

DIVERSITY COLLOQUIUM

PROTECTION FROM PROSECUTION

Privilege and Illicit Substance Use in Reality TV

Presenter: Kim Baker

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Monday, February 18

7-8:30 p.m. | ScholarSpace, Rod Library

Refreshments provided!

Popular criticisms of the war on drugs have focused primarily on the consequences for poor communities and communities of color, but there has been less attention to the ways that white, middle class and wealthy users have been protected from these consequences. I argue that this exceptionalism is supported by popular media, particularly reality television shows like *Intervention* and *Celebrity Rehab*. These shows feature predominantly white, middle class and wealthy users who bypass the criminal justice system to enter expensive private treatment programs. I argue that while reality television does not affect public policy directly, it does affect how lay audiences think about substance use and social responses.

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