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Department of  
Sociology, College of  
Social Science

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Speaker  
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# Styling Masculinity: Gender, Class, and Inequality in the Men's Grooming Industry

Berkey Hall 457

Friday, February 17, 12:00-1:30pm

What does it mean that men are spending more money on their haircuts, getting manicures, and considering facials and under eye cream? In her book, *Styling Masculinity*, Dr. Kristen Barber investigates just what it takes to sell men beauty. Going inside high-end salons catering to a male clientele, Barber investigates how the beauty industry recodes these practices so that they inflate rather than compromise men's masculine identities. Beauty doesn't have to feminizing, but this doesn't mean it's a bastion of gender equality.

In her visiting lecture, Dr. Barber will discuss how the recoding of beauty relies heavily on women's labor. Building a framework to understand the "labor of consumption," Barber makes it clear that both male clients and women workers are symbolically created on the shop floor. The women end up serving as corporate marketing tools, are responsible for socializing men into beauty culture, pamper men and sooth their egos, and act as resources for men's projects of heterosexual desires. These interactions, Barber argues, help to reinforce the privilege of these mostly straight, white, well-to-do men. At the same time, Barber considers when the women workers turn power relations on their head to create valued work identities and a sense of job satisfaction.



*Dr. Barber's book *Styling Masculinity* (Rutgers University Press, 2016) has been highlighted in the New York Times, the Atlantic, Playboy, and NPR's Marketplace.*