

CENTRE FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN SOCIETY AND CULTURE  
AFRICAN STUDIES WORKING GROUP

# PANICS OVER PLASTICS

## Queer Objects, Moral Pollution, and the Materialities of Belonging in Kenya

**George Paul Meiu**

Harvard University

**Friday, 26 October****3 - 4:30 p.m.****Room H-1120**Henry F. Hall Building,  
1455 De Maisonneuve Blvd. W.**Lecture Details**

In recent years, in Kenya, popular claims that homosexuality is a “foreign import”—and therefore, “un-African”—have coincided with similar statements about plastic as a substance. On social media, a Kenyan man claimed that “gayism [looks] like a fatal plastic import from the West;” and state efforts to ban plastics have borrowed from the sentiments and language of an anti-homosexuality rhetoric. In order to better understand the role of sexuality to belonging and citizenship, this paper proposes a detour through the meanings and textures of plastic.

Meiu will speak of the materialities of belonging to show how plastic anchors belonging and citizenship in the idioms of substance.

**George Paul Meiu** is John and Ruth Hazel Associate Professor of Social Sciences in the Department of Anthropology and the Department of African and African American Studies at Harvard University. He is author of *Ethno-erotic Economies: Sexuality, Money, and Belonging in Kenya* (University of Chicago Press, 2017). He also published in the *American Ethnologist*, *Ethnos*, *Anthropology Today*, the *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, and in edited volumes on tourism, sexuality, and the history of anthropology.

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