

Welcome to the **Fall 2016 Speaker Series** of the  
**Indian Ocean World Centre**

Speaker: **Peter Hynd**  
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5:45 pm Arts Building Room 230

\*\*\*Reception to follow\*\*\*

***Before the War on Drugs: Cannabis and the State in  
Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century India***

In South Asia the use of cannabis for medical, spiritual, and recreational purposes can be traced back thousands of years. During the middle decades of the twentieth century cannabis use, with the exception of a small number of traditional preparations, was criminalized throughout India, and largely remained illegal. Prior to this period of prohibition, however, cannabis was harnessed by the state as a source of tax revenue. Beginning in the final decades of the nineteenth century, the colonial government of British India made considerable efforts to regulate and tax the production and sale of cannabis drugs. Despite serious concerns over the effects of cannabis use – real and imagined – colonial administrators determined that it was neither within their power, nor in their interest, to challenge traditional cannabis consumption habits. What can this period of legal, but regulated and taxed, cannabis tell us about late nineteenth and early twentieth century India? And how can this same history inform our own present day debates over the criminalization and decriminalization of cannabis?

