

'The Unbeatable Coolness of Cat Sweaters' will slink up to the University's Bergren Forum podium at lunchtime April 23

4/13/15

Alfred University's (AU) longstanding lunchtime series, the Bergren Forum, continues Thursday, April 23, at 12:10 p.m. in Nevins Theater, Powell Campus Center with "The Unbearable Coolness of Cat Sweaters: Camp, Kitsch, and the Hipster." The program is free and open to the public.

In her talk, Sarah Cote, visiting lecturer in English, will explore "some of the ripple effects that 'hipster' culture has made on the mainstream. I will discuss how and why some people find value and meaning in consuming culture ironically and will consider how the aesthetic margins affect the center and vice versa.

"For instance," she explained, "what is the material difference between an elderly woman wearing a sweatshirt with a kitten design as a sincere fashion choice and, say, a 21-year-old male skateboarder wearing the exact same shirt, but ironically? Is the ironist making fun of the older woman's taste as kitsch? Is he producing micro-theater in the form of camp?"

Cote earned a Ph.D. in English language and literature from Cornell University. Her areas of concentration include 18th century British literature, composition and pedagogical theory, and feminism and queer theory.

The Bergren Forum is sponsored by the Division of Human Studies, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Provost's Office. Guests are encouraged to bring a brown bag lunch; coffee and tea will be provided.

The series known as the Bergren Forum was begun by Rich Bergen, who taught at the University in the '70s when he was inspired by learning of the gatherings that (AU) students in the 19th century were known to conduct in Alumni Hall to discuss community issues. After Bergen's death in 1974, the University decided to continue the tradition in his name. Various faculty members have taken on the coordinator duties since that time.