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Participant

Observer

Annual Lewis Henry Morgan Lecture Series Review

The honor of giving the annual Lewis Henry Morgan Lecture series at the University of Rochester this year was granted to Professor Veena Das of Johns Hopkins University. Both Department Chair of her home university's Anthropology Department and the Krieger-Eisenhower Professor at Johns Hopkins, a title awarded to professors of distinction and scholarly achievement, she brought with her a vast background of experience and academic prestige. This year's lecture series entitled "Everyday Lives and the Claims of the Other," began with the keynote lecture, which took place in the Hawkins-Carlson Room at 7:00pm on October 24. With a full audience, Veena Das opened her keynote lecture, "Muslims and Hindus in Urban Neighborhoods in Delhi," by placing her work within its philosophical context, referencing Kierkegaard and MacIntyre among others' work. However, after a few minutes she distinctively switched gears to a much more concrete discussion of her fieldwork within an urban neighborhood in Delhi, India. The focus of her work revolved around the Hindu and Muslim conflict in India and how it actually plays out between neighbors on an every day basis. Neither claiming that perfect harmony exists between neighboring people of different ethnic backgrounds, nor claiming pure conflict, she offered a more nuanced middle ground showing the attempts made by different people to recognize the claims of their neighbors, despite them conflicting with their own beliefs.

Most of her discussion focused on Muslims making a claim for their place in India without much discussion of a reverse situation as the title seemed to indicate (Hindus making claims to Muslims), but included many interesting anecdotes from her extensive work: the way in which many myths are adapted to include interchangeably Muslim or Hindu deities depending on how they are used; the way in which people adapt their religion to the changing conditions they are faced with every day; how running around chasing kids makes wearing a bulky burkah impossible; how a person could relate to a Hindu myth despite being Muslim. The next day at 4:30pm in the Welles-Brown Room of Rush Rhees Library, Das' theory received some provocative feedback in a panel discussion featuring University of Rochester Professor of Anthropology, Thomas Gibson; President of the M.K. Gandhi Center for Non-Violence, Arun Gandhi; Syracuse University Professor of Religion and Anthropology, Ann Grodzins Gold; and University of Rochester Professor of Philosophy, Robert L. Holmes. Arun Gandhi brought up the ways in which the type of conflict Veena Das was looking at often results from a manipulation of people

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More on Morgan Lecture

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by those with political and religious power, exploiting the situation to create dissension and reinforce their own power. Professor Grodzins Gold, a former student of Veena Das, mentioned similar points to Arun Gandhi from her own fieldwork, discussing how the conflicts are often the result of political exploitation rather than inherent unrest, the idea of generational conflict functioning in these conflicts, and finally the idea of pluralistic religious identity that she observed in her own work. Professor Holmes developed an extremely interesting response to Veena Das' philosophical discussion, discussing what authorizes tradition through the different philosophical theories of truth ultimately coming to no favorable conclusion. Finally, Professor Gibson responded by incorporating all the points mentioned and his own interpretation of her work, which she seemed to disagree with, but elucidated some interesting facets she hadn't addressed. Overall her work may not have fully addressed all the facets mentioned in the discussion but both the lecture and panel facilitated many conversations between students and faculty about the ideas she presented, including relating it to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict among other such situations around the world. Das' work does provide an interesting and necessary pathway for discussion conflict situations that do not rely solely on ideological or historical explanations. All students of the Anthropology Department sincerely thank Veena Das for joining in on our little annual ritual.

The Participant Observer is brought to you by the Undergraduate Anthropology Council

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Letters

At present day, a hotbed issue in the field of anthropology is the recent use of anthropologists by the American military within Iraq, as reported by numerous pieces in the New York Times. Many anthropologists have condemned it, many have applauded it, many say it is too little too late and could have been useful before an invasion (possibly to prevent one). In any case, the Participant Observer was sent a letter by Russell French Williams II, an anthropology alumni from the University of Rochester, concerning this very issue. We have reprinted the exact letter here with permission in the hopes of generating even more discussion on the issue:

Dear Participant Observer:

Of what real use is anthropology and why would anyone want to study it? I am sure that there are people who ask those questions. Such people may well feel that a degree in business administration or medicine are much more sensible undergraduate goals.

