

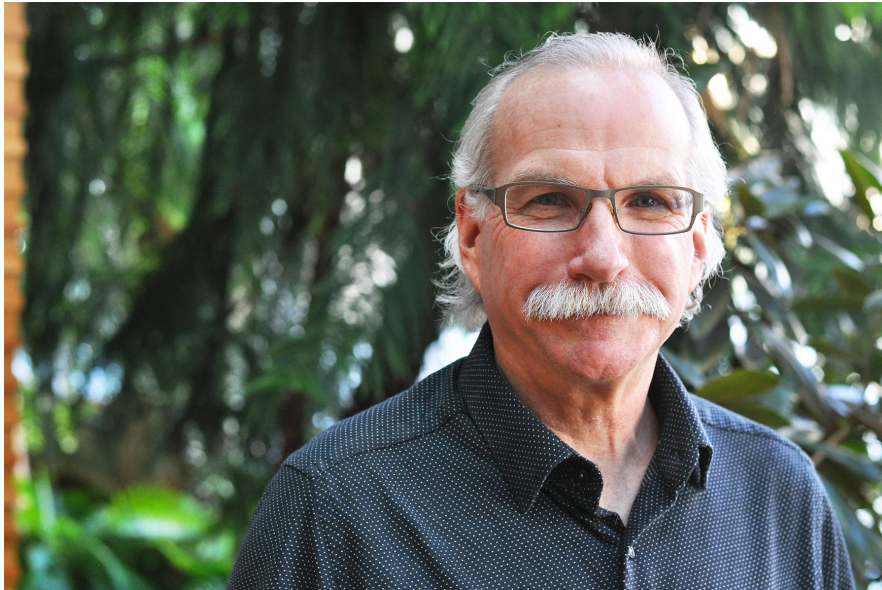
**The Department of History at the University of Akron presents the combined 2022
George W. Knepper and Sally A. Miller Humanities Lecture**

Sponsored by the George W. Knepper Lecture Series and the Sally A. Miller Humanities Center

**Empire of Rubber:
Scenes from Firestone's Scramble for Land and Power in Liberia**

Dr. Gregg Mitman

Vilas Research and William Coleman Professor of History, Medical History, and Environmental
Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison



In the early 1920s, Americans owned 80 percent of the world's automobiles and consumed 75 percent of the world's rubber. But only one percent of the world's rubber grew under the U.S. flag, creating a bottleneck that hampered the nation's explosive economic expansion. To solve its conundrum, the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company turned to a tiny West African nation, Liberia, founded in 1847 as a free Black republic.

Empire of Rubber tells a riveting story of ecology and disease, of commerce and science, and of racial politics and political maneuvering, as Firestone sought to transform Liberia into America's rubber empire. Drawing upon excerpts from his recently published book, Mitman's talk explores the tensions between the interests of white capital and the desire for Black self-determination that locked Firestone, the United States government, and Liberia in an uncomfortable embrace for more than half a century.

**March 31st, 2022, 5:30pm - 7:00pm
Simmons Hall Auditorium**

Free and Open to the Public