Professor Sigrid Luhr, University of Illinois at Chicago, presents:

“Engineering Inequality: Informal Coaching, Glass Walls, and Social Closure in Silicon Valley”

Description: Despite the rise of women’s labor force participation over the last 60 years, the technology industry remains highly segregated by gender. Engineers often think of their work as purely technical. Yet this study highlights the importance of social relationships for career advancement. Drawing on interviews with tech workers, it finds that men without relevant STEM degrees are informally coached to learn technical skills from their coworkers and transition from non-technical to technical roles. Women, however, are excluded from these coaching opportunities and steered out of technical roles, effectively barring them from some of the most lucrative positions in the industry. At the same time, many women – and particularly women of color – are tasked with uncompensated diversity work within their companies, which they do in addition to their paid work. Together, these findings trace the unequal career trajectories of men and women and highlight social closure mechanisms that reproduce gender inequality in the tech industry.

Sigrid Luhr is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research is broadly concerned with the intersections between gender, work, and family. She is currently working on projects that examine inequality across various sectors of the economy, from the low-wage service industry to the high-wage tech industry.

Thursday
October 6, 2022
12:30-2:00pm

Parkes 222
1870 Sheridan Road
Evanston, IL 60208

For Zoom info please contact:
sociol@northwestern.edu