

## CSLS SPEAKER SERIES

Cosponsored with the [Center for Race & Gender](#) and  
the [Thelton E. Henderson Center for Social Justice](#)

**Monday, September 20, 2021**

### **MATTHEW CLAIR**

Assistant Professor of Sociology, Stanford University

## **“Privilege and Punishment in an Era of Mass Criminalization”**

The number of Americans arrested, brought to court, and incarcerated has skyrocketed in recent decades. Criminal defendants come from all races and economic walks of life, but they experience punishment in vastly different ways. How and why is the criminal court process unequal? This talk draws on findings from my book *Privilege and Punishment: How Race and Class Matter in Criminal Court* (Princeton University Press, November 2020). Drawing on fieldwork and interviews in the Boston court system, I show that lawyers and judges often silence, coerce, and punish disadvantaged defendants when they try to learn their legal rights and advocate for themselves. These dynamics reveal how unwritten institutional and organizational norms devalue the exercise of legal rights among the disadvantaged, and that ensuring effective legal representation is no guarantee of justice. Drawing on other research and activism on the courts as an instrument of racialized social control, I conclude with reflections on how we might reimagine the criminal courts in relation to the movement to abolish police and prisons.

PLACE Zoom – [Register here for the zoom link.](#)  
TIME 12:45 – 2:00pm.  
INFO <https://www.csls.berkeley.edu>

**If you require an accommodation for effective communication** (ASL interpreting/CART captioning, alternative media formats, etc.) to fully participate in this event, please contact [csls@law.berkeley.edu](mailto:csls@law.berkeley.edu) with as much advance notice as possible and at least 7-10 days in advance of the event.