Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution provides that, to promote progress in science and the useful arts, a monopoly to protect inventions and innovations can be extended for a limited time. This clause has given birth to the many protections over intangible ideas, expressions, inventions, and creative works we know as intellectual property. The original intent of the constitutional language was to provide those who invent things with protection for their ideas in exchange for the communication of their ideas to the larger public. The underlying balance in all intellectual property law is between the private owner and the public that will ultimately benefit from these goods. It is safe to say that the 21st century application of patent principles has moved far from the original balance sought by the framers of the U.S. Constitution. Patent law in the U.S. has expanded dramatically in what can be protected and is most often used as an anti-competitive club wielded by those with the largest patent portfolios against those who seek to innovate in the field. Additionally, it is now the case that entire companies exist merely to sue for patent infringement without producing any products at all. In other words, patent law needs to be fixed and brought back into line with its original intent -- to balance the needs of inventors with the needs of society as a whole. This talk will discuss the current problems in the field of patents from patent trolls to the types of things we can patent and then discuss what provisions we might consider to ensure that patents benefit humanity instead of become a tool of exploitation.

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Refreshments will be served following the lecture