

Ethnographies of Complex Belongings

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Semester I, 2023
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Time: As part of the Visiting Professorship Program at the JU, the courses is time-blocked and runs through October 2023:

Mondays, 16:00-19:15, room 9,
Wednesdays, 16:00-19:15, room 9
Fridays, 16:00-19:15, room 9

ECTS: 10

Course Description: Ethnographies of Complex Belongings is a course in “deep reading”, involving theoretical, textual and empirical analyses. Through in-class discussions, it explores and sometimes explodes connections, overlaps and intersections among identity and identifications, ancestry and kinship, genes, race and belonging, place, multiculturalism and intersectionality, religion, the state and globalization as portrayed in 21st century ethnographic texts.

The readings, and the course, are in English. All readings are available online through Jagiellonian Library Digital Sources (https://bj.uj.edu.pl/en_GB/start-en)

Course Requirements: The course will be conducted as a seminar, a place to discuss assigned readings, raise questions, and conduct debates. Each student should arrive having read the assigned material and eager to explore it in all its complexity. Students will be evaluated by their class participation, including field trips (20%), their submission of 2 thought pieces throughout the semester (20% each = 40% for two), and an end-of-term final paper (40%).

Thought Pieces: See the syllabus for guiding questions that will structure your 2-3 page essays, double-spaced in hard copy. Each thought piece is due on the day that the assigned reading is to be discussed in class—NOT after!

Final Paper: 7-10 pages, double-spaced in hard copy. Please discuss your choice with the instructor.

Option 1: Take one or more aspect/s of belonging (e.g. blood, ancestry, history, territory, religion, race) and analyze it/them through a comparison of at least two of the course’s articles or books. Conclude with your ideas about the salience of that/those factors for belonging in the 21st century.

Option 2: Use ethnographic data from your thesis or dissertation research, or from a field trip and follow-up visits to write a first draft of (part of) your ethnography of complex belongings.

Due: TBA, to be arranged.

Option 3: Instead of a final paper submit 4 thought pieces throughout the course, for a total of 80% of the course grade.

Course Plan

I. 2 October

Introductions: Who are we and what do we want to learn in this course?

Ethnography/ethnographies: A discussion of these terms and an overview of the key ethnographic genres that anthropologists use to formulate, solidify and make public the results of their ethnographic research and anthropological theorizing.

Belongings: to what and to whom, and by whom? How do I know that I belong, that you belong, that we belong...or do not?

Key concepts: identity, self, ancestry, family, kinship, religion, ethnic group, history, local community, blood, genes, soil, citizenship; ascription, passing, gatekeepers.

An unexpected taste of complex belongings: Sapritsky-Nahum, Marina, 2022. "Putin's War and the Making of a Ukrainian Jewry"
<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionglobalsociety/2022/03/putins-war-and-the-making-of-a-ukrainian-jewry/>

II and III. 4 October

Thoughts on Belongings, Identity, Identification: Background

Reading: Brubaker, Rogers and Frederick Cooper, Beyond "Identity", *Theory and Society* 29: 1-47, 2001.

<https://eclass.aegean.gr/modules/document/file.php/SA200/Brubaker%20%26%20Cooper%202000.pdf> (also from JSTOR)

Key concepts: identities, identifications, borders, boundaries, hybridity, intersectionality, diasporas, nation-states, primordialism, constructivism; multiculturalism; idols of the tribe; invented traditions, spaces of belonging (spaces of encounter; spaces of conciliation).

Thought piece #1: How do YOU know who you are, and to which groups you belong, and do not belong? Is there any room for negotiation?

Anthony Cohen wrote in *Belonging*, "People recognize their culture as that which distinguishes them from others and thereby, as the source of their own identities. Secondly, that in conditions of frequent contact with other cultures the valuing of such distinctions is a condition of its survival. Thirdly, these are processes which occur due to the *everyday* experience of life..." (1982:6).

Zygmunt Bauman wrote in "Identities in the Globalizing World," "Boundaries are not drawn to fence off and protect already existing identities. As the great Norwegian anthropologist Frederik Barth explained, it is exactly the other way round: ostensibly shared, 'communal' identities are by-products of feverish boundary-drawing. It is only after the border-posts have been dug in that the myths of their antiquity are spun and the fresh, cultural/political origins of identity are carefully covered up by genesis stories. This stratagem attempts to belie the fact that (to quote Stuart Hall again) what the idea of identity does *not* signal is a 'stable core of the self, unfolding from the beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change" (2001: 129).

