Biography

Nelson holds a Ph.D. in American Studies from New York University. She has held faculty positions at Yale University and Columbia University. She has been a visiting scholar at the London School of Economics, the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin, the International Center for Advanced Studies at New York University, and the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University. She has received fellowships from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the National Science Foundation. Nelson is presently Chair of the American Sociological Association’s Section on Science, Knowledge, and Technology. She is an elected Fellow of the American Academy of Political and Social Science and of the Hastings Center, and an elected Member of the Sociological Research Association.

Abstract
Direct-to-consumer genetic testing was supposed to augur the ultimate threshold of the quantified self: one’s personal (and personal family) information, for your eyes only, derived through a private consumer transaction. However, it has always been the case that genetic data can be exploited in many domains, regardless of its original provenance and intended use. This has been born out more recently in the use of direct-to-consumer genetic ancestry testing in the domains of the criminal justice and healthcare systems. In exploring the transitive quality of DNA, this talk will suggest some of the social, political and regulatory issues raised by the circulation of genetic data.