Fostering Global International Dialogues

Bela Feldman-Bianco, CWA Cochair  
Carla Guerrón Montero, CWA Cochair

The Committee on World Anthropologies (CWA) has been actively working toward advancing global dialogues among anthropological communities. In light of our main objectives to further joint intellectual activities in collaboration with other national and supranational associations and to foster the internationalization of AAA, we have been working diligently to promote meaningful international communication among anthropologists.

One of the most exciting projects this year is the launching of a World Anthropology Section in American Anthropology. A major achievement for world anthropologies, the section will serve as a forum for articles that promote global anthropological dialogues. It will include thematic reviews and discussions about the theoretical and practical challenges encountered by anthropologists worldwide. The section will also offer review essays about influential anthropologists whose works have been published in languages other than English. Jim Weil (United States) will be the Associate Editor of the section and the editorial board members include Dominic Boyer (United States), Bela Feldman-Bianco (Brazil), Goh Beng Lan (Malaysia, Singapore), Francis Nyamnjoh (South Africa), Miguel Vale de Almeida (Portugal) and Shinji Yamashita (Japan). The first full issue of the section will appear in March 2014 and will include contributions by Ulf Hannerz, Veena Das and Shalini Randeria, and Gustavo Lins Ribeiro. We look forward to productive and engaging dialogues and increasing membership through this medium.

CWA is also supporting AAA’s mission to engage with national and supranational associations worldwide. In 2011, the Brazilian Association of Anthropology (ABA), the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) and AAA agreed to promote a variety of collaborative pilot projects that have intended to open up and encourage the construction of a global anthropology, rather than creating their own hegemony. The first has been a series of events at four scholarly meetings (ABA 2012, AAA 2012, CASCA 2013, IUAES/WCAA 2013) under the heading of Desplazamientos y /Deslocamentos /Displacements. The collaboration has been proven fruitful, and the three associations, together with the Canadian Anthropology Society (CASCA), have organized a virtual seminar entitled La langue et le savoir anthropologique/language and anthropological knowledge/língua e conhecimento antropológico. The seminar will explore the centrality of language in the production of anthropological knowledge and its political aspects, in two particular ways: as central to the ethnographic encounter and as central to the global circulation of this knowledge. Miguel Vale de Almeida will chair the seminar, and Deirdre Meintel will be the moderator. The format of the seminar is as follows: four scholars representing each association (Bruna Franchetto, Penelope Harvey, Alexandra Jaffe and Christine Jourdan) will make available their papers (in French, English and Portuguese) on a platform to which anyone will have access for a period of about one month, starting October 1, 2013. There will be a live event on October 15, 2013, where four discussants (Omar Ribeiro Thomaz, Benoît de l’Estoile, Salikoko Mufwene, and Petra
Rethmann) will comment on the papers. For the next ten days, the chair and moderator will monitor an on-line written discussion, which can take place in French, English, Portuguese and Spanish. The seminar will be closed formally on October 25th, 2013. Please take note of these dates. Your online participation in this pioneering and experimental event that aims to build a multilingual environment will be most welcome!

CWA will also have an active presence at the upcoming meetings in Chicago through the organization and co-sponsorship of a series of activities. CWA members Bela Feldman-Bianco and Pamela Calla have organized an international panel entitled “Race and Racism in Comparative Perspective”. Divided in two sessions, this panel calls for a broader theorization of race and racism to bring together the ongoing anthropological debates which tend to center either on the diasporic descendants of African slaves, indigenous populations or immigrants and other displaced people. By assembling case studies highlighting how the global, national, regional and local have been assembled on the ground through networks of unequal social relations, the panel organizers seek a comparative basis with which to grasp the new and old forms of race, racism and inequality produced by contemporary global capitalism and the fundamental logics that support them. Underlying these efforts are central questions related to the interplay between culture and power, nationalisms, the restructuring of global capitalism and resurgent imperialist projects, which benefit from global multidisciplinary critical dialogues.

Giving prominence to practicing, applied, and public anthropologies is also an essential objective of CWA. CWA members Carla Guerrón Montero and Laurie Krieger have organized the international Invited Roundtable, “The Practice of Anthropologies Worldwide: Moving Beyond ‘Applied’ and ‘Academic’ Models.” The roundtable is co-sponsored by the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology (NAPA). The roundtable will convey anthropologists from Australia, Guatemala, Kenya, and the United States to the AAA meetings to discuss the implications of the diverse global ways to look at the practice of anthropology and the complexities of the connections between academic and practicing anthropology. The objective of the session is to motivate a global dialogue about some of the models used for the practice of anthropology in an effort to rethink the academic practice/divide, share traditions, and foster a more unified world discipline with an interdisciplinary public in mind.

Representing WCAA, Chandana Mathur has organized the Presidential session, “Making Sense of Contemporary Capitalism: Theoretical and Ethnographic Reflections from the Multiple Vantage Points of World Anthropologies.” This session explores the rise of a new global order from the standpoint of the so-called PICGS countries of Europe, and from the perspective of the BRICS countries. Fundamentally, the session will address the following pressing questions for today’s political economy: Are forms of work and large-scale labor flows shifting with these changes? What are the ecological consequences of this new order? What is happening in the realms of war and revolution? Anthropologists from Afghanistan, Brazil, Poland, South Africa, Spain, and the United States will respond to these and other questions.

CWA looks forward to your involvement in these projects, your participation in these events, and your comments and suggestions.