

## "*Magic's Reason: An Anthropology of Analogy*"

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Thursday, May 10th 3:30-5:00  
SBSG 3323

Focusing on formative moments in the history of both stage magic and anthropology as Euro-American cultural traditions, this talk describes a representational feedback loop linking the entertainment industry and anthropological scholarship in parallel efforts to define primitive magic. I examine how ethnographers have mobilized analogies with Western stage magic, a genre of entertainment synonymous with self-avowed trickery, to frame religious rituals as epistemological problems. Arguing that magic is just one example of the way that cross-cultural analogies shape ethnographic knowledge, I explore a range of analogical manoeuvres that continue to shape the anthropology of magic, such as dis-analogy, counter-analogy, and meta-analogy. In paralleling magical and anthropological enchantments, I develop view of modernity itself as an artifact of analogy, viewed from the comparative vantage of two professions claiming the expert ability to mediate some of its operative binaries—especially the opposition between magical and rational thought.



*Graham M. Jones is a cultural and linguistic anthropologist who explores how people use language and other media to enact expertise in practice, performance, and interaction. An Associate Professor of Anthropology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he teaches classes on a range of subjects, including: magic, science, and religion; education; play and games; communications technologies; and ethnographic methods. Jones's two monographs constitute a diptych: Trade of the Tricks (California, 2011) describes day-to-day life and everyday talk within the insular subculture of contemporary French illusionists; Magic's Reason (Chicago, 2017) examines the meaning of magic in Western modernity, shuttling between the intellectual history of anthropology and the cultural history of popular entertainment.*