

Colloquium on

Citizenship Beyond the State:

Theoretical and Practical Strategies for Anchoring Citizenship in Civil Society

Thursday, 18th February, 5:30pm-7:30pm, Large Seminar Room ?

an initiative of

Religion & Civil Society Project, ICS

SPEAKERS:

- **Dr Trevor Stack**, Senior Lecturer, School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture and Director of the Centre for Citizenship, Civil Society and Rule of Law, University of Aberdeen. Author of *Knowing History in Mexico: An Ethnography of Citizenship* (Univ of New Mexico, 2012) and lead editor of *Religion as a Category of Governance and Sovereignty* (Brill, 2015). He holds a PhD in Anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania.
- **Dr David Thunder**, Research Fellow, Religion & Civil Society Project, ICS and Lecturer, Philosophy Department, University of Navarra. Author of *Citizenship and the Pursuit of the Worthy Life* (Cambridge Univ Press, 2014) as well as articles on topics such as the ethics of beneficence, the foundations of human rights, the psychological and cognitive roots of social responsibility, and the challenge of building community in an individualistic culture. He holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Notre Dame.

THEME:

Citizenship is a highly ambiguous concept, carrying resonances of juridical standing, national belonging, political participation, resistance to unjust authority, and participation in civil society. Nonetheless, in both liberal and republican theory, citizenship tends to be anchored primarily in loyalty to the state and nation, and participation and equal standing within an established political regime. Clearly, the state and nation do configure the identities, rights, and duties of their members in crucial ways. However, theorists of citizenship are not always attentive to the ways in which civil society organizations and local allegiances can generate forms of identity and participation that resemble or even compete with nation- and state-based citizenship. In this colloquium, two scholars of citizenship will discuss dimensions of citizenship that do not fit neatly into statist and nationalist paradigms of political identity.

PROGRAM:

- 5:30-6:15pm **“You Can’t Not Be a Citizen: Comparing Citizen Personae in West Mexico and Anglo California”**
—Trevor Stack
- 6:15-6:40pm **“Between Tribe and Cosmopolis: Recovering Civic Spirit from the Ashes of the Nation-State”**
—David Thunder
- 6:40-7:30pm **Discussion**

For more information, please contact David Thunder (dthunder@unav.es)

“You Can’t Not Be a Citizen: Comparing Citizen Personae in West Mexico and Anglo California”

—Trevor Stack

During ethnographic fieldwork in west Mexico in 2007 and 2010, and among Anglos in northern California in 2008, one of my interview questions was: “Is it sometimes easier not to be a citizen?” The reason I asked the question was, primarily, to gauge how important duties or responsibilities or obligations were to being a citizen. Several of my Anglo interviewees conceded that there were obligations as a citizen that might prove a burden. In Mexico some responded in similar terms, but several others replied in a way that I had not anticipated—it was not really possible, they said, not to be a citizen. My main task in this paper is to explain the response of those Mexican informants, and to set out some of the implications. I start by comparing briefly the history of US and Mexican immigration to explain why not being a *national* citizen was so much more salient in California than in Mexico. My main explanation, though, is quite a different one. When I followed up my question by asked why it was not possible not to be a citizen, I was usually told that citizenship was ultimately about living in society which is something that we as humans cannot escape from. When I asked another interview question – “if you don’t behave as a citizen, are you still a citizen?” – most replied in the affirmative. Some explained this by saying that they would still be legally citizens. Others, though, replied they would still be living in society, in the sense of remaining dependent on those around them. In other words, when they said it was not possible not to be a citizen, they were using “citizen” in a different way to the legally-defined membership of a nation-state. In the paper I set out and develop some of the normative implications of this way of thinking about citizenship beyond the state.

“Between Tribe and Cosmopolis: Recovering Civic Spirit from the Ashes of the Nation-State”

—David Thunder

Six fundamental ideas frame the practice of citizenship in the modern nation-state: individualism, democratic representation, national sovereignty, debt- and tax-financed public projects, governance by bureaucracy, and rule of law. In this paper, I wish to focus on some of the harmful effects of this frame on citizens’ human relationships, in particular as those relationship affect a just and harmonious social order. I wish to argue for three basic propositions: first, that the traditional form of governance associated with the nation-state, notwithstanding its great benefits, has severely depleted the dispositions of solidarity, trust, and constructive cooperation without which a society collapses into mutual indifference and rampant criminality; second, that whereas traditionally, the welfare State has managed to reduce the anti-social effects of mutual indifference by meeting citizens’ needs from the public coffers, the anti-social effects of mutual indifference will likely become widespread as a debt-ridden State with aging populations is forced to dramatically cut its welfare programs; and third, that the only realistic way to mitigate these anti-social effects in a future unprotected by the welfare state is to reframe citizenship within local structures capable of recreating lost habits of solidarity, trust, and cooperation. I advocate a form of citizenship that is embedded in real and felt relationships—and thus by no means limited to a cosmopolitan perspective—and yet sensitive to remote interlocutors and partners—and thus, not limited to the perspective of the tribe.