Additional References and a note

- Barth, Fredrik. 1969. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Boston: Little, Brown,
- Bauman, Zygmunt. 1996. "From Pilgrim to Tourist—or a Short History of Identity," in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds.), *Questions of cultural identity*, London: Sage, 1996.
- Bhaba, Homi. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Boudi, Liz. 1993. "Locating Identity Politics," in Michael Keith and Steve Pile (eds.) *Place and the Politics of Identity*. Pp 84-101. London: Routledge.
- Brubaker, Rogers, 2017. *Trans: Gender and Race in an Age of Unsettled Identities*. Princeton University Press.
- Cohen, Anthony. 1982. *Belonging: Identity and Social Organisation in British Rural Cultures*. Manchester University Press.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2015. Intersectionality's Definitional Dilemmas. *Annual Review of Sociology* 41:1–20
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams. 1991. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43 (6): 1241–1299.
- Dunn, Robert G. 1998. *Identity Crises*. University of Minneapolis Press,
- Erikson, Erik. 1968. *Identity, Youth and Crisis*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1968.
- Gilroy, Paul. 1997/2012. Diaspora and the Detours of Identity. In *Identity and Difference*. Kathryn Woodward, ed. 301-343. London: Sage.
- Hall, Stuart. 1996. 'Who needs "identity"?', in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds.), in *Questions of cultural identity*, London: Sage.
- Probyn, Elspeth. 1996/2015. *Outside Belongings*. Routledge.

Note: In the 1990s, "Identity politics" focusing on Race, Class, and Gender rose to prominence alongside notions of hybridity (see, esp. the work of Homi Bhaba). In the 21st century, these approaches have been expanded by the development of *intersectionality* as part of critical race and feminist theory.]

IV. 8 October

The Belongings and Un-Belongings of Greek Gypsies/Gypsies in Greece: Place, Nation, and Multiculturalism

Read: Theodosiou, Asoasia. 2011. Multiculturalism and the *catachresis* of multiculturalism: Settling Gypsies, Unsettling Gypsy belongings. *Critique of Anthropology* 39(2): 89-107.

Key concepts: Nation-state; multiculturalism, locality, performance, recognition and misrecognition.

(Video: "The Shutka book of records", Youtube.)

Thought piece #2: Is Gypsy identity inherently connected to a perpetual out-of-placeness, or nomadology? What has happened in Greece, where Gypsies have settled and developed belongings to tangible places, including the physical and social environment? (And how does the village of Shutka in Makedonia feed into or contradict this feeling of belonging to a place in a nationstate?) What does Theodosiou's ethnography (and the Shutka film) reveal about the performative and affective dimensions of group (mis-)recognition when both national homogeneity and multiculturalism are stated cultural values?

V. 11 October

The Lemba and their belongings to the Jewish, Black, and African peoples

Read: Tamarkin, Noah. 2014. Genetic Diaspora: Producing Knowledge of Genes and Jews in Rural South Africa, *Cultural Anthropology* 29 (3): 552-574. <https://doi.org/10.14506/ca29.3.06>

For more: See Tamarkin's book-length ethnography, *Genetic Afterlives: Black Jewish Indigeneity in South Africa* (2020).

Key concepts: Blackness, Africanness, Jewishness; DNA, essentialism, the author's place in his study

Thought piece #3: Tamarkin writes of a genetic "diaspora". Do you agree that this is the best way to conceptualize Lemba ideas of belonging to the Jewish people? If so, substantiate your ideas through references to the text and other sources with which you are familiar. If not, select another trope (blackness, Africanness, local place) that you think works better to conceptualize Lemba multiple belongings, and demonstrate why.

VI. 13 October

***** FIELD-TRIP TO KAZIMIERZ *****

Polish space, Jewish space; Polish-Jewish space, Jewish-Polish space
Spaces of encounter; spaces of conciliation? Haunted space?

What do you see? What do you smell?

What do you hear? What have you tasted?

How do you feel? How do you (not) belong? And why...

READ: Lehrer, Erica. 2013. *Jewish Poland Revisited*, Introduction, pp. 1-17.

VII. 16 October

Why is hybridity such a contentious subject? What are its threats and promises regarding singular ethno-national identities or forms of belonging?

Read: Markowitz, Fran. 2007. Census and Sensibilities in Sarajevo. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49 (1):40-73 (**also available on JSTOR**) DOI: 10.1017/S0010417507000400, and

Kurtović, Larisa and Azra Hromadžić. 2017. Cannibal states, empty bellies: Protest, history and political imagination in post-Dayton Bosnia. *Critique of Anthropology*. DOI: 10.1177/030817X/7719988

Key concepts: mixed identities, state citizenship/national identity; human rights/group rights; the Yugoslav project; socialist-internationalist goals.

Thought piece #4: Given the argument of "Census and Sensibilities", how might we understand the failure of the Yugoslav project? Why did specific ethno-religious identity interests seem worth fighting for in Eastern Europe during the 1990s? How did these interests remain (discursively) salient in the 2000s and 2010s? And then, how did the protests of 2014 demonstrate the power of the *narod* in post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina and manifest in a new, yet historically-based, political imagination of hybrid social categories?

VIII and IX. 18 October

Blood Politics and Race-Shifters in the Cherokee Nation

Read: Strum, Circe. 2002. *Blood Politics*. University of California Press, chapters 1, 4, and 5 (**ebook**), and 2010, and *Becoming Indian: The Struggle over Cherokee Identity in the 21st Century*, pp.1-20, "Openings".

Key concepts: native populations in US history; the Cherokee Trail of Tears (1838), blood (not DNA), US state and federal policy toward race and native status; whiteness, class and (not) belonging.

