



**CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF LAW AND SOCIETY**  
**BERKELEY LAW**

**CSLS SPEAKER SERIES**  
**Monday, September 16, 2019**

**SAM ERMAN**

Professor of Law, University of Southern California Gould School of Law

***Almost Citizens:  
Puerto Rico, the U.S. Constitution, and Empire***  
(Cambridge University Press, 2018)

*Almost Citizens* lays out the tragic story of how the United States denied Puerto Ricans full citizenship following annexation of the island in 1898. As America became an overseas empire, a handful of remarkable Puerto Ricans debated with U.S. legislators, presidents, judges, and others over who was a citizen and what citizenship meant. This struggle caused a fundamental shift in constitutional jurisprudence: away from the post-Civil War regime of citizenship, rights, and statehood and toward doctrines that accommodated racist imperial governance. Erman's gripping account shows how, in the wake of the Spanish-American War, administrators, lawmakers, and presidents, together with judges, deployed creativity and ambiguity to transform constitutional law and interpretation over a quarter century of debate and litigation. The result is a history in which the United States and Latin America, Reconstruction and empire, and law and bureaucracy intertwine.

**The Intro and Chapter 4 of *Almost Citizens* is available online and in hard copy at the Center.**

**PLACE**  
**TIME**  
**INFO**  
**EMAIL**

Selznick Seminar Room, 2240 Piedmont Avenue  
**12:45 – 2:00pm.** Coffee and water provided. Bag lunches welcome.  
<https://www.law.berkeley.edu/centers/center-for-the-study-of-law-society/>  
[csls@law.berkeley.edu](mailto:csls@law.berkeley.edu)

**Catherine Albiston, FACULTY DIRECTOR**