Since its inception in 537 CE, the Hagia Sophia has stood as the manifestation of state power. Built as a church by the Byzantine emperor Justinian, it became a mosque after the Ottoman conquest in 1453, and then a state museum in 1935 along with the secularist projects of the Turkish Republic. In recent years with the rise of religious nationalism in Turkey, the status of Hagia Sophia is again an open question.

Prof. Bigelow will exam how transitions of this global monument reveal intense efforts made by centuries of politicians, rulers, terrorists, nationalists, religious believers, and expatriates to control how people interpret and experience the building.

Sponsored by the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, NC State University