Immigration law's focus is nation-state sovereignty and the ability of the state to exclude or deport aliens, who are understood to move spatially to the nation state, seeking entry or admittance. But this vision of immigration law fails to recognize settler colonialism, and, in particular, its grounding on preexisting indigenous populations' territory. This talk seeks to examine the reasons for this omission, as well as its consequences. Immigration scholarship tends to presume not only that borders are spatially fixed, but that they are fixed over time, so that states have always existed within their current territorial borders. The focus of inquiry then becomes the lawfulness of the already existing’s state’s deployment of sovereignty to keep out or expel noncitizens. Forgotten is how states came to be. This talk will examine the political theory underpinning immigration law, political theory that imagines a social contract quite different from what has been termed a “settler contract.” The consequences of this settler contract for indigenous populations, including their transformation into aliens, will be discussed.


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For more information, please see http://revolutionizingamericanstudies.commons.gc.cuny.edu/ and http://globalization.gc.cuny.edu/leti-volpp-indigenous-as-alien/.