



## Massachusetts Institute of Technology

**Building E51  
Room 095**

**Corner of Amherst and Wadsworth Street  
Cambridge, MA**

**FRIDAY**

**October 11, 2019**

**2:30 – 4:30 PM**

## **THE GREAT CHERNOBYL ACCELERATION**

**KATE BROWN**  
PROFESSOR, MIT

In April 1986, the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant exploded and sent upwards of 50 million curies into the surrounding environment. Working through archives, Brown encountered many contradictory accounts of the disaster and its effects. Realizing that though people and archives lie, trees probably don't, she turned to scientists—biologists, foresters, physicians and physicists—to help her understand the ecology of the greater Chernobyl territories and the health effects that ensued. She learned working in the swampy territory around the blown plant that radioactive contaminants saturated local eco-systems long before the Chernobyl accident and continued long after the 1986 event. Brown argues that to call Chernobyl an “accident” is to sweep aside the continuum of radiation exposure that saturated environments in the northern hemisphere in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Instead of a one-off accident, Brown argues that Chernobyl was a point of acceleration on a timeline of radioactive contamination that continues to this day.