Qualities of Mercy:
Disability, Dignity, and Debate on the American Small Screen, 1956-1964

January 15, 2014 • 4:00-6:00pm • Sierra Room at the Faculty Center

This talk will place the recent spate of representations of disabled children and their parents in U.S. popular culture in the historical context of earlier examples between 1956 and 1964. We will look both at classic television anthology dramas and at slightly later courtroom and medicine episode dramas. We will focus on two prolific dramatists in early television, both fathers of disabled children, who quietly sought to reshape the meanings of American disability and American dignity.

Susan Schweik is a professor of English, Associate Dean of Arts and Humanities, and co-director of Disability Studies programs at UC Berkeley. She is author of The Ugly Laws (NYU Press 2009) and is at work on current projects on Agent Orange representation and on American eugenic history.