



COMMONWEALTH HONORS COLLEGE

University of Massachusetts Amherst

NEWS RELEASE

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UMass Amherst Professor Addresses How Individual Action Leads to Social Change in Upcoming Lecture

AMHERST, Mass. – M.V. Lee Badgett, professor of economics and director of the Center for Public Policy and Administration, presents the next Commonwealth Honors College Faculty Lecture Series with her talk "Coming Out for Change" on Thursday, March 15, at 6:30 p.m. in the Campus Center Auditorium at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Badgett's talk seeks to answer the question 'how does individual action turn into social change?' The progress made so far by lesbian, gay, and bisexual people over the last century—from jails and hospitals to the halls of power—shows a clear link between social gains and the decisions by individuals to come out as LGB or as heterosexual allies.

Margaret Mead's famous quote "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has" puts the power to make social change in the hands of individuals, but the way forward is not always clear, says Badgett. Badgett's talk shows how the advancement of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people's rights in the United States is rooted in individuals' decisions to take action, whether as LGB people or as heterosexual allies. She will draw on research in public policy, economics, psychology, history, and sociology to show how transformative individual decisions contributed to the policy victories of today.

LGB people have laid the groundwork for an influential social movement. Sometimes at great personal risk, LGB people who wanted to live lives of authenticity began disclosing their sexual orientation to family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers and politicians. Those actions contributed to attitude change and to winning formal equality in some parts of the United States. Along the way, family members and allies of LGB people have also had to develop their own "coming out" strategies. Badgett's talk includes a discussion about how these actions have changed our culture and have opened up opportunities and strategies for other less obvious minority groups in the U.S.

Badgett's most recent book, *When Gay People Get Married: What Happens When Societies Legalize Same-Sex Marriage* (NYU Press, 2009), focuses on the U.S. and European experiences with marriage equality for same-sex couples. Her first book, *Money, Myths, and Change: The Economic Lives of Lesbians and Gay Men* (University of Chicago Press, 2001), presented her groundbreaking work debunking the myth of gay affluence. She is also the author or co-author of numerous journal articles and policy reports. Badgett has testified on her research before Congress and many state legislatures, and she was an expert witness in California's Prop 8 trial. In 2009, Badgett delivered a Distinguished Faculty Lecture at UMass and received the Chancellor's Medal (the highest honor bestowed on individuals for

A community of scholars

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exemplary and extraordinary service to the campus). She also received the College Outstanding Teacher Award from the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences in 2000-2001.

Commonwealth Honors College introduced its Faculty Lecture Series during the spring 2011 semester in recognition of university faculty who have made significant contributions to research or creative activity. Many of the talks in the faculty lecture series relate to themes in "Ideas that Changed the World," the Honors Seminar in which honors students examine books and other works that have profoundly shaped the world we live in. The texts in this class and the related faculty lectures are meant to be exemplary for students who have the potential themselves to achieve outstanding things.

This talk is supported by the Kathryn and Paul Williamson Lecture Series Fund. The Williamsons, both UMass Amherst alumni, provided these funds to support speakers who can broaden the perspectives of current honors students through public lectures and other interactions.

This semester's series concludes with Raymond Bradley, Distinguished University Professor, Geosciences presenting "Our Planet, Under Pressure: Current Status and Future Prospects" on April 4 at 6:30 p.m. in the Student Union Ballroom.

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