

# THE CENTER FOR HUMAN EVOLUTIONARY STUDIES IS PLEASED TO PRESENT:



**Dr. Robin Nelson**

Arizona State University

Fri, 2/2/24 at 3:30pm Ruth Adams Bldg. 001

## Kin, Community, and the Complexity of Everyday Life: Building Theory in Studies of Family Making and Kin Investment

While kinship has served as a principal anthropological research topic for decades, who we consider kin, and how we understand those relationships to come into being and transmute continues to shift in response to changing theoretical orientations and movements away from orthodox conceptualizations of the family. We are now exploring how cultural identity and practice, resource availability, and social positionality mediate individual decisions regarding kin making. My research examines these facets of kinship and care in the contemporary contexts of urban and migrating populations living in industrialized environments. In this talk, I will discuss how evolutionary anthropological conceptualizations and assessments of investment have structured our theory building and data collection, while sometimes obscuring the complexity of lived relations. With evidence from my research on created relations, kin investment, identity, and health at three sites, I suggest that a grounded biocultural theory may enable us to navigate some of the more complicated human behavioral patterns (such as intra-gender conflict and trans-generational antipathy) that have been relegated to anecdotes and cast aside in favor of more easily operationalizable data. Similarly, a better theoretical and methodological integration of the fluidity of kin networks while recognizing the everyday challenges navigated within these relationships enables anthropologists to re-visit what we understand to be the core behaviors that have shaped human evolution.

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