

LING 4800

Seminar in Linguistics

Spring 2007

Instructor: Dr. Sadaf Munshi

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Class meets: M/W 4.30-5.50pm

Topic: “Gypsy Language and Culture”

Course Description

The Roma, more popularly known as “GYPSIES”, are often described as “peripatetics” (i.e., nomads and travelers) in western civilization. Usually associated with stereotypical images such as fortune-telling, black-magic, theft and robbery, these “Gypsies” have been treated as the lowest and most stigmatized part of the social stratum in Europe. The aim of this course is to present the historical, linguistic, and cultural origins of the Roma people. Based on the social and linguistic evidence available to us, we will discuss various theories relating to their migration from the Indian subcontinent and the subsequent migrations into Europe. We will also examine the five and a half centuries of slavery, the Gypsy Holocaust (“Porrajmos”), their transportation to the Americas, and their current struggle for civil and political rights. The two main components of the Romani studies to be dealt with in this course are: the socio-cultural construction of the “Gypsies”, and the historical development of the Romani language. The course will present a discussion of the different events and theories relating to the Roma exodus out of India in the 11th century and familiarize the students with their past and present situation in the world. We will examine various aspects of the sociology of this diaspora population - the Indian roots of their language and culture, their cuisine and their occupation, external linguistic and cultural influences, and their interaction with the non-Gypsy (“gadže”) world. The students will also be introduced to the basic structure of the Romani language through analysis of texts in Vlax Romani - a dialect of Romani.

Course Requirements and Grading Policy

The course requirements are divided into two main components: (a) two closed-book, in-class, exams, and (b) two short papers

Required Texts

Ian Hancock (2003): *We Are the Romani People*. Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press
Yaron Matras (2002): *Romani: A Linguistic Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Also available online at the UNT Net-Library)