



Department of Sociology

Seminar

Business Leadership of a Social Movement: The Case of Natural Foods

Speaker: Dr. Laura Miller
Associate Professor, Department of Sociology
Brandeis University

Date: 29 March 2018 (Thursday)

Time: 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Venue: Rm 1045, 10/F., Academic and Administration Bldg.,
15 Baptist University Road, Kowloon Tong, Kowloon

Abstract

In recent years, sociologists have attended to the interactions between social movements and the private sector. This literature tends to pose industry as either adjuncts to a movement, or as players seeking to co-opt a movement. In contrast, this talk uses the case of the natural foods movement in the United States to demonstrate the role of business in leading a movement oriented to social change. Drawing on the intertwined history of the natural foods movement and the natural/health food industry, I show how industry has provided the movement with stability and the means to attract new followers at the same time as the movement's goals have been shaped to benefit businesses. The argument is made that industry leadership of a movement promotes radical cultural change over economic reforms.

Bio

Laura J. Miller is Associate Professor of Sociology at Brandeis University. She received her PhD from the University of California, San Diego, and previously taught at the University of Western Ontario and Vassar College. Her research focuses on the intersection of cultural and economic factors within industries characterized by moral commitments to their products. Her most recent book is *Building Nature's Market: The Business and Politics of Natural Foods*, published in 2017 by University of Chicago Press. She is also the author of *Reluctant Capitalists: Bookselling and the Culture of Consumption* (University of Chicago Press, 2006), which received the American Sociological Association Section on the Sociology of Culture Book Award in 2007.

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