Roma in Central East Europe:
Ethnographic and historical overview of a people without a state

Syllabus Spring 2012

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Thu 2pm-3pm

Course description: The course will introduce students to the development of Romany politics and culture from a persecuted minority through to the emergence of Romany organizations with an emphasis on Central and Eastern Europe. The aim is to challenge any essentializing view on Roma as either a people outside or/and without society or as perennial victims of oppression. Two main approaches have dominated the teaching of Romany issues: a culturalist/ethnic approach, which stresses Romany cultures, and an economistic approach, which stresses ‘poverty’. This course will challenge mono-causal and a-historic explanations for the social situation of Roma and will stimulate students to think about Roma in a critical holistic way that brings into consideration the societies they live in. Building on a diverse selection of empirical material, ranging from ethnographic, historical and sociological case studies to artistic representations of Roma, the course will present the Roma “as good to think” for our comprehension of current social issues. The course is divided into three thematic blocks: identity, community and culture, Power, the State and social stratification, History, memory and politics of representation. All three will allow to cover much of the current debates on the plight of European Roma as well as a gasp of social theories on marginalization.

Grading policy
Class participation/attendance: 10 %
Paper or other assignment: 20 % (film review)
Mid-term: 30 %
Final: 40 %

Schedule of classes

Week 1
16 February - Overview of course

Week 2
23 February - History of the scholarly interest in Roma/gypsy groups, the “optical illusion” of ethnonymes
Reading

Week 3
1 March - The question of „indic roots“ and the idea of diaspora in debates on Roma identity
W. Willems, L. Lucassen (2001) – Gypsies in the Diaspora?

Week 4
8 March – Comprehending Roma from the Rom point of view – facets of Romanes
Reading

Week 5
15 March - Roma in the wider society – strategies of disappearance and passing among Romany groups
Reading

Week 6
22 March – Proletarization and the “gypsy question” during socialism
Reading

Week 7
29 March - The Romany political movement in contemporary Europe

Reading

Week 8
5 April - MIDTERM EXAM

Week 9 – Spring Break – no classes

Week 10
19 April - Economies of survival – work strategies and marginality

Reading

Optional

Week 11
26 April- Culture of poverty, underclass and “living for the moment” as a life-style

Reading

**Week 12**
3 May - “Time of the Gypsies” as western imagination
Film screenings: Time of the Gypsies; Black Cat, White Cat; Gadjo Dilo

Reading

4 May - The history of the Nazi persecution of Roma

Reading

**Week 13**
10 May - The memory of the Nazi persecution of Roma, the case of Lety Gypsy camp

Reading

**Week 14**
17 May - Current debates on integration, social exclusion and multiculturalism in relation to the “Roma problem” – imagining the future

Szelenyi, I. (2001) Poverty under post-communist capitalism - the effects of class and ethnicity in a cross-national comparison (excerpts)

**Week 15 -- FINAL EXAM DUE**
5 film screening sessions

Films:

The Roma worldview:
Latcho Drom (1994, dir. Tony Gatlif)
Gadjo Dilo, (1998, dir. Tony Gatlif)

Roma in Western imagination:
Time of the Gypsies (1990, dir. E. Kusturica)
Black Cat, White Cat (1998, dir. E. Kustorica)

Roma in CEE:
Across the Tracks (1988, dir. J Blake, Disappearing World)

Representing social margins:
Distrikt (2004, dir. Áron Gauner)
Ghetto No.1 (2007, dir. Ivan Pokorný)

The plight of Roma:
Cigán (The Gypsy, 2011, dir. Martin Šulík)
Smradi (The Brads, 2002, dir. Zdeněk Týc)