What is contained in a photograph is at the heart of considering “Lynching as Leisure.”
As an ongoing analysis that was initiated in 2002 of past lynching photography, news accounts on lynchings, archival documents defending and condemning lynchings, and modern-day lynching effigies and symbolism utilizes a visual methodological perspective. The talk engages a discussion of the American fascination with the practice, specifically those that were/are racially motivated. Just the sheer number of Black lynching victims within the 30-year period of 1880-1930, in particular, raises questions that moves us past discussions of the debase extrajudicial criminality and historical accounting but the sociological implications when we begin to consider those who chose to be a lynching event spectator, collector of post-cards, and scavenger of bodily remains. Thus, modern concerns of the discovery of lynching post-cards found at garage sales, victims of apparent lynchings that have been found since the 1980s, and the use of lynching imagery in effigy and as a rhetorical term in political discourse should give us pause in 2014.