

Atkinson Center Topical Lunch

Title - The Cigarette Economy and Sustainability

Hosts – Marina Welker, Associate Professor Department of Anthropology and Jeff Niederdeppe, Associate Professor, Department of Communication

Date – Friday November 10, 2017 12:00 – 1:00pm 300 Rice Hall

Even as smoking rates have fallen dramatically in many countries over recent decades, the tobacco industry is continuing to grow and reap profits by targeting the most vulnerable countries and population sectors. Public perceptions of the industry's negative consequences are dominated by a public health lens, which depicts tobacco-related diseases as epidemic and catastrophic. This topical lunch asks how tobacco-related research might benefit from a broader sustainability perspective that more fully accounts for tobacco's economic, environmental, and social consequences. As historian of science Robert Proctor argues in *The Golden Holocaust*, the cigarette economy in its entirety plays a significant role in global pollution, climate change, and social inequality - from deforestation for tobacco flue-curing to resources sunk into advertising and distribution; cigarette butts discarded after consumption (the world's most common toxic trash and a major source of residential, industrial, and forest fires); the carbon footprint of medical treatment for patients suffering the slow violence of tobacco-related diseases; and disproportionate burdens on vulnerable people across the globe. Although our focus falls on conventional cigarettes, we would also welcome researchers working on non-cigarette forms of tobacco and non-tobacco forms of nicotine consumption such as e-cigarettes.