

Professor Swethaa Ballakrishnen, University of California, Irvine

BLASÉ

Genderqueerness, Ambiguous Legalities, and Interactional Ambivalence



Description: Blasé explores a recurring thematic finding across research projects of feigned indifference or dismissal – what I term blasé – in response to identity assertions of genderqueer persons in the United States. Drawing from everyday experiences of this growing demographic, I deliberate on a larger question about the work of law in society: when identity categories are not yet legally– (and sometimes, not fully socially) recognized, how do they impact the experience of everyday equality? What, the project asks, can we do by observing the “moment before” a right is calcified in social and legal consciousness, and how can it inform the production of our implicit and explicit biases?

Swethaa Ballakrishnen (they/them) is the Associate Dean for Faculty Research and Development and a Professor of Law at the University of California, Irvine. They also hold courtesy appointments as Professor of Sociology, Asian American Studies, and Criminology, Law, and Society at UCI and are the 2025-26 William H. Neukom Fellows Research Chair in Diversity and Law at the American Bar Foundation. Primarily trained within a sociolegal praxis, Ballakrishnen writes and teaches about law's connection to actors, institutions, and relationships at the periphery, broadly defined. Their multi-award winning first book, *Accidental Feminism* (Princeton University Press, 2021), unpacks the case of unintentional gender parity among India's elite legal professionals. They are currently working on two book manuscripts—one, *Blasé*, on genderqueer legalities, and the other on decolonial queer prefiguration.

Thursday
November 20, 2025
12:30-1:50pm

Parkes 222
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**For Zoom info
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