



# Western

Centre for Research on  
Migration and Ethnic Relations

**Fall Colloquium  
Series 2016**

## **\*Dr. Joanna Quinn\***



Dr. Joanna Quinn is Director of the Centre for Transitional Justice and Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Associate Professor of Political Science at The University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario, Canada. Since 1998, Dr. Quinn has been engaged in research that considers the role of acknowledgement in overcoming the causes of conflict, which has the potential to affect real and lasting change. She has written widely on the truth commissions in Uganda, Haiti, and elsewhere. Her current research considers the role of customary practices of acknowledgement and justice in transitional justice in Uganda and in Fiji.

### **Instrumentalizing Ethnicity to Prevent the Formation of Thin Sympathy and Reconciliation Among By-Standers and Outsiders in Uganda**

Conventional transitional justice theories have assumed that societies emerging from conflict will necessarily be receptive to programs of acknowledgement and reconciliation. Yet often they are not, and efforts to promote reconciliation fall on unreceptive audiences at the national level and below. The presentation traces the factors that hamper the uptake of reconciliation and the acknowledgement of past events. It considers the role of empathetic champions who inspire sympathetic acknowledgement in leaders who can take these ideas forward, and the importance of building a critical level of understanding, or "thin" sympathy, in the general population through exposure to the "other" and education about the other's experiences. The presentation argues that reconciliation efforts fail, first, when empathetic champions meet resistance or fail to find a sympathetic policy entrepreneur to catalyze reconciliation efforts, and, second, when there is not even "thin" sympathy or basic understanding of the experiences of the other within civil society. Through the lens of Uganda, a number of factors that obscure this kind of knowledge translation are explored: instrumentalization of ethnicity as a tool of division, lack of national identity, stunted civil society, co-optation of the NGO sector, the role of spoilers-both government and donors, and the strategy of self-preservation single-mindedly pursued by government.

**Thursday, October 6, 2016**

**4:00 pm, SSC 5220**

**Refreshments at 3:30pm in SSC 5230**

**All Welcome!**

**For More Information email: [mer@uwo.ca](mailto:mer@uwo.ca)**