



Eadweard Muybridge, *Striking a blow with the left hand*, 1885. Collotype print. *Animal Locomotion*, plate 343, 1887, Boston Public Library.

## ***Boxing in the Frame: Eadweard Muybridge and the Force of Blackness***

Jordana Moore Saggese (University of Maryland, College Park)

### ABSTRACT

This lecture—drawn on material from Saggese's forthcoming book, *Game On: Boxing, Race, and Black Masculinity*—will look closely at the photographs taken by Eadweard Muybridge of the mixed-race boxer Ben Bailey in 1885 as a historically situated racial project wherein the social categorization of Blacks played out. Saggese argues that these pictures of Bailey must be read within the larger context of nineteenth-century photography, in which the bourgeois classes were excessively preoccupied with the classification of difference and looked to the medium, with its strong associations of “truth,” for evidence to support a general drive to regulate, even criminalize, the presence of an unwanted underclass in the new urban environment. Of particular interest is the introduction of the anthropometric grid in these photographs, which uniquely pathologizes Bailey. Saggese will further explore the ways in which these photographs were instrumental in giving visual form to these fantasies (and fears) about Black bodies in the public sphere, looking both to fine art and vernacular photography for comparative treatments of the Black body as both a scientific and an aesthetic object.

Thursday, January 27, 2022  
4:00 - 5:30 pm (PST) | via Zoom

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