For those who wonder of what practical uses are anthropologists and especially cultural anthropologists I might suggest a review of the opening phases of the War in Iraq. Those in power were comparing the invasion of Iraq to the invasion of France. Eisenhower was able to call his book, "Crusade in Europe" and those who first referred to the War in Iraq as a crusade in the Middle East did not have anthropologists to advise them of the cultural differences between Iraq and France. While they're many differences, French culture has many similarities to American culture. There are far fewer similarities between American culture and the Iraq culture. If the administration had had a few cultural anthropologists on staff and listened to them they would've learned about these differences and been able to adjust plans accordingly.

Of what real use is anthropology? In times of national crisis anthropology can help achieve a better understanding of the cultural background of those causing the crisis and provide useful guidance on ways to most effectively eliminate the crisis. In times of national crisis, good anthropologists can save lives and money.

Yours truly,

Russell French Williams II - BA in anthropology -- 1964

(The Anthropology Department and Participant Observer thank Mr. Williams for his insight and permission to reprint it here.)

Anthropology Dept. Proudly Presents New York Times College Essay Publication

Rachel Odhner
University of Rochester, Class of 2010

untitled.

Apathetic. If I had to describe the student body on my college campus in one word - apathetic would be it.

After four years at a fairly conservative, living-for-the-next-soccer-game, suburban public high school, I could not have felt more ready for a change of scenery - especially for college - a place that is supposed to be so different and free. Like any college freshman, I had expectations. I had hopes of being surrounded by young people who are living for more than just weekend keg parties and prom dates. People who are aware of what is going on in the world at this critical time and, as human beings, feel an obligation to help make change - further the course of social justice. And upon coming to college, I did find these people - all five of them.

Out of a student body of four thousand. When I got to college and met my peers - the people I would be spending the next four years of my young life with - I asked the same question that Rick Perlstein is asking now, "What's the matter with college?"

For me, that question has expanded to, "What's the matter with Americans?" College students are supposed to make up the best and brightest of each coming generation. And, if at the ages of 18 to 22, these young and capable people are not active and engaged with their world - with our world - what happens in post-college life? I imagine the trend continues: the apathy remains.

Comfort. College kids, kids like me, are comfortable. Our lives are privileged. We live with our friends in dorms that are cleaned for us. We can eat whenever we want. We are receiving what is considered to be a pristine education from world-renowned professors. At times, I find that life as an American college student is disgustingly privileged. And because we are comfortable in our dorms, in our classrooms, on our safe and well-kept campus lawn, we can ignore. We can ignore the war in Iraq. We can ignore the fact that college students in other cities in the world cannot walk safely through their campuses due to a constant threat of an explosion or attack. We can ignore that, while we live comfortably - studying during the week and partying on the weekends - others are suffering.

The truth, of course, is that we cannot ignore these things. We cannot ignore our fellow humans; we cannot ignore the acts of our government. This is our world; each of us is an integral part of it. We can be apathetic, yes. But only for so long.

As many others have said, there are several parallels between the Vietnam War of the sixties and seventies, and the war in Iraq today. One enormous contrast is the activism in the former and the lack thereof in the latter. I have heard people suggest that the reason for this discrepancy is that now there is no active draft. And without the very real possibility (threat) of being called to war - young people have no critical need, no tangible reason to be active and persistent in ending the war.

As a college student, although it is not been my experience in particular, I do believe college is a time and a place in which change is suppose to take hold. Young people themselves, through the exposure to new people and novel ideas, change. And through those personal changes, people work together to change something outside of themselves - whether it is a project in the local community, or a large-scale effort to end a national war. Today, in the year 2007, college is not a source of this type of change; this process does not take place, or at least not in full cycle. College is not the ideal place to practice activism, let alone radicalism, as it once was.

I feel privileged to be receiving the education that I am receiving, but I feel there is a crucial element that college kids like me are missing. We are not vulnerable - or at least do not feel vulnerable. Protected and even sheltered (some of us), we need a new awareness. That is "what's the matter with college"-we are asleep. We need to wake up, recognize the state of our country and of the world, and care. Contribute. Act. Do something! We are the doctors, politicians and journalists of the next 50 years. One of us will be president. A couple hundred of us will be foreign ambassadors. Many of us will be congresswomen and men. We will have incredible influence. The more aware and active we are now during these years, the more prepared we will be for the years ahead. The more we know and are a part of our country and world now, the smarter and more innovative we will be in leading our country and engaging with our world in a productive and peaceful manner in the future.

