

School of Sanskrit, Philosophy and Indic Studies
Goa University



Unravelling the Colonial Lifeworld in Canada's Prison Capital

22 August 2025 (Friday)
5:30 PM to 7:30 PM IST

An online talk by
Dr. Lisa Guenther
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Political Philosophy and Critical Prison
Studies
Queen's University

Meet Link: <https://meet.google.com/qxz-seho-edt>

Abstract

The relation between colonialism and incarceration runs deep. It is not just a matter of certain laws, policies, or practices that could be changed without altering the basic structure of our lifeworld. Rather, the challenge is to transform the common-sense understandings of safety, harm, and responsibility built into the colonial world through the reduction of land to property, the defense of property with state violence, and the equation of justice with punishment. Anishinaabe legal scholar Aaron Mills disrupts colonial common sense with a simple but profound question: “As beneficiaries of settler supremacy, is citizenship premised on domination good enough for you?” Mills offers a decolonial interpretation of treaties as agreements for mutual aid, illuminating a pathway beyond the colonial lifeworld.

Bio

Lisa Guenther is Queen’s National Scholar in Political Philosophy and Critical Prison Studies at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. Before 2018, she served as Associate Professor of Philosophy at Vanderbilt University. She is the author of **Solitary Confinement: Social Death and its Afterlives (2013)** and **The Gift of the Other: Levinas and the Politics of Reproduction (2007)**, and co-editor of **Death and Other Penalties: Philosophy in a Time of Mass Incarceration (2015)**. She has published articles and book chapters in phenomenology, feminism, prison studies, and critical race studies, including recent work on police violence, prisoner resistance, and carceral space. As a public philosopher, Guenther’s work has appeared in The New York Times, The Globe and Mail, Aeon, and CBC’s Ideas. From 2012-17, she facilitated a discussion group with men on death row in Tennessee called REACH Coalition, and she is currently a member of the Advisory Board for the P4W Memorial Collective. Guenther teaches philosophy classes at Collins Bay Institution through the Walls to Bridges Program. She is working on a critical phenomenology of prison abolition and decolonization on Turtle Island.