

# Princeton University

Honors Faculty Members  
Receiving Emeritus Status



**May 2011**

The biographical sketches were written by  
colleagues in the departments of those honored.

Copyright © 2011 by The Trustees of Princeton University

# Contents



## *Faculty Members Receiving Emeritus Status*

|                            |    |
|----------------------------|----|
| James Alexander Boon       | 3  |
| Garry Leslie Brown         | 7  |
| Peter Robert Brown         | 10 |
| Ronald Crosby Davidson     | 13 |
| James Edward Gunn          | 16 |
| Lincoln Steffens Hollister | 20 |
| Henry Stanken Horn         | 24 |
| Simon Bernard Kochen       | 26 |
| Burton Gordon Malkiel      | 29 |
| Ricardo Emilio Piglia      | 32 |
| Kenneth Steiglitz          | 35 |
| Lynn Townsend White III    | 37 |

# James Alexander Boon



The professional biography of James (Jim) Boon, a member of the Class of 1968, crisscrosses, ivy-like, the history of anthropology at Princeton. Jim was the first Princetonian to graduate with a certificate in anthropology—finding in that brand-new concentration courses on symbolic anthropology, historical ethnography, and Southeast Asia, among other tendrils that grew into major veins in all his work still to come, including his current pursuits. He also majored in French literature—his interest in the past, present, and collateral lifeworlds of texts also remaining very present in his attention to the shimmering qualities of representation, the pleasures and perils of translation, and the compound cultural and temporal crossings of textual referents, expressivity, and need in the intertwined histories of anthropology and culture. These recombinant interests have been among Jim’s signature concerns since his student days. His first book, *From Symbolism to Structuralism: Lévi-Strauss in a Literary Tradition* (Blackwell, 1972)—published while Jim was still in graduate school—sets out an analogy between French symbolism and Lévi-Straussian structuralism that reveals, meldingly, a fresh sense of their mutual implication and context. The abstract printed inside the book’s front jacket contains a telling and charming syntax error—or just perhaps cunningly planted by an enthusiast in the Blackwell marketing department, caught up in the spirit of Jim’s interpretive dialectic: “In his perception of Lévi-Strauss as an essentially nineteenth-century figure, and in his rearrangement of the boundaries of anthropology and literature, Mr. Boon reveals a startlingly original mind.” Indeed, those of us who have been fortunate enough to teach and work alongside Jim will readily appreciate the dual aptness of that ambiguous referent—a justifiable nod to the great Claude Lévi-Strauss but familiar, too, as an evocation of the inspiration of our own erudite colleague.

Jim earned his doctorate in social anthropology from the University of Chicago in 1973, based on years of fieldwork in Java and Bali, as well as

archival work in Indonesia, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland, on the cultural history of Balinese notions of caste. Since then, he has returned to Indonesia, as well as to centers of Indonesian studies and archives around the world. Reading and/or speaking in English, French, Indonesian, German, Dutch, and Balinese, Jim is expert in many literatures (anthropological and otherwise) that other people might think of as separate. He has an extraordinary lateral imagination and a virtuoso gift for comparison-via-contextualization, deflating notions of incongruity in the process (sometimes in a way that might strike some as hijinks—but then Jim’s anthropology is most playful where it is most serious and urgent). His ethnographic and interpretive concerns are with the reticulations of experience, commentary, and critique, past and present—twining, braiding, knotting, and netting lines of analysis at the junctures where seeing and reading, hearing and writing, speaking and listening (each of these being keywords of anthropology’s method of “participant-observation”) become indistinguishable in practice over time. His interests and expertise span East and West, rites and writings, musings and museums, stage and screen, politics and play, the everyday and the exceptional—all of which (and then some) he engages with disciplined élan. Jim crosses intellectual boundaries with conviction.

