**Ethnicity and Identity Politics: An Anthropological Approach**
Fall 2010
Room TBA
Anthropology 4479/AAS 4790

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Office: McGraw 205
Office Hours: Tuesday 3:00-4:00 and Friday 1:30-3:00 (sign up sheets on my office door)
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*And now what will become of us without Barbarians?--*
*Those people were some sort of a solution.*

(C.P. Cavafy, "Waiting for the Barbarians")

*Course Overview:*

The most baffling aspect of ethnicity is that while ethnic sentiments and movements gain ground rapidly within the international arena, the claim that ethnicity does not exist in any objective sense is also receiving increasing credence within the academic community. How can something thought "not to exist" have such profound consequences in the real world? In lay understandings ethnicity is believed to be a "natural" disposition of humanity. If so, why does ethnicity mean different "things" in different places? Anthropology has much to contribute to a greater understanding of this perplexing phenomenon. After all, the defining criterion for ethnic groups is that of cultural distinctiveness. This course introduces students to some of the major theoretical approaches to ethnicity, primarily but not exclusively within anthropology. Through a careful reading of ethnographic case studies we will explore the relationship of ethnicity to culture, ethnicity to nation and ethnicity to state. We will also examine that relation between history and ethnicity, history conceptualized as methodology (as in a historical anthropological approach to ethnicity), as discipline (as in the complicity between the production of certain forms of knowledge and ethnic movements) and as sociohistorical process (the persistence and transformation of empirical contexts through time). The course also engages the more recent literature on the formation of identities at centers and margins within national and transnational contexts, and colonial and postcolonial contexts. An important line of inquiry will be to understand the tension created by exclusionary and inclusionary logics informing democratic and liberal formulations of identity politics.

*Course Requirements:*

1. For each class students will be expected to formulate two questions/comments related to that weeks reading (approx. 1page) to facilitate discussion. Students will be called upon randomly to express their views on the assigned topics for a particular week.
2. Oral presentation of final paper.
3. Final paper (20 pages) on a topic of your choice that addresses issues raised in class and in the readings. **Due: December 3.**

***"Each Student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work."***

*Required Texts:*
Agamben, Giorgio (2005) **State of Exception.** Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
Barth, Frederik (1969) **Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference**, Boston: Little Brown and Company.
Bartholomeusz, Tessa and Chandra De Silva (1998) **Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority Identities in Sri Lanka.** State University of New York Press.
Brown, Wendy (1995) **States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity.** Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Fanon, Frantz (1967) **Black Skin White Masks**.
Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger, eds., (1983) **The Invention of Tradition**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Lipsitz, George (1998) **The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit From Identity Politics,** Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
Lowe, Lisa (2007) **Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics**. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
Munasinghe, Viranjini (2001) **Callaloo or Tossed Salad? East Indians and the Cultural Politics of Identity in Trinidad,** Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
Povinelli, Elizabeth (2007) **The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism.** Durham: Duke University Press.
Trouillot, Michel-Rolph (1995) **Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History,** Boston: Beacon Press.

[The Books are available at the Campus Store. Articles are available on Blackboard]

***Course Calendar***

Aug. 30 *Introduction*

Sep. 6 No class (Labor Day)

***A Theoretical Overview***

Sep. 13 *Primordialism*

Geertz, Clifford (1973) "The Integrative Revolution" in **The Interpretation of Cultures**.
Isaacs, Harold (1974) "Basic Group Identity: The Idols of the Tribe." **Ethnicity** 1: 15-42. [This is also Chapter 1 of his book with the same title]
Shils, Edward (1957) "Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties." **British Journal of Sociology** 8: 130-145.
Weber, Max (1978) "Ethnic Groups" in **Economy and Society**, Vol. 1, pp.385-398.

Sep. 20 *Situationalism*

Leach, Edmund (1964) "Introduction: The Problem and its Setting" in **Political Systems of Highland Burma**, Boston, Beacon Press.
Barth, Frederik (1969) **Ethnic Groups and Boundaries** [Introduction and Chapters by Eidheim, Haaland, and Barth]

Sep. 27 *Social Classification of Difference and Inequality*

Simmel, Georg (1908) "The Stranger" in **On Individuality and Social Forms**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press,143-149.
Vincent, Joan (1974) "The Structuring of Ethnicity." **Human Organization** 33: 375-9.
Munasinghe, Viranjini (1997) "Culture Creators and Culture Bearers: The Interface Between Race and Ethnicity in Trinidad, in **Transforming Anthropology** Vol. 6 (1&2): 72-86.
Williams, Brackette (1989) "A Class Act: Anthropology and the Race to Nation Across Ethnic Terrain." **Annual Review of Anthropology** 18: 401-44.
Verdery, Kathryn (1994) "Ethnicity, Nationalism and the State: Ethnic Groups and Boundaries Past and Present" in **The Anthropology of Ethnicity**. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.
Drummond, Lee (1980) "The Cultural Continuum: A Theory of Intersystems." **Man** 15 (2): 352-374.

## ***Becoming Ethnic***

*Ethnicity vis-à-vis History; Culture; Nation; and State*

Oct. 4 Trouillot, Michel-Rolph (1995) **Silencing the Past** [Chapters 1 and 4]
Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger eds., (1983) **The Invention of Tradition** [Introduction and Chapters 2, and 7]
Handler, Richard (1985) "On Dialogue and Destructive Analysis: Problems In Narrating Nationalism and Ethnicity." **Journal of Anthropological Research** vol. 41 (2): 171-182.

Oct. 11 No Class (Fall Break)

Oct. 18 Munasinghe, Viranjini (2001) **Callaloo or Tossed Salad?**

Oct. 25 Comaroff, John and Jean (2009) **Ethnicity, INC.**

Nov. 1 Bartholomeusz Tessa and Chandra Desilva (1998) **Buddhist Fundamentalism and Minority identities in Sri lanka.**

***Postcolonial perspectives: Identities in Centers, Margins and Borderzones***

Nov. 8 Fanon, Frantz (1967) **Black Skin White Masks.**

Nov. 15 Simmel, Georg (1908) "The Stranger" in **On Individuality and Social Forms**. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 143-149. (revisit)
Agamben, Giorgio (2005), **State of Exception.**
Ahmed, Sara (2000) **Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality.** [Intro, 1-6]

Nov. 22 Lipsitz, George (1998) "Introduction" and "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness" in **The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit From Identity Politics.** Philadelphia: Temple University Press. (Introduction and Chapters 1,4,5 and 7]
Lowe, Lisa (1996) **Immigrant Acts** (Chapters 1, 2 and 3]

Nov. 29 Povinelli, Elizabeth (2002) **The Cunning of Recognition**
Brown, Wendy (1995) **States of Injury** (Introduction and Chapters 2 "Exposures and Hesitations" and 3 "Wounded Attachments")

**Dec. 3 Final Paper Due**