

HISTORY WORKSHOP

The Department of History

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

(Public) Historians and the Archive

Kristin O’Brassill-Kulfan

Rutgers University

September 24, 2019

12:30-1:30 pm

203 Munroe Hall



Transiency and poverty thwart documentation. As a historian and archivist, Kristin O’Brassill-Kulfan’s work explores how we know what we know about the lives of the poor, especially the mobile poor, throughout United States history, and how archival epistemologies influence the scholarship of social historians. Her recent book, *Vagrants and Vagabonds: Poverty and Mobility in the Early American Republic*, documents the experiences of migrants – consisting of everyone from work-seekers to runaway slaves – who populated the roads and streets of major cities and towns. It explores the paths of their travels and minutiae of their experiences in the 19th century US in an effort to extricate their life stories from the records of criminal justice systems and relief organizations. These archival challenges, O’Brassill-Kulfan argues, should influence public historical work at multiple levels. This talk will cover the research and writing of *Vagrants and Vagabonds* as well as public engagement with difficult histories and methodologies in public history.