



DECADE

Talia Bettcher



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3 pm-5 pm



HIB 55



Between Appearance and Reality: On Trans Oppression and the Calamities of Intimacy



BIO

Talia Bettcher is an engaged philosopher who integrates critical reflection with tangible and meaningful action in our lived world.

“Much of my work in transgender studies flows from my personal experience as a trans woman and through being actively involved in trans community subcultures and grassroots organizing in Los Angeles for the past fifteen years. My philosophical investigations, even at their most abstract, aim to capture realities that are experienced by flesh and blood people and that can have political and practical consequences”

Reality enforcement is a kind of misgendering that involves the representation of trans people as either deceptive about who we are or else as pretending to be something we are not. The latter is typically accompanied by the phenomenon of “playing along”. When this occurs, the apparent recognition of a trans person’s identity by a nontrans person will give way to accusations of pretense, particularly when the possibilities of what I call “the calamities of intimacy” arise. The first calamity is the fear that a trans woman – viewed as really a man – will occupy sex-segregated female space. The second calamity is the fear that one will have sex with the “wrong gender.”

Drawing on my own experiences doing trans advocacy work in Los Angeles, I illuminate “reality enforcement,” “playing along” and “the calamities of intimacy” through my theory of intimacy and distance (“interpersonal spatiality”) and I show how this has implications for how we understand transphobic violence, policies, and rhetoric and therefore and how we respond to them. In this way, I illustrate how (trans) philosophy can come from real-world experiences in trying to change oppressive practices and then provide illumination in further efforts towards change.