Jim’s first teaching appointment was at Duke University, where he taught until moving to Cornell University as a professor of anthropology and Southeast Asian studies, in 1977. His second book, *The Anthropological Romance of Bali 1597–1972* (Cambridge, 1977) is an account of Bali’s place in the history of ideas, in the making of modern anthropology, and in what anthropology has made of Bali—making it prominent as an anthropological location. A line from Jim’s preface—just after he likens Bali to “anthropology’s ‘Shakespeare’”—offers a taste of the itinerary: “...the corpus of [Bali’s] Indo-Pacific social and cultural forms was richly textured by native authors, has been concordanced and interpreted by a distinguished line of cross-cultural readers, and provides continuing challenges to understanding” (page xi). *Other Tribes, Other Scribes: Symbolic Anthropology in the Comparative Study of Cultures, Histories, Religions, and Texts* (Cambridge, 1982) is in some ways the obverse of *Romance*, as Jim turns from the crystalline interpenetrations of reading,

writing, and living traditions in a particular place over time to the array of interpretive lenses with which anthropology has envisioned—diversely—its comparative enterprise in/as symbolic anthropology in the broadest sense. Read now (and it was reissued in 2009), Jim’s account of ethnology is stunningly current—braced against keywords such as “authenticity” and “truth” as judgments of identity or as objects of description, and against the false coinages of polemic within anthropology or beyond it with respect to culture and cultural theory. *Other Tribes* is at once an intellectual history of the discipline and a book-length essay on the ethics of reading and writing about culture. He opens *Other Tribes* with the observation that “anthropology heightens our sense of human diversity, often routinely, sometimes painfully, sometimes making us giddy” (page 3). Jim’s work has taught us much about how cultures—including whatever we might call “our own”—make themselves diverse, doing so diversely with whatever material is at hand.

*Other Tribes* opens with a chapter on “the exaggeration of cultures”—and this notion returns as the theme of *Affinities and Extremes: Crisscrossing the Bittersweet Ethnology of East Indies History, Hindu-Balinese Culture, and Indo-European Allure* (Chicago, 1990). The book tells a story—informed by *Symbolism*, broader than *Romance*, more ethnographic than *Other Tribes*—about Bali and the way it features in the history of the idea of culture as it was formed dialogically in encounters (some on the ground, some literary) between East and West. The book’s opening lines give a taste of the subject matter and Jim’s approach: “The never neutral, seldom transparent evidence of Bali has been deposited over many centuries, abundant texts, lots of languages, and diverse disciplines . . . What has come to be called Balinese culture is a multiply authored invention, a historical formation, an enactment, a political construct, a shifting paradox, an ongoing translation, an emblem, a trademark, a nonconsensual negotiation of contrastive identity, and more” (page ix). The book, published soon after he joined the Princeton faculty, is an argument by demonstration of the scope of anthropology as the comparative study of diversities (plural), and as counter to a discourse that meanwhile has made culture, identity, and civilization into dangerously divisive keywords.

In 1989, 21 years after earning his certificate in cultural anthropology, Jim returned to Princeton with his wife, Olivian, and daughters Tili and Jessica, as a professor of anthropology. He served as chair from 1998 to 1999 and again from 2002 to 2007—transformative periods for the department that included a major renovation of Burr Hall. *Verging on Extra-Vagance: Anthropology, History, Religion, Literature, Arts... Showbiz* (Princeton, 1999) is also a work of architecture—moving the walls around academic anthropology to illuminate the anthropologies that wind through and around museums, films, music, literature, and everyday spectacles. Eschewing the category of “the popular,” Jim breaks down the fourth wall (having dismantled the other three—time, place, discipline—long ago) between academic stagings of culture theory and cultural stages of other kinds.

In addition to his books, Jim has written many articles and, all along the way, has won recognitions and appreciations from his own discipline as well as other scholarly communities in the United States and abroad—including numerous research fellowships and lectureships around the world. At home in the department, he is perhaps best known for his regular contributions to the pro-seminar sequence on the history of anthropological theory, a course that re-introduces entering anthropology graduate students to their discipline as its co-producers.

As professor emeritus, Jim will continue his research in the histories and diversities of comparative discourse in anthropology, as anthropology, and along always-surprising itineraries. He is currently working on two books, provisionally titled *Cultural Comparison, Encore!* and *Lévi-Strauss, A “Longtemps” Later*. He continues to be a world authority on Lévi-Strauss, and to approach anthropology with an ever-fresh sense of its most generative locations and productive ironies. The characteristic generosity he brings to his teaching and collegial life is but one mirror of his imaginative breadth. At Princeton, Cornell, and Duke, he has taught, nurtured, coaxed, and encouraged generations of students who now flourish in their own right, buoyed by their learned sense of the discipline as both a source of intellectual richness and radically unfinished business—and accordingly, as the canvas of their own originality and responsibility.