

THE UB HUMANITIES INSTITUTE SCIENCE IN SOCIETY WORKSHOP AND THE
UB RENEW INSTITUTE PRESENT:

Air Pollution, Measurement, and Democracy



Peter Ore

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of Sociology and
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By the 1950s, Great Britain and the United States hosted the most sophisticated air pollution monitoring networks in the world, and had begun exporting their methods to Europe, India, Japan, and Latin America. In this talk I will discuss the formal development of these networks, in particular how the US Clean Air Acts of the 1950s and 1960s combined principles from both sides of the Atlantic, yielding both durability and high technical standards in what eventually became the US EPA's Air Quality System. This monitoring system is one of the foundations of today's response to climate change. With all its flaws, I argue that it harbors the potential for a more robust, democratic form of atmospheric governance.

About the Speaker: Peter Ore studies how knowledge is made useful — or not. Substantially, he is concerned with the history of environmental bureaucracy, examining two major cases of public knowledge in the 20th century United States, the Federal air pollution control technocracy and the development of sociology itself. His book *The Tragedy of Control: Air Pollution and the American State, 1910-1970*, which deals the origins of air pollution control, is under advance contract in the *Middle Range* series with Columbia University Press. Moreover, with his students at the Queens Data Lab, Dr. Ore helps local public organizations make sense of their work.

DATE: Thursday October 22, 2026

TIME: 2-3:30 p.m.

LOCATION: 474 Park Hall, UB North Campus

For more information, visit <https://humanitiesinstitute.buffalo.edu/>, or contact Dr. Jordan Fox at jfox22@buffalo.edu

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