



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Utopia Modern: Palm Springs in the American Imaginary

School of Social and Political Sciences

Public Event

Event title

Professor Niko Besnier, University of Amsterdam

How to understand utopia when different groups conceptualize it in different ways? This is the fundamental question of Niko Besnier's ongoing fieldwork in the city of Palm Springs in the California desert, originally the land of the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, which at the end of the 19th century was invaded by white settlers in search of the healing powers of the desert climate. It later became the playground for Hollywood stars, suddenly affluent post-war middle-classes, gays and lesbians looking for an oasis of tolerance, and the homeless, all driven by utopic quests lined with dystopic realities. At the end of the millennium, it was claimed again by the Indian tribe, who established ultra-capitalist casinos. The heterogeneity of the utopic projects leads us to a rethinking of the meaning of the dialectic of utopia and dystopia in the 21st century.

Niko Besnier is Professor of Cultural Anthropology at the University of Amsterdam and Honorary Research Fellow, Department of Social Inquiry, La Trobe University. In 2012–17, he directed a European Research Council-funded project titled “Globalisation, Sport, and the Precarity of Masculinity” and in 2015–19, he was editor-in-chief of *American Ethnologist*. His most recent books are *Gender on the Edge: Transgender, Gay, and Other Pacific Islanders* (2014, co-edited with Kalissa Alexeyeff); *The Anthropology of Sport: Bodies, Border, Biopolitics* (2018, co-authored, translated into French, Spanish, and Japanese); and *Sport, Migration, and Gender in the Neoliberal Age* (2021, co-edited).



Event Details

Date:

Wednesday, 14th October

Time:

4.30pm - 6.00pm

Venue:

Online Event

Enquiries:

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Bookings:

Bookings are free, but required at link:

https://unimelb.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_25CS30cuQu6mU1NOuwELkrQ