



## Giovanna Del Negro

Texas A&M University

Friday, March 27, 2-4pm

ACAD 326

Reception Immediately Following

### **The Bad Girls of Jewish Comedy: Gender, Class, Assimilation, and Whiteness in Post WWII America**

**Abstract:** This presentation will explore the comedy of Belle Barth, Pearl Williams, and Patsy Abbott, a trio of working class Jewish stand-up comics that were hugely popular in the late-1950s. This period was one in which Jews saw upward mobility, suburbanization, a changing racial identity, and pressures to assimilate. Recuperating the contributions of these neglected figures in the history of American performance, the presentation will show how the trio's bawdy humor negotiated these social transformations and offers insights into class, Jewish ethnicity, and whiteness.

Giovanna P. Del Negro is an assistant professor of English at Texas A&M University. Her ethnographic work on expressive culture in Italy and North America focuses on issues of gender, performance, and the aesthetics of everyday life. Her first book, *Looking Through My Mother's Eyes: Life Stories of Nine Italian Immigrant Women in Canada*, is now in its second printing. Her research on the Italian ritual promenade has appeared in the *Journal of American Folklore* and *Midwestern Folklore*, and she is currently the convener of the Mediterranean Studies Section of the American Folklore Society. Her second book, *The Passeggiata and Popular Culture in an Italian Town: Folklore and the Performance of Modernity* will be published in 2004 by McGill-Queen's University Press. She is the co-author of *Identity and Everyday Life: Essays in The Study of Folklore, Music and Popular Culture* (2004: Wesleyan University Press), a collection of original essays examining core issues in social and cultural theory. She is currently conducting ethnographic research on women's stand-up comedy in San Francisco, Houston, Montreal, and London. Del Negro has taught courses that deal with performance, gender, ritual and the body. She is currently teaching a graduate class entitled "Introduction to Cultural Studies."

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