

Populist Antiheroes

from B.J. Palmer to Donald Trump

In *The Religion of Chiropractic* and other projects, Holly Folk has explored the intersection of alternative medicine and American populism. Folk argues the ideological dimensions of alternative medicine foster an elective affinity with populist social movements that has affected not only public health, but also American politics and culture. In this presentation, Folk considers how the anti-establishment sentiments of the chiropractic profession were embodied in the persona of Joshua Bartlett Palmer, one of the most powerful creators of the chiropractic subculture and leader of Palmer School of Chiropractic in Davenport, Iowa for more than 50 years. A successful entrepreneur in radio and television, B. J. cultivated a public image that challenged conventional aesthetics and morals with the promotion of an alternative model of success that resisted and superseded social norms. B. J.'s challenge to middle-class values of "respectability" makes him a useful comparison to other populist icons, such as Donald Trump, a contemporary master of the "politics of radical rudeness."

February 26

4:00 PM

White Hall 206



Sponsored by the
Department of Religion
and the **Center for the
Study of Human Health**
at **Emory University**

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Department of Religion