

Aida Alymbaeva

Department of Cultural Anthropology and Archaeology,
American University - Central Asia, Bishkek

The First Teaching Workshop: The Visit of Prof. Edwin Segal

October 13, 2003 – First extra-curricular meeting with **Edwin Segal**, PhD, Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of Louisville, US; email: esegal@louisville.edu.

This was Dr. Segal's second visit to AUCA; the first was in Fall 2001. He taught the Introduction to Cultural Anthropology course for our freshmen. Unfortunately he had to leave us because of tragic 11 September 2001. His second visit to AUCA was connected to his position as a mentor for the research project of one of AUCA faculty, funded by the Central Asia Research Initiative. During his visit he met with AUCA faculty and students, especially with representatives of the Cultural Anthropology and Archaeology program.

Dr. Segal kindly accepted my invitation to a meeting on October 13, 2003.

I told him about the program and explained that the meeting's aim was to have a chance to get the advices of an experienced anthropologists-teacher to us, young anthropologists. Mr. Segal first listed four main fields of Anthropology as a science: Physical, Archaeological, Linguistic and Cultural Anthropology. A comparative approach is central to anthropological research. Utilizing a comparative approach in research can help to solve or understand many social problems by putting them in the perspective of a larger frame of reference. It is very important in a research to maintain the bridges, cultural connections with other cultures. Cultural anthropology works with common and detailed differences in case of variations of entire communities. Mr. Segal emphasized the importance of reading more theory. Theoretical material could be a base for a research and help us to phrase research questions in a more coherent way. And we always should think how this new theoretical data could be compared to the knowledge that we have. Fieldwork in cultural anthropology provides an opportunity to study what people think about themselves; how they organize their lives; how they understand their lives? A researcher should always ask what does a recipient understand by terms.

Dr. Segal presented some advice dealing with the Jewish identity research we were planning to conduct. He described three kinds of social situations regarding Jewish identity. One of them is keeping a secret self-identification by some of Jewish people. The second is a situation of influences of WWII. He said that a researcher in Jewish identity should remember about Second World War, which affected too the Jewish identity. And the third one is the impact of the State of Israel.

Generally, in examining ethnic identity issues we should always try to find answers to questions focusing on how people understand their own identity. Other questions: How do they consider/understand other parts of community? How do they recognize themselves in comparison with others? What differences are important in this case or what differences we can compare for our research? In our considering case it should be the question: what do they think being Jewish means?

As anthropology lecturer, Dr. Segal gave valuable advice. The main one is to help students to learn to write—put—asking questions; to formulate—shape different kinds of questions. For this an instructor can ask students to write a list of questions by the topic. Questions should be detailed, not extensively abstract. It is good to let to students practice by asking questions to eachother. Another kind of work is to create small teams of students and give them team assignments. In teams students can practice more in shaping of questions, to work together, to study to be more self-confident, to analyze what are they looking for, what do they want to know. It is good to give to each student in the team some specific duties, for example, to make notes for instructor, or to tell to classmates about their work.

Dr. Segal shared his opinion as an answer to my question. The question which was of interest for me, was from Don Kalb lecture in Cluj-Napoca. It is about the determination of inside and outside researchers' role in anthropology. Mr. Segal said that there are two different parts of science to investigate phenomena from inside and outside. Both of these sides could be right, even when they seem to be contradictory.

**Meeting/lecture: Dr. John Schoeberlein, Central Asia and Caucasus Program
Director, Harvard University, USA**

John Schoeberlein, PhD in Social Anthropology, is mentor of my “Changes in Kyrgyz World-View (1917-1940, North Kyrgyzstan)” project from Central Asian Research Initiative (CARI) HESP/OSI. He visited AUCA **April 2004** and gave lectures for the CAA faculty and students. There were three main topics: Anthropology in Kyrgyzstan; Anthropology of Islam; and Anthropology of self-consciousness. He touched the interested us issue: Teaching Anthropology. Dr. Schoeberlein marked four points, which are core for lecturer in Anthropology. First one is ideas of culture studies, which are interesting by themselves. Lecturer goal is to show this interest to students; to involve students in the topic. The application of general Anthropology concepts to own experience is an important method for teaching anthropologists. The next point is to use origin of texts and to study students on that. Third distinctive point of anthropological courses is the penetration into own or other culture. And the last one is learning on practice. Teacher of Anthropology should let to students make their anthropological researches through giving them concrete tasks, for example, to define terms by themselves.

**Teaching Workshop: Meeting with my colleagues from the Cultural
Anthropology and Archaeology (CAA) program**

There was a meeting of the CAA program faculty members on **March 15, 2004**. Those were Mukaram Toktogulova, Aida Egemberdieva, Talantaaly Bakchiev, Tynara Ryskulova, and I. All of us have a basic education in Language and Literature Studies. All of us are works with our dissertations/researches using/studying anthropological issues. All of us are developing and teaching anthropological courses. So, we are teachers, who work on “transition”. By that way, the main issue for discussion was what differences could be noted in teaching courses in Language/Literature and in Anthropology. Following are the main conclusions of discussion. As an instrument a language, request a lot of practice, without that it is impossible to study any language. It

is not necessary to study a theory. But a theory in anthropological courses take a big part, it builds a base for being an anthropologists. But a practice, applying a theory on practice became bricks for building of specialists. So, the main method for teaching anthropologists should be using the theory on practice, to make more tasks with research character, to write research paper, which could help to students to reflect on new material. Tynara supposed that we should be very objectively in giving material. Another point for discussion was an evaluation of students work. Everybody was agreed that we should use both kinds of work – writing and oral - for better evaluation.