The Department of English & Cultural Studies and The Institute on Globalization and the Human Condition present:

Mimi Thi Nguyen
“The Hoodie As Sign, Screen, Expectation and Force”

In the aftermath of Floridian teenager Trayvon Martin's murder by vigilante George Zimmerman in 2012, the hoodie became a material witness. Constellating for us historical-racial schema, troubling and tangling representations and references to race, as a detail the hoodie may appear to some to be a distraction, but it is as a detail that it might nonetheless capture time and movement, or the span and breadth of a life. How and to what does the hoodie draw our attention—away from or toward the fact of blackness? To answer this question, I argue that it appears as both a devastating detail and distraction. Because the hoodie is both overfull and empty, because it is the detail that is only filled in specific, contingent, and changing situations, the hoodie does not hide a history of racial violence, but might instead focus our attention upon those lethal structures that fold some human beings into thinghood, and some things into agents of danger.

When: January 16, 2014
Where: Institute for Applied Health Sciences (IAHS) 201
Time: 1-2:30pm

Mimi Thi Nguyen is Associate Professor of Gender and Women’s Studies and Asian American Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her first book, called The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages, focuses on the promise of “giving” freedom concurrent and contingent with waging war and its afterlife (Duke University Press, 2012).