Diabetes and the Politics of Migration

The Great Migration has generated a groundswell of scholarship in the past forty-years. From resilient stories of survival in harsh rural and urban landscapes to the art work of Jacob Lawrence, the Great Migration occupies a prominent place in both US southern, urban, and Black thought. My talk moves the discussion of migration politics into the realm of chronic disease, sickness, and public health. Among the varied and multi-factorial reasons that Black people left the rural South was the opportunity to access health resources. At the same time, the Great Migration was often racialized in narratives of "fitness" for urban spaces that attempted to pathologize Black migrants from rural and southern spaces. Focusing on diabetes, chronic disease, and the politics of health in the South, this talk helps to reshape current trends in US Southern and Great Migration scholarship.