The Tanner Humanities Center is proud to present the Spring 2013 Work-in-Progress Lecture Series

What is a Secret?

| A Work-in-Progress Talk with Matthew Potolsky, Department of English | Tuesday, January 22 | 12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. 
| The Jewel Box | CTIHB Room 143 | Lunch will be provided! |

It is a contemporary ethical and political commonplace that secrecy in government, business, and personal life is inevitably suspicious. We only hide, it is assumed, information that would be embarrassing, illegal, immoral, or otherwise compromising were it to be revealed. This commonplace is so pervasive that it can inform such radically different cultural products as the website Wikileaks and the therapeutic culture of television talk shows. But while the ethos of transparency can be credited with making governments more democratic and corporations more responsible for their mistakes, it also oversimplifies the workings and multiple possibilities of secrecy. This paper will explore these workings historically and from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. It is my argument that secrecy is not one thing but many things, a shifting complex of theories, metaphors, beliefs, social practices, and archetypal narratives. Rather than being opposed, secrecy and transparency should be understood as part of a continuum that encompasses a range of secrecy practices, many of which we recognize as ethical, necessary, or unexceptional.