What is the economy? How do people both understand and experience it? In this lecture I consider what answers to these questions emerge in Greece during a period popularly described as an “economic crisis.” The account that I offer describes an economy crucially constituted by its relationship to the future. Drawing on ethnographic study of real estate investment and insurance in the form of retirement pensions, I examine the prominence of economic practices, tools, and discourses as means of thinking about and acting on the future. In doing so, I analyze what it means for the economy to be a key framework for addressing the future, and how this relationship to the future shapes understandings and experiences of the economy itself. Ultimately, in considering how to think about what the economy is, I propose an approach attentive to the fundamental ways in which the economy figures the future as an object of knowledge, activity, and anxiety in the present.

Soo-Young Kim draws on diverse approaches to economics, epistemology, and the everyday in order to examine the interplay between the economy and the future. She is working on a book about how the future is thought about and acted upon through the framework of the economy and developing projects on the social life of economic statistics and on education and debt. She received a B.A. in Classics from Harvard College, M.A. in Anthropology from the New School for Social Research, and Ph.D. in Anthropology from Columbia University. Her research has been supported by fellowships from Mellon/ACLS, the Council for European Studies, the Wenner-Gren Foundation, the Onassis Foundation, and Fulbright. In 2017-2018, she was a Consortium for Faculty Diversity Postdoctoral Fellow at Whitman College, where she taught courses in economic anthropology, nation making and nationalism in Greece, and the anthropology of the future.

Wednesday, December 12, 2018
4:30 p.m.
Scheide Caldwell House, Room 103

Supported by The Christos G. and Rhoda Papaioannou Modern Greek Studies Fund