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3:00-4:00PM

**Sociology Commons
SSCI #1061**

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UNM DEPT OF SOCIOLOGY AND
CRIMINOLOGY

"IDEOLOGY AND INFLUENCE: FRIENDSHIP NETWORKS AND BELIEF CHANGE IN A DIVIDED WORLD"

ABSTRACT:

This talk outlines and tests a model of belief change that hinges on both social factors (e.g., peer influence) and cognitive factors (e.g., ideological consistency). The model is tested using the salient case of first-year divinity students during a period of high-profile schisms over the morality of same-sex marriages and ordaining gay clergy. Results from longitudinal analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data support the model. Although students feel personally conflicted when their beliefs about God, the Bible, and sexuality are inconsistent with a liberal-conservative schema, these uncomfortable feelings alone are insufficient to drive belief change. Rather, belief change is driven by interpersonal influences that act as a catalyst for individuals resolving belief inconsistencies, leading individuals who are more embedded within the peer network to achieve greater ideological consistency. These results help make sense of broader patterns of belief change and stability throughout the life course, and the particular importance of peer influence in shaping these patterns.