In this talk, Dr. MacKendrick will examine how individuals attempt to manage their exposure to environmental toxins in foods and consumer products through the purchase of organic, ‘natural’, and ‘non-toxic’ commodities. Drawing from data collected in focus groups and interviews, she show how participants describe feeling contaminated when engaging in normal, everyday activities, like eating, applying cosmetics and breathing indoor air. Many attempt to build a boundary between the body and toxins that is contingent on their agency as a consumer. This talk contributes to our understanding of the “exposure experience” by revealing the contradictory ways that bodies are envisioned within environments, as both vulnerable to toxic trespass and impermeable through the application of individual-level forms of precaution.

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