



Jolie A. Sheffer

September 15, 2010

207 BTSU (Mylander room)

2:30 pm

"Blanket" September 1990 for Benetton.
Photographer: Oliviero Toscani.
<http://press.benettongroup.com>

"The Romance of Race: The Familial Origins of American Multiculturalism, 1880-1930."

How did America come to be imagined as a nation of immigrants, a melting pot, salad bowl, or mosaic?

Professor Jolie A. Sheffer's talk investigates the role of turn-of-the-century women writers and reformers in the inauguration of modern American multiculturalism. In a period of profound demographic change, ethnic women writers were at the vanguard of efforts to democratize national identity. They reframed public debates through narratives based on the model of the nuclear family, depicting interracial encounters as longstanding, unacknowledged liaisons between white men and racialized women, which result in an incestuous, mongrel nation. By confronting and conflating the sexual taboos of incest and miscegenation, these women writers created political allegories of kinship. Linking popular literature and activism to citizenship and anti-miscegenation laws, Sheffer examines the nature of kinship and taboo in the national imaginary.

Jolie A. Sheffer is an Assistant Professor of English and an affiliated faculty member of American Culture Studies at BGSU. Her research and teaching interests include twentieth-century American literature, multiethnic American literature, Asian American studies, gender studies, and cultural studies. She is currently serving on the Literary Studies book award committee for the Association for Asian American Studies. She has published articles in *MELUS*, the journal of the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States; the *Journal of Asian American Studies*; and in the edited collection *Sport, Rhetoric, Gender, and Globalization: Historical Perspectives and Media Representations* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010).