

The Department of French and Italian presents

***Becoming Lesbian* in Modern France: Queer History for Troubled Times**

a lecture by

Dr. Tamara Chaplin

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European History and Lynn
M. Martin Professorial
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at Urbana-Champaign /
Université de Paris
Panthéon-Assas



**Friday, April 10th
4:00 pm
Kresge 1-515**

Historian Tamara Chaplin has spent the last fifteen years researching what it meant to “become lesbian” in twentieth century France. Her book, *Becoming Lesbian: A Queer History of Modern France* (University of Chicago Press, 2024) argues that this process was inextricable from access to public space and public media. Contradicting the belief that WWII and the rise of Vichy quashed a golden age of lesbian emancipation in France, *Becoming Lesbian* reveals instead how the subcultural spaces of sapphic desire that emerged in the cabarets of interwar Paris outlasted the war and were instrumental to the politicization of lesbian identity in the decades after May '68. The individuals implicated in this trajectory revolutionized lesbian life (expanding social access, cultural representation, and legal rights) while making possible new forms of sexual citizenship that have challenged the divisions between public and private that shape contemporary France. In so doing, their stories also contradict dominant understandings of the French past. At a moment when queer lives around the globe are increasingly under attack, join us for a conversation about what we can learn from lesbian history in these troubled times.