

# OSTROM WORKSHOP COLLOQUIUM SERIES

## Jessica Eaglin

*Maurer School of Law, IU Bloomington*

### “Sentencing’s Technological Counternarrative”

**Guest commentator:**

Virginia Eubanks, Department of Political Science,  
University at Albany, SUNY



**Monday, FEBRUARY 11, 2019**

12:00–1:00 PM • Ostrom Workshop, 513 N. Park

Since the rise of clinical rehabilitation in the 1960s, states have adopted numerous sentencing technologies to “improve” the distribution of punishment. This article identifies three social concepts that altered through or alongside these technological sentencing interventions: “rehabilitation” mutated to risk management; “racial equality” mutated to technical formalism; and “dangerousness” and “recidivism risk” merged in social meaning. These altered social concepts, and not scientific advancement, underlie the proliferation of actuarial risk tools as sentencing reform today. They also obscure and legitimate the expansion of castigatory government surveillance in marginalized communities, resignation to racialize sentencing practices, and expansion of the carceral net. By connecting technological interventions and conceptual transformations, this article seeks to balance and expand debates about pragmatic technological sentencing reforms. Such reforms not only threaten to stall broader changes that address society’s deeper issues of race, class, and power. They strip us of a language to resist the status quo by changing society’s notions of justice along the way.



[Jessica Eaglin](#) is an associate professor of law at IU Maurer School of Law. Her research considers criminal justice reforms aimed to address the economic and social pressures of mass incarceration. Recent work explores the rise of actuarial risk assessments as sentencing reform, including issues of governance and political representation in tool construction.

Presentations are open to the public and are live streamed (see our website for URL and papers). You are welcome to bring your lunch. For questions, contact Allison Sturgeon ([sturgeon@iu.edu](mailto:sturgeon@iu.edu); 812/855–3151).