

Law, Societies and Justice/Comparative Law and Society Studies, the Center for Global Studies at the Jackson School, and the Department of Political Science present:

# Sally Engle Merry

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Friday, April 25<sup>th</sup>

12:00pm

Gowen 1A

This talk is part of the  
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Sally Engle Merry, former President of the Law and Society Association, is a professor of anthropology and law & society at New York University. Her most recent book (2006) is entitled *Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice*.

## *Law, Human Rights and Social Movements: Exploring the Justice Scaffold*

Do human rights offer resources for grassroots social movements that enhance their power in political struggles? Can they serve social movements as a basis for using global law “from below,” as de Sousa Santos and Rodriguez-Garavito claim, offering a form of cosmopolitan law that can be mobilized by subalterns to challenge their situations of subordination and exclusion (2005)? Using a case study from New York City, this paper argues that social movements that use human rights frameworks relocate political struggles in legal arenas, which privileges legal expertise but at the same time offers an opening for dialogue between experts and more grass-roots oriented activists. It suggests that such activism may change the nature of human rights law itself.