Thought piece #5: According to Circe Strum, "blood" is a (if not THE) key metaphor for understanding belonging among the Cherokee. And yet, unlike the US government, which demands at least 1/16 Native American ancestry to be officially granted Indian status, most

Cherokees are unfazed by the quantifiable amount. What do officially recognized tribal Cherokees consider important identity markers, and how do they maintain group boundaries? How do they react to “race-shifters”? Likewise, why might white people in the US wish to identify as Cherokee? What, then, does “blood” signify?

(X. 20 OCTOBER

*****FIELD TRIP TO NOWA HUTA*****

How did a planned built environment reflect views of a bright Polish socialist future? What did (socialist) Polish residents do, and what are they continuing to do, to make that environment conform to their 21st century needs and desires? How do imaginaries of past and future intersect, battle, and coalesce in present-continuous everyday practices? How much can we discern from “flash ethnographies” of the built environment?)

XI. 23 October

National Dysphoria and the story of Rachel Dolezal

Read: Petric, Domina. 2022. “National Dysphoria: a terminology and a research proposal”.

Film: The Rachel Divide on NETFLIX (2018).

Key concepts: race, passing, cultural appropriation; dysphoria., “transracial”.

Thought piece #7: Do we get to choose our ethnic (and gender, and class) belongings? Why are there “gatekeepers” and how do they operate? During the Holocaust passing was a matter of life-and-death; so too was it in the segregated US, in apartheid South Africa, and other parts of the world. Why might someone, like Rachel Dolezal, or even like me or you, choose to identify with and belong to a minority ethno-racial group, which is not her birthright? How does Rachel explain it? How might you explain it? People’s possession of a cultural heritage and group identity seems, as Charles Taylor implies, a basic human right. Is it, or should it be, an individual choice? Please state how your understandings of race, blood, DNA and shared history—and our seminar discussions about these issues--contribute to your answer to this question.

XII. 25 October

Kinship, Ancestry, and Be-Longings among Portugal’s Urban Marranos

Read: Leite, Naomi. 2017. *Unorthodox Kin: Portuguese Marranos and the Global Search for Belonging*. University of California Press.

INTRO and Chapter 1;

Chapter 2, pp. 76-97; 112-118); Chapter 3, pp. 125-145, 151-155, 160-172;

Chapter 4, 194-199, 214-219; Chapter 5, pp. 220-222, 227-229, 236-252,

257-260; Chapter 6, 267-278.

Key concepts: state genocide without expulsion or murder; there are no Jews in Portugal but everyone has Jewish blood; feelings of identity vs. official gatekeepers; “productive miscommunication” and the touristic encounter; kinning, local kin/global kinship; 21st century ironies.

Thought piece #8: How could there have been “no Jews” in Portugal when centuries-old circulating discourses proclaim that “everyone” has some Jewish blood? How can, and did, a state erase a people without expelling or killing them, and what are the lingering effects of these historical events in the 21st century, an era of global travel and Jewish roots tours? Where do you stand regarding the belonging of Portuguese urban Marranos within the Jewish people, and why?

XIII. 27 October

The Hebrew Israelites of Dimona, Israel: How Jewish? How Black? Where and to whom do they belong?

Read: Markowitz, Fran, 2020. "Already Black...and Proud, and Righteous". Chapter 11 in *Blackness in Israel*, Uri Dorchin and Gabriella Djerrahian, eds. Routledge.

Key concepts: back to race (but not DNA), blackness, conflation of state and religion; the salience of soil: living on, working and loving the land, "the power to define who we are as a people".

Thought piece #9: How are the Hebrew Israelites not Jewish but not entirely un-Jewish? In what ways do they demonstrate belonging to the Jewish people and to Israel. Do (you think that) they belong; should they? In what ways are the cases of the Portuguese Marranos and the Hebrew Israelites similar and different? Why did the Marranos decide to undergo conversion through the Masorti movement, and why does the AHIC continue to resist rabbinical conversion? If you were Israel's Minister of the Interior, what would you recommend—if anything--to resolve the Black Hebrews' "exceptional" status?

XIV. 27 October

Deep reading, ethnographic research and the anthropological project in the 21st century

Read: "Chapter VIII: To Posterity" pp. 94-111 in *Light in Dark Times*, by Alisse Waterston and Charlotte Corden, 2020 (**ebook**)

Also as background: Ortner, Sherry. 2016. *Dark Anthropology and Its Others: Theory Since the Eighties*. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*.

Key concepts: dark times, proximity and detachment (subjectivity and objectivity?); engaged anthropology.

Thought piece #10: For much of the history of anthropology, written ethnographies tended toward the objectively descriptive and/or the highly theoretical. Toward the end of the 20th century, some anthropologists disrupted this scheme by examining ethnographies as texts (Marcus and Cushman 1982) and their poetics and politics (Clifford and Marcus 1986), and then moved toward producing more experiential and experimental ethnographies (Poewe 1996). Today, in these "dark times," many define themselves as engaged anthropologists and strongly advocate using the discipline to probe, deconstruct, and even solve social problems. Where do you stand on this issue and how did this course help you formulate that stance?

******* Your stories, your ethnographies, your reflections: Where do we go from here, and how? *******