Abstract:
Discussions of race are often framed as clear points of opposition—us versus them. And when considering white racial identity, an essential split between "racists" and "antiracists" is all too frequently assumed. But rarely are these intra-white divisions empirically investigated. Sociologist Matthew Hughey questions the depth and salience of white political and ideological bifurcation, and in so doing offers a unique view of white racial identity in his new book, "White Bound." Based on over a year of ethnographic observations inclusive of fieldwork, content analysis, and in-depth interviews with two white organizations—a white nationalist group and a white antiracist group—Hughey argues that despite immediate differences, whites across the political spectrum often make meaning whiteness through a reliance on similar racist and reactionary narratives, social expectations, and common ideals of what whiteness should be. On the whole, Hughey throws abstract beliefs and theoretical projection about the supposed white "culture war" and "crisis" of whiteness into relief against the realities of two groups never before directly compared. By examining seemingly antithetical white groups, we see not just the many ways of being white, but how these actors make meaning of whiteness in ways that collectively reproduce both white identity and, ultimately, white supremacy.

Speaker Bio:
Matthew W. Hughey is Associate Professor of Sociology and Affiliate Faculty in the Institute for African American Studies at the University of Connecticut. He received the Ph.D. from the University of Virginia (2009) where he served as a research fellow with the Carter G. Woodson Institute for African-American and African Studies and held the position of Instructor for the Departments of Sociology, Media Studies, and African American Studies. In broad strokes, his research examines the relationship between inter-subjectively shared social meanings and objectively unequal social relations. His specific research agenda is a threefold examination of (1) racial identity formation, (2) racialized organizations, and (3) the production, distribution, and consumption of mass media racial representations. An active member of his discipline, he serves on the editorial boards for Social Problems, Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, Humanity & Society, Ethnic and Racial Studies and he is a Founding Associate Editor of the American Sociological Association’s first journal dedicated to the study of race: Sociology of Race and Ethnicity.