Sacred Landscape, Secular Law: Storying Spirituality on American Public Lands

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Nicolas Howe will discuss the idea of spirituality and how it has shaped public discourse about sacred space in modern America. Focusing on legal conflicts over sacred sites and iconic wilderness areas, he will show how dominant stories about the nature of ‘spiritual experience’ have enabled courts to routinely deny land claims that threaten secular assumptions about the material agency of place—assumptions paradoxically rooted in the country’s still-dominant Protestant religious imaginary.

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