Democratic Deliberation and Engineering Reform

Dean Nieusma
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

This presentation explores the work of two communities explicitly interested in engineering reforms centered on questions of justice. The first is a group of Sri Lankan renewable energy experts working toward social and environmental justice in the context of development decision making. The second is small group of academics—including the presenter—collaborating under the banner, Engineering, Social Justice, and Peace. The talk will describe selected activities carried out by each group, highlighting the creation and maintenance of new spaces of deliberation. Drawing broadly on democratic theory, the talk will reflect on strategies of inclusion and, importantly, exclusion that are intended to enable perspectives typically marginalized within engineering discourse to be elaborated and systematically explored.

Dean Nieusma is Assistant Professor in STS and Director of the Programs in Design and Innovation at RPI. His research investigates contemporary engineering reform initiatives, with special attention to engineers’ efforts to integrate social analysis, social responsibility, and sustainability in technical work. Dr. Nieusma received his PhD in STS from RPI and bachelor’s degrees in mechanical engineering and general studies from the University of Michigan.

Friday, Feb. 24  2:30 – 4:00  655 McBryde Hall