

Czech Association for Social Anthropology
is pleased to Invite you to

202nd GELLNER SEMINAR

Thursday 16 November 2023 at 5:30 p.m.
2nd floor, Seminar room 2.32 of the Faculty of Humanities
Charles University, Pátkova 2137/5, Praha 8

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Ethnobiography as Approach and Practice: The Life of D'Arcy McNickle In and Over Time

Forty-five years ago, the interdisciplinary scholar James Clifford authored a brilliant essay in which he articulated a unique approach that he called “ethnobiography.” While it seems not to have garnered the praise or currency of his other writings, including *The Predicament of Culture* (1988) and *Routes* (1997), I have found it both prescient and transformative. In this talk, I will share my own take on Clifford’s notion of ethnobiography as approach and practice. I will do so in the context of my ongoing work on the life of D’Arcy McNickle (1904-1977), one of the twentieth-century’s most important American Indian writers, intellectuals, and political actors. At the heart of my own published and public-facing digital scholarship is McNickle’s diary, which extends from 1930 to 1971. I will demonstrate how I have put an ethnobiographical approach into practice and, in so doing, reimagined his remarkable life synchronically (in time) as well as diachronically (over time). What emerges is not a life rendered as a series of events but a window on what Clifford calls an “experiential world.”

Daniel M. Cobb is Professor of American Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he serves as Co-Chair of the Dean’s Working Group on Global Indigeneity, Coordinator of American Indian and Indigenous Studies, and Associate Chair. He has also served as Assistant Director of the D’Arcy McNickle Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies at The Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois (2003-2004), the Fulbright Bicentennial Distinguished Chair in American Studies at the University of Helsinki (2017-2018), and Visiting Researcher at the University of Tübingen (May-July 2019). An award-winning writer and teacher, his publications include *Beyond Red Power* (2007), *Native Activism in Cold War America* (2008), *Say We Are Nations* (2015), and numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals. His passion for public-facing scholarship can be found in his Great Courses devoted to Native North America, which was produced in partnership with the Teaching Company and the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American Indian History (2016), public programs and exhibitions devoted to American Indian activism, activists, and memory, and an ongoing digital project inspired by the diary of Flathead writer and intellectual D’Arcy McNickle.



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