Hey Stupid! Show Me Sex-Positivity: Youth Sexuality and U.S. Moral Sex Panics

With an increased awareness of child pornography, online predators, and youth sexting, the attempt to protect children from all things sex remains an oft-circulated trope in our contemporary landscape. In this talk, I suggest these public anxieties both enable and constrain a more robust discussion of youth sex education and youth sexuality. To animate this observation, I turn back to a controversial sex education picture book created for children and their parents in the 1970s called *Show Me!*. I suggest that this ‘turning back’ highlights the not-so-curious junctures between the banning of the book and feminist debates over the place of sex in public, which resonate loudly today in these discussions. Given the representation of youth sex education and youth sexuality in *Show Me!*, I posit that we narrowly limit ourselves if we proceed with youth sex/sexuality deliberation under the exclusive auspices of the logics of intrinsic sexual danger. Following Judith Halberstam’s recent call to practice a mode of inquiry called ‘stupid reading,’ I negotiate the precarious position of *Show Me!* in the spirit of delinking discourses of youth sex/sexuality from child pornography, child abuse, and child exploitation. I suggest stupid readings, where the critic plays dumb and ‘forgets’ pre-given orthodoxies, are well suited for those cultural productions that firmly reach certain ideological limits.

Ruin Rhetorics: De/Re Constructions of (Un)Livable Space

This talk explores the communicative dimensions of contemporary de-industrial ruin as a particular kind of space-making technology. I investigate the symbolic force of crumbling industrial infrastructure as a kind of interruption to normative discourses of spatio-temporal stability within the 21st century urban economy.

Tuesday, April 2, 2013 — 4:00-5:00 pm—Room 203 BCSB