Basic Information

Course Title: **‘Identity and Cultural Memory of Diasporic Cross-Border Communities in Bulgaria and Romania’**
Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Yelis Erolova, PhD
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Total Teaching Hours: 30

Annotation

The course aims at introducing doctoral students to key studies on diasporas, identity, and cultural memory. The objects of comparative analysis are different types of diasporic communities in the border regions of Northeastern Bulgaria and Southeastern Romania: the Crimean Tatars (military-political refugee diaspora); the Roma (transnational diaspora); and the Russian Old Believers (religious refugee diaspora). It is traced how they form different models of identity (ethnic/ethnonational, religious, and segmented) under the influence of knowledge of the past, relations with the host state, and perceptions of the real or imagined homeland. Emphasis is placed on the role of collective cultural memory as a resilient mechanism for preserving or transforming identity within a foreign ethnocultural environment. The processes of identity reconstruction are examined through the concepts of the ‘liminality’ of communities situated ‘betwixt and between’ (Turner, 1979; Bhabha, 1994), and ‘cultural hybridity’ (García Canclini, 1995), considering the specific status of the ethnic and religious groups/minorities in both countries.

Course content

Module 1: Theoretical and methodological frameworks. Conceptualization of diaspora, transnationalism, identity, cultural memory;

Module 2: Methodology of comparative ethnological research. Challenges of fieldwork in familiar and unfamiliar environments;

Module 3: Historical context of diaspora formation. The state as an architect of identities;

Module 4: Cultural memory, belonging, and group resilience;

Module 5: Construction of hybrid identities. Dimensions and markers.

Teaching and assessment methods

Teaching method: lectures (in-person and distance learning). The course is offered in both Bulgarian and English.
Assessment method: written assignment.

Competencies acquired as a result of training

1. Theoretical Competencies and Knowledge: advanced theoretical comprehension of diasporic communities, identity, identification processes, and cultural memory, alongside the further enhancement of specialized knowledge regarding minority policies in Bulgaria and Romania.

2. Methodological and Research Skills: acquired methodological competencies for conducting independent fieldwork and comparative research utilizing qualitative data collection methods—

such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation—within multicultural and cross-border environments.

3. Development of Expert Skills: developed capacities for identifying and defining the specific needs and challenges (social, institutional, and cultural) related to preserving the identity of diasporic, ethnic, religious, and border communities, as well as the ability to apply interdisciplinary approaches in the areas of intercultural interactions, social integration, and, more broadly, in the field of minority policies.

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Additional information

The lecture course is targeted at doctoral students in ethnology, history, sociology, cultural studies, psychology, education, and other fields within the humanities and social sciences.