



Lecture Series in Social Anthropology

Spring
Semester
2026

Tuesday, 26 May 2026 | 4.15 p.m. | Room AND-4-06

On Freedom and Madness. Psychiatry, Care and Affective Territories in the Swiss Alps

Dr. Paola Juan (University of Zurich)

Since the 1960s, the question of constraint within psychiatric institutions has permeated the debate in the West and led to the establishment of new models of care; models described as ‘alternative’ to the usual psychiatric asylums have developed throughout Europe. In this lecture, I introduce my ethnographic research on forms of freedom, care and affects at the interface between psychiatric services, communities and non-profit associations in a Catholic and rural region of Switzerland. I question the links between freedom and constraint in relation to a specific tradition of care developed in a public psychiatric institution in the Swiss Alps, which is based on “humanistic” principles for people who are repeatedly hospitalised into psychiatry. The presentation investigates different facets and understandings of freedom which become evident on the ethnographic level and coalesce into a typology. It shows how divergent perspectives on what constitutes good care in relation to freedom for people diagnosed with mental illnesses depend on the social and affective structures in which individuals are embedded.

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Entrance free of charge.

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