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**Social Science Research Building 340 - Linguistic Anthropology Lab**

***What’s in a Name? Re-Articulating the “Transsexual Lady” amid a Proliferation of Genders and Sexualities in Thailand***

How many phet (gender/sexual forms) are there in Thailand? While this is a recurring question in the literature that I address, I’m more interested in the socio-political work that new identity labels do. Why does one need a new term? How does it shape our moral conceptualizations of gender difference? What words count and how do we count them? When do new labels point to new identities or re-framings of existing identities? In this talk, I address these questions in reference to a specific term: phu-ying kham phet (transsexual lady), promulgated by a celebrity activist in 2010, within the context of an ongoing proliferation of Thai gender/sexual terms. I argue that the deployment of “transsexual lady” is a strategy for transsexual rights, that ultimately reinforces the biopolitics of semi-colonial sexual dimorphism (heteronormative binary gender) to the exclusion of broader gender rights, ignores historical forms of Thai transgenderism, and severs potential alliances with other sexual diversity networks. Researchers need to pay attention to how language is used in practice, to change social norms, without being mesmerized by its novelty or repetition independent of an embodied ritualization that points to a new identity