

THE THIRD ANNUAL VINCENT AND ELINOR OSTROM MEMORIAL LECTURE

“Rule Breaking and Political Imagination”

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This lecture is based on a soon-to-appear book of stories about institutions and how they sometimes fail to perform in ways we expect. Institutions have figured prominently in theories of politics of the last half-century. The classic statement of what came to be known as *the new institutionalism* was articulated by the late Nobel Laureates Douglass North and Elinor Ostrom, summarizing the realization that institutions structure and constrain rational action. As the economic historian Joel Mokyr observed, “Institutions are in a way much like prices in a competitive market: individuals can respond to them differently, but they must take them parametrically and cannot change them.” They channel the choices of individual actors.



But what if they do not? An attempt to answer this question is what I want to talk about. Despite the nominal constraining effects of institutional rules and arrangements, they may be altered by *imagination* and by *transgression*. The consequence: constraints need not constrain, ties need not bind. This is what I hope to convince my audience of.

DATE: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12, 2017

TIME: 5:00—6:00 PM

VENUE: INDIANA MEMORIAL UNION, STATE ROOM EAST
(Reception to follow in State Room West)

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