

# HISTORY WORKSHOP

## The Department of History

Tuesdays ~ 12:30-1:30 pm ~ 203 Munroe Hall

# *The Ethics of Memorializing Anti-Black Spectacle Violence*

**Mari Crabtree**

College of Charleston

**Oct 15, 2019**

**12:30-1:30 pm**

**203 Munroe Hall**



Historians often confront difficult methodological challenges regarding the practice of excavating and narrating the past, and these challenges are compounded for historians who write about historical traumas that victims and survivors often buried in the deeper recesses of their minds. However, this talk asks not only *can* historians who write about traumatic events recover stories from the archives given the available sources but also *should* all stories from the past be told and, if so, then *how* should they be told. In short, what are the ethical obligations of historians who write about historical traumas, especially when the subjects of their histories cannot give consent for their violent and deeply personal stories to be aired in public? Historians are charged with unearthing the ‘truth’ of the past without whitewashing or tempering violence, bigotry, and the like, but do they also have an ethical obligation to preserve the dignity and privacy of the victims and survivors of historical trauma? Should historians consider the potential harm caused by writing narratives that may threaten to re-objectify victims and re-traumatize survivors? This talk offers some answers--or, at the very least, some strategies for forging ethical relationships with historical subjects and navigating these difficult writing choices--by considering thoughtful representations of traumatic violence in works of fiction, visual art, and poetry.