



**HUMANITIES
SCHOLARS
PROGRAM**

***Real Farmers, Dream Cities: Agrarian Change, Demonstration,
and the Politics of Visibility in Myanmar***

Dr. Courtney T. Wittekind, Purdue University

***with an introduction by Dr. Judith Schachter, Professor Emerita of Anthropology and History,
CMU***

Thursday, October 24th at 4:30PM – CUC Peter & Wright Rooms



This presentation examines a series of demonstrations held in the southwestern outskirts of Yangon, Myanmar, the site of a 20,000-acre proposal to transform the region's farmland into a built-from-scratch "new city." Slogans and speeches—both in support of and in opposition to the new city—tied demonstrators' demands to the desires of the region's "real farmer," a figure hyper-visible in the popular protest movements from Myanmar and Southeast Asian history. Tracing contested claims about Southwest Yangon's farmers circulating in the popular press and state propaganda, this lecture explores the political and pragmatic tactics of future-making amid authoritarian resurgence, rapid urbanization, and the pressures of a changing climate. At stake is a broader politics of visibility, wherein the boundary between the seen and unseen becomes a site through which what is "real" is debated in contemporary Myanmar.

Courtney T. Wittekind is an anthropologist researching uneven urban development, the growth of speculative investment, and the rapid expansion of digital technologies in and beyond Southeast Asia. Her first book, *Speculating on Transition*, describes the unequal burdens facing residents of Southwest Yangon, Myanmar (Burma), an agricultural region set to be redeveloped into a sprawling "new city." Wittekind received her Ph.D. in Social Anthropology with a secondary field in Critical Media Practice from Harvard University in 2022. Currently, she is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Purdue University, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on ethnographic methods, urban studies, and digital media and technology. She graduated from Carnegie Mellon as part of the BXA program and received her Bachelor of Humanities and Arts in Art and Anthropology in 2013.

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