

SPRING 2016 COLLOQUIA SERIES

Date: Monday, May 23

Time: 3:15 – 5PM

Location: Social Sciences 1, room 261

Dr. Nir Avieli

Israel Institute Visiting Professor at Middlebury College

Senior Lecturer, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Ben Gurion University, Israel

Meat Masculinity and the Logic of the Occupation: Food and Power in an Israeli Military Prison for Palestinian Detainees

This talk explores how meat, power and masculinity interact in extreme conditions of hierarchy. Based on anthropological fieldwork conducted in an Israeli military prison, it focuses on the military experience of Israeli-Jewish soldiers assigned with guarding Palestinian detainees arrested for taking part in the "Al Aqza" uprising ("Second Intifada"). The soldiers insisted that lack of meat led to poor military performance and suggested that this shortage was the reason for their relative weakness in comparison to the other two masculine groups that shared the prison's space: Military Policemen and Palestinian detainees. A discourse of victimization evolved among the soldiers, in which their relative weakness, the outcome of alleged meatless diet, became the pretext for the institutional and personal abuse inflicted on the Palestinian detainees. Applying the anthropological theory that deals with meat, masculinity and power, this paper discusses the intimate realities of the Israeli control over the Palestinians and exposes some of the implicit cultural mechanisms that maintain a sense of weakness and victimization among Israelis, which underlies the maintenance of the occupation.

Nir Avieli is a cultural anthropologist and a senior lecturer at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Ben Gurion University, Israel. Nir is mainly interested in the anthropology of food and in the anthropology of tourism. He has been conducting ethnographic research in the vibrant central-Vietnamese town of Hoi An since 1998. His book: *Rice Talks: Food and Community in a Vietnamese Town* (2012, Indiana University Press) is a culinary ethnography of Hoi An. Selected recent publications include: "Dog Meat Politics in a Vietnamese Town" (*Ethnology* 2012), "Vegetarian Ethics and Politics in Postsocialist Vietnam" (in Yuson Jung, Jakob Klein, and Melissa Caldwell (eds.) *Ethical Eating in the Postsocialist and Socialist World* 2014); "Grilled Nationalism: Power, Masculinity, and Space in Israeli Barbeques" (*Food, Culture and Society*, 2013); and "The Rise and Fall (?) of Hoi An, UNESCO World Heritage Site in Vietnam" (*Sojourn* 2015). Currently he is a visiting Israel Institute Professor at Middlebury College, where he is completing a manuscript on "Food and Power: A Culinary Ethnography of Israel".

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