

TEMPLE DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
AND URBAN STUDIES



FALL 2021 SPEAKER SERIES

Presented by the GUS Graduate Student Association

10/15 -- Dr. Kevon Rhiney (Rutgers University)
Cultivating Crisis: Coffee Leaf Rust and the
Co-production of Smallholder Vulnerability in
the Jamaican Blue Mountains
2:00 PM via Zoom Webinar



Since September 2012, the Jamaican coffee industry has been grappling with the coffee leaf rust (CLR) epidemic caused by the fungal pathogen *Hemileia vastatrix*. The first widespread outbreak affected more than one-third of coffee plants across the island, resulting in millions of dollars in lost revenues for the sector. The emergence and spread of the disease have been linked to a confluence of factors ranging from changing climatic conditions, impacts from extreme weather events, improper farm management practices and bounded knowledge systems, and institutional and market constraints that restrict measures aimed at controlling the disease. In this talk, I use the case of the CLR epidemic to illustrate the systemic, relational and multi-scalar ways socio-ecological shocks are often disproportionately experienced by smallholders, and how these shocks in turn map onto and are routinely mediated through everyday human-environment interactions. Drawing on a mixed methods research design involving household surveys, focus groups, archival research and interviews with a range of value chain actors, I show how smallholder responses and exposure to CLR links into broader political-economic processes that are partly responsible for creating the structural conditions that influence smallholder vulnerability to socio-ecological shocks in the first place, and often set the conditions for future impacts and vulnerabilities.

Dr. Kevon Rhiney is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography at Rutgers University. Prior to joining Rutgers, he held a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Oxford and taught for several years at the University of the West Indies, based in Kingston, Jamaica. He adopts a mixed methods approach to examine the complex conditions under which rural agrarian landscapes change, and the socio-material implications these changes pose for smallholder livelihoods. He is the editor for the development section of *Geography Compass* and recently served as a contributing author for the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5C.