



The Department of American Studies, the Department of Philosophy at the University of Innsbruck, the American Corner Innsbruck, and the Center for Inter-American Studies cordially invite you to a talk by

## **Prof. Kevin Schilbrack**

Chair, Department of Philosophy and Religion  
Appalachian State University, Boone, NC

### **“Religious Affordances”**

Tuesday, 23 May 2017, 6:00 PM  
HS 7, Lecture Hall 7 – GEIWI Building

**Prof. Kevin Schilbrack** is a professor and the chair of the department of Philosophy and Religion at Appalachian State University, located in the beautiful mountains of North Carolina, USA. A graduate of the University of Chicago Divinity School, he is the author of *Philosophy and the Study of Religions* and dozens of papers about cross-cultural philosophy, ethics, and theories of religion.

In the 1970s, the psychologist James Gibson developed the concept of “affordances” as part of an ecological theory of perception. The central idea, inspired by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, is that in their primary mode of perception embodied animals, including human animals, see their environment as providing opportunities for action. In this way, the concept of affordances provides a way to talk about experience not merely as the reception of sense data but rather as the perception of value-laden properties of things in the world. The concept also gives theologians and philosophers of religion a way to speak of “religious affordances.” With this conceptual tool, scholars of religion can look for ways in which religious practices are not just mechanical actions, but rather non-deterministic modes of subject formation that train people to see the world as providing opportunities for proper action. Religious practices can therefore be seen as helping participants to come to see their world as providing opportunities for action, and the concept of affordances means that the values which the participants believe they see and to which they respond may well be real values in the world. On this account, the concept of religious affordances lets one see how religious participants respond to real values in the world.

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Gudrun Grabher  
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