

The study of norms and deviance is central to the intellectual genealogy of queer studies. While social science scholars have recognized commonalities between the sociological study of deviance and contemporary queer studies, queer humanities scholars have been slow to do so. A significant aspect of what Gayle Rubin has described as the “obscured” history of the field, research on deviance and social problems in the social sciences shaped queer studies’ commitment to subcultures, to non-normativity, and to a constructionist view of sexuality. However, early queer theorists transformed the study of deviance by turning non-conforming behavior from an object of study to a political program. This collapse of the position of the scholar and the social deviant produced transformations in the ethos and style of scholarship, and yet it did not profoundly change the material conditions or the power relations between professional academics and the marginal subjects they study. While queer studies has understood itself alternately as interdisciplinary and as anti-disciplinary, it has failed to grapple with methods of description and objectification that would allow for a fuller apprehension of social worlds and of the position of the researchers who study them. Through this return to the history of post-war sociology, Love argues the account of deviance as part of the social world rather than a departure from it offers an important model for queer scholarship and for the apprehension of the queer ordinary.

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The English verb ‘to err’ has largely lost its positive connotations. It no longer invokes wandering, rambling, or roaming, and is now understood negatively in relation to a prescribed path or goal. To be sure, errors are acknowledged to play an important role in the pursuit of knowledge and happiness, but usually only to the extent that their recognition allows for their elimination, correction, and avoidance. Recognizing that a critique of ideals of productivity, success, goal-orientation, and determination is necessarily paradoxical, the **ICI Lecture Series ERRANS** will take the shifting meanings of ‘erring’ – connoting the violation of norms as well as the activity of wandering – as a prompt to explore the critical potentials and risks of embracing error, randomness, failure, and non-teleological temporalities, and to do so across different disciplines and discourses.



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**Norms, Deviance,
and the Queer Ordinary?**