

Workshop: Cosmopolitanism

1.30 – 4.30 pm, Wednesday June 3, 2009

Stanner Seminar Room, Bld 37 (campus map reference AB32)

Convenors: Ned Curthoys, Ida Nursoo, and Asha Varadharajan

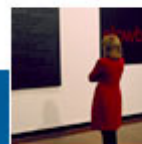
All interested members of the ANU intellectual community are invited to a workshop on "Cosmopolitanisms," the designated theme of the Research School of the Humanities for the year 2009.

"Cosmopolitanism" in political theory is often invoked as a critique of nationalism and the global system of nation-states which continually jeopardizes prospects for world peace and international human rights. Cosmopolitanism has thus emerged as a perspective that tries to be humane, learned and even anti-imperial. But while these intentions and aspirations might all sound ideal, some of the uglier manifestations of "worldliness" might also be described as "cosmopolitan"—the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the global financial crisis. Our workshop will reflect on this perceived ambivalence by focusing on the following themes:

- A genealogy of the term "cosmopolitanism" with a view to generating conceptual clarity as well as historicity.
- Connotations of "cosmopolitan" as style, sensibility, identity, ethos, or culture. Cultures of exile, expatriation, and migrancy might be appropriate here.
- The relations and/or tensions among cosmopolitanism and nationalism, imperialism, multiculturalism, and globalism. Is cosmopolitanism necessarily Eurocentric, elitist or masculinist?
- What kind of challenge does cosmopolitanism pose in the current historical conjuncture? What kind of solution or antidote might it offer in an increasingly riven world?
- How does cosmopolitanism mediate or negotiate between "home" and "world?" Here, we might consider the issues of rights, solidarities, and citizenship.
- What challenges and opportunities do the idea and practice of cosmopolitanism throw up for new ways of approaching research in the humanities and social sciences?

The number of participants is limited to 30 and will be accepted on a first come first served basis, except in unforeseen circumstances. If you're interested in participating, please contact Asha Varadharajan at asha.varadharajan@anu.edu.au

We welcome multidisciplinary perspectives on the issue and hope to discover intersections between them.



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Readings

Selected readings will be available as pdf documents for the participants in question. All participants are expected to be relatively familiar with the selected readings. They will constitute the basis of our discussion.

Each participant should be prepared with at least one question or observation that will advance the discussion or intervene productively in it. Should time permit, participants will be invited to share thinking or writing they have done in the past on the issue of cosmopolitanism and that might shed new light on the selected readings or on the broad themes under scrutiny.

Ned, Ida, and Asha will introduce the workshop with brief presentations that will explain their individual takes on the issue and set the tone for further conversation.

The readings are as follows:

1. K. Anthony Appiah, "Introduction" in Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), pp. xi-xxi; "Human Rights and Cosmopolitan Liberalism" in Human Rights at Harvard: Interdisciplinary Faculty Perspectives on the Human Rights Movement (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Committee on Human Rights Studies, 1999), pp.10-16.
2. Sheldon Pollock, Homi. K. Bhabha, Carol A. Breckenridge and Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Cosmopolitanisms," Public Culture, 12, no.3 (2000), pp.577-589.
3. Anthony Pagden, "Stoicism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Legacy of European Imperialism," Constellations, 7, no.1 (2000), pp.3-21.
4. Bruce Robbins, "Introductions Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism" in Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation, eds. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 1-19.

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