
GCSC Seminar Series

September 27, 2016
4:00-5:00 PM

210 ASB
(Aline Skaggs Biology)

ALL ARE WELCOME

Refreshments & meet
the speaker at 3:45

Leah Sprain

Department of Communication, University of Colorado
Boulder

"Democratic dilemmas of energy system transformation"

Co-hosted by the Communication Institute



ABSTRACT

Shifting the nature of how energy is used, delivered, produced, or sourced within a city could easily be seen as a matter of wires and grids; yet, energy system transformation is fundamentally social, political, and cultural. Boulder, Colorado serves as a case study of how one city is attempting energy system transformation through municipalization and related climate action. This talk focuses on democratic dilemmas that city council members encounter during discussions about Boulder's Energy Future. Examining how council members use talk to manage dilemmas between adaptive governance and public trust, democratic legitimacy and technical analysis provides the basis for developing a practical theory of communication and energy democracy .

BIO

Leah Sprain is Assistant Professor in the Department of Communication at the University of Colorado Boulder. Her research focuses on democratic engagement, studying how specific communication practices facilitate and inhibit public action. Outreach and praxis are crucial to democratic engagement; thus, much of her research is collaborative and focused on the practice-theory interface. Current projects focus on energy democracy, measuring quality deliberative engagement across difference, and community resilience. She co-edited *Social Movement to Address Climate Change: Local Steps for Global Action*, and her work appears in the *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *Environmental Communication*, and *Communication Theory*.