New Anthropology Alumni Publications

Elizabeth Dunn (BA 1991)

PRIVATIZING POLAND: BABY FOOD, BIG BUSINESS AND THE REMAKING OF LABOR

Cornell University Press, 2004

Elizabeth Dunn, Ph.D., Johns Hopkins University, 1998 , is Assistant Professor of Geography and International Affairs. Her work focuses on the economic origins and effects of foodborne illness. Recently, she has been investigating how new rules about cattle production affect farmers, meatpackers, consumers and the environment. She has also looked into how rules about pig production have forced smallhold farmers out of the market in Poland, and how the collapse of the canning industry in the former Soviet Republic of Georgia has led to hyperendemic botulism.

Much of her previous work focused on labor and industrial management.

Professor Dunn serves on the Boulder County Board of Health and as a foster parent for Boulder County.

Kate Navarra Thibodeau (BA 2001)

DESTINATION HOLYOKE

This is a non-fiction book containing images of Holyoke, past and present. It tells the story of a mill town developed using a business plan and many immigrants and migrants. There are over 150 photographs, along with many family histories that contributed to the history of Holyoke as a gateway city.

Kate Navarra Thibodeau holds a master's degree in American history from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She is a public historian and curator of Wistariahurst. This is her second book.

To order, please send a check made payable to "Wistariahurst Museum" for \$25, includes shipping and handling. Mail to 238 Cabot Street, Holyoke, MA 01040

John Tofik Karam (BA 1996)

ANOTHER ARABESQUE: SYRIAN-LEBANESE ETHNICITY IN
NEOLIBERAL BRAZIL

Temple University Press, 2006

John Tofik Karam is an assistant professor in the Latin American/Latino Studies Program at DePaul University. His research and teaching interests include ethnicity, nationalism, globalization, Brazil, and the Arab Americas. He is now completing the manuscript, *Another Arabesque: The Arab Project in Neoliberal Brazil*. It explores the ways Arab ethnicity has intensified as a project during the neoliberal moment in Brazil. His research has been funded by the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of California, Berkeley; the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Florida, Gainesville; the Institute of International Education; as well as the U.S. Department of Education. His work has appeared in *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* and *The Journal of Latin American Anthropology*. Professor Karam is currently working on a comparative study of Arab immigrants and descendents in Brazil, Argentina, and the United States.

**Have A Question, Comment, Criticism, Praise for, or Something to
Include in the Participant Observer?**

Send an email to anthro@mail.rochester.edu

Spotlight on New Anthro Courses

ANT 247: Colonial Encounters and Anthropology Instructor: B. Lundy

Spearheaded by Spain and Portugal, and subsequently by other Western European powers, colonialism emerged in the wake of extensive exploration, violent conquest, and settlement. The colonial experience involved complex and simultaneous patterns of resistance and adaptation to colonial rule on the cultures of the colonized and the colonizer. The colonial encounter also helped structure methodological and conceptual formulations in a burgeoning socio-cultural anthropology. This course will examine the colonial roots of anthropology through a journey into the history of the discipline as well as a fresh reading of colonial ethnographies. In addition, students will review relevant postcolonial issues and discuss ethics in anthropology more generally.

ANT 255: Perspectives on the Modern Middle East Instructor: S. Monshipour

This course is designed to familiarize students with the variety and scope of cultural diversity in the Middle East and major socio-cultural issues concerning the countries, nations and ethnicities within this region. Focus will be on recent and current developments in the Persian Gulf region within an anthropological context. Examine particular issues such as questions of gender equality, freedom of speech, dress code, and polygamy in countries of Iran, Afghanistan and Turkey. Readings of articles by authors from a variety of the nations within the Middle East region will be assigned.

CORRECTION FOR LAST ISSUES:

December 2006 and July 2007 Issues incorrectly numbered. Should have been Volume XI, Issue 1 and 2.
