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Cross-border identities: a narrative approach to migration experiences

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Course Directors: **Roswitha Breckner**, Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, Austria
Júlia Vajda, Budapest ELTE University, Hungary

Resource Persons: **Lena Inowlocki**, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF), Germany
Mirjana Morokvasic-Müller, Université Paris X, France
Martin Peterson, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Our team consists of persons all working in the field of social sciences, with different specialisations according to their scholarly training, the research topics and projects they have been involved in, and their personal research interests. **Roswitha Breckner**, Ph.D., assistant and lecturer at the Vienna University of Economics in the department of general sociology, has been trained in sociology and history. She is working mainly in the area of interpretive sociology and biographical research, concentrating on issues of every day life history, migration, biographical risks, and picture analysis. **Julia Vajda**, Ph.D., assistant professor, head of the department of empirical methods in social sciences at ELTE University, Budapest, (trained in mathematics, sociology and psycho-analysis) is dealing with identity concepts and the theory of narrativity, while doing research on Jewish identity in post-socialist Hungary. **Lena Inowlocki**, Ph.D., professor at the the Peace Research Institute of Frankfurt, is trained in sociology, philosophy, and psycho-analysis. She does qualitative-interpretive research on issues of culture and knowledge, specifically on traditionality and transculturality in families of Jewish Displaced Persons, as well as on migrant families and social transformations through immigration. **Mirjana Morokvasic-Müller**, Ph.D., presently visiting professor at the Institute for Gender Studies, Ochanomizu University/Japan, senior research fellow at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, and teaching at the Université Paris X, was trained in sociology, and demography. Her areas of research are migration and gender studies, currently focussing on postcommunist migration and gendered interethnic relations. **Martin Peterson**, Ph.D., professor of history in Gothenburg and Bergen, represents an interdisciplinary approach in his broad research and publication on (East) European History. His current field of interest and research is shaped around the question of the historical emergence of different forms of identity in literature.

The different perspectives these persons in the team stand for will deepen the understanding of both, the theoretical and methodological approaches as well as the questions concerning migration within the course. All of them are experienced in doing social research and teaching it at university.

Course objectives

The course aims to explore identity formation in relation to migration experiences. In what way do migrants refer to their migration experiences in the context of their life stories? How has this experience shaped their life history and life story? What kind of (new) identity formation can be observed in this process? The focus will be put on the migration of Jews, on forced migration as well as on East-West migration. The course investigation will be based on interpretive methods (narrative interviewing, hermeneutic text and picture analysis) which allow to reconstruct the interchange between concrete 'experiences' made by subjects in their life contexts and the (changing) position of migrants in society. Thus, the course shall provide the participants with a practice based introduction into the *use* of a current research methodology and its methods, giving access to the visible and less visible changes in social contexts and its representation in the lives and life-stories of individuals.

Objectives include:

- providing a training in the methodology and the methods of narrative interviews and their hermeneutic case-reconstruction
- investigating experiences of migrants, their biographies and their life-narratives
- providing an understanding of different concepts of individual and collective identity.

Course level, target audience

The course addresses young academics, Ph.D. students as well as researchers and lecturers of any level. Participants should be interested in enlarging or deepening their knowledge concerning identity concepts in the context of migration, and in particular their skills in the use of qualitative methods. Concerning its theme and the methods taught, the proposed course is certainly useful for young academics working in sociology, history, anthropology, psychology or cultural studies. Reasonably good English is required due to the hermeneutic analysis proposed in the course description. Priority will be given to participants who intend to use the discussed theoretical and methodological concepts in an ongoing or planned empirical research project.

Syllabus

| TOPICS | RESOURCE PERSON | NO. OF HOURS | TEACHING MODE | DISCUSSION POINTS |
|--|-----------------|--------------|------------------------------------|--|
| <i>I. Narrative interviewing and text analysis</i> | | 22 | | |
| Introduction into a narrative approach | Breckner Vajda | 2 | Introductory role plays | The question of relations between 'Narration' and 'Reality' |
| The concept of biography and identity | Breckner Vajda | 2 | Lecture and participant discussion | The social construction of biographies. Different concepts of identity focusing on the question how the integration of social and personal change, different and shifting belongings and relations to 'others' is conceptualized in the different approaches |
| Narrative interviewing | Breckner Vajda | 8 | Practice in small groups | |
| Hermeneutic case reconstruction | Breckner Vajda | 8 | Practice in small groups | |
| Picture analysis | Breckner | 2 | Lecture and workshop | Practice based introduction in a method of picture analysis (focus on photos) |
| <i>II. Crossborder experiences</i> | | 22 | | |
| Identity concepts in literature | Peterson | 2 | Lecture and participant discussion | The historical emergence of different identity constructions in literature in the context of crossborder experiences and radical changes in social worlds |

| TOPICS | RESOURCE PERSON | NO. OF HOURS | TEACHING MODE | DISCUSSION POINTS |
|--|--|--------------|--|--|
| Changing identities and biographies in the context of different types of migration and historical situations. | Breckner Inowlocki Morokvasic Vajda | 4 | Short lectures and exemplary discussion of case examples | Characteristics of different types of migration and their impact on experiencing discontinuity and constructing continuity in biographies and family histories |
| Joint analysis of case examples in the context of - Jewish migration - Forced migration - East-West migration | Breckner Inowlocki Morokvasic Peterson Vajda | 16 | analysis in smaller groups and joint discussion of results | Discussion and comparison of experiences of cross-border and changing identities in interviews |
| III. Conclusion | | 4 | | |
| Migration, identity, biography and their links | Breckner Inowlocki Morokvasic Peterson Vajda | 4 | summarizing presentations of participants and discussion | Discussion of different patterns of migration experiences |

Teaching methods

During the course different methods will be used: i.e. lectures (cc. one third of the total time), participant presentations /seminars (1/6), practicing interviews: work in trios (1/6) and subgroups (1/6), plus guided discussions (1/6).

During the course all participants shall have the possibility to conduct an individual interview to be assessed and discussed by the participants and the instructors. The participants will be assessed on the basis of their activity in the collective analyses and discussions.

Applicants may wish to visit the web site of CEU SUN at <http://www.ceu.hu/sun/sunindx.html> where detailed c.v.'s of the course director and resource persons will be found.

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