PRACTICE JOB TALK: A NEW ERA FOR LABOR ACTIVISM?
STRATEGIC MOBILIZATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AGAINST BLACKLISTING

Filiz Kahraman
Tuesday, January 17, 2017 - 1:30pm to 3:00pm
Gowen 1A

About Filiz:
Filiz’s research centers on human rights law and labor activism. Her dissertation, Claiming Labor Rights as Human Rights: Legal Mobilization at the European Court of Human Rights, provides a comprehensive analysis of the causes and consequences of mobilizing labor rights at an international human rights court. She has been awarded numerous fellowships and grants, including the Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant from the National Science Foundation, the David J. Olson Graduate Fellowship for Labor Studies, the EU Center of Excellence Graduate Research Grant, the Chester A. Fritz and Boeing Fellowships for International Research and Study, and Individual Research Grant from the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies. Her work is also recognized by the Stuart Scheingold Prize for Best Graduate Student Paper in Public law.

What Filiz will present:
Her job talk will be based on an article forthcoming in Law & Social Inquiry

Title: A New Era for Labor Activism? Strategic Mobilization of Human Rights against Blacklisting

Abstract:
This article examines whether and how international human rights law transforms the grassroots mobilization strategies of labor activists. Drawing on original ethnographic research on the activism of the blacklisted workers in the UK, I show that there is a two-tier process through which human rights norms are interpreted and mobilized first by legal advocacy groups, then by grassroots activists. Contrary to skeptics who argue that human rights have a “mainstreaming” and “individualizing” effect on labor movements, this research shows that by strategically embedding human rights language in their campaigns, blacklisted workers leveraged media attention and undertook a discursive change on trade union rights. Findings suggest that the strategic mobilization of human rights differs from other mobilization efforts, since labor activists use human rights language primarily for the purpose of finding a sympathetic audience within a political environment in which trade unions are viewed as a regressive force in the economy.