

# Susan Seizer

Associate Professor

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[www.roadcomicsmovie.com](http://www.roadcomicsmovie.com)

[www.stigmasofthetamilstage.com](http://www.stigmasofthetamilstage.com)

<https://campanthropology.wordpress.com/>

## Academic Employment History

Associate Professor, Dept. of Anthrpology, Indiana University, 2015-present.

Associate Professor, Dept. of Communication & Culture, Indiana University, 2006-2015.

### Additional appointments:

- Adjunct Faculty, Dept. of Anthropology, IU, 2006-present.
- Affiliate Faculty, Dept. of Folklore & Ethnomusicology, IU, 2006-present.
- Affiliate Faculty, Dept. of Gender Studies, IU, 2006-present.
- Associate Professor, Dhar India Studies Program, IU, 2006-present.
- Adjunct Faculty, Dept. of American Studies, IU, 2009-present.

Associate Professor, Departments of Anthropology and Gender & Women's Studies. Scripps College, Claremont, CA, 2003-2006

Assistant Professor, Departments of Anthropology and Gender & Women's Studies, Scripps College, Claremont, CA, 1998-2003.

Visiting Professor of Anthropology, Occidental College, 1998.

Visiting Professor of Women's Studies, UC Santa Barbara, 1996.

## Education

University of Chicago, Anthropology. MA. 1988, Ph.D. 1997.

Barnard College, Columbia University, English. BA Summa Cum Laude, 1981.

Hampshire College, Concentration: Dance. 1976-78.

## Areas of Research & Teaching Expertise

Performance; Humor in Use; Stigma: Culture, Deviance Identity; Cultural Anthropology; South Asian Studies; Museum Studies; Gender & Women's Studies; Diasporic Indian Feminist Film; Ethnographic Film; Ethnographic Method.

## Honors, Awards, Fellowships

Faculty Research Support Program fellow, IU, to support fieldwork in India 2014-2015.

New Frontiers in the Arts & Humanities fellow, Indiana University, 2008-2010.

A.K. Coomaraswamy Book Prize for best book on South Asia, Association for Asian Studies (AAS)

Awarded for *Stigmas of the Tamil Stage*, 2007

College Arts & Humanities Institute (CAHI) Research Travel Grants, IU, 2007 & 2009.

American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), International Area Fellow, 2001-02

Sylvia Forman Prize in Feminist Anthropology, Assn. for Feminist Anthropology, 1995

Charlotte W. Newcombe Dissertation Fellow, Woodrow Wilson Foundation, 1994-95

American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) Junior Research Fellow, India, 1992–93  
Fulbright-Hays Fellow, United States Department of Education, India, 1991–92  
National Science Foundation Graduate Fellow, 1988–1991  
Jacob K. Javits Fellow, 1987–88  
New York Foundation for the Arts Fellow, Emergent Forms, 1987  
Barnard College Cabell Greet Award for Excellency in English, 1981  
Elected to PHI BETA KAPPA, 1981

## Publications

### **Books:**

- *Stigmas of the Tamil Stage: An Ethnography of Special Drama Artists in South India.* Duke University Press, 2005.

### **Films:**

*Road Comics: Big Work on Small Stages.* 2012. Producer, ethnographic documentary film. See <http://roadcomicsmovie.com> for more info & to screen film. 53 min.

*The Buffoon-Dance Duet.* 1997. Ethnographic short film, 11 min (in Tamil). Available at <http://www.stigmasofthetamilstage.com/videoclips.html>.

### **Articles:**

- *CaMP Anthropology: Communication, Media and Performance.* Blog Editor, Department of Anthropology, Indiana University. 2015-16. <https://campanthropology.wordpress.com/>
- “Craft and Magic on the U.S. Comedy Club Stage.” 2014. *Humor in America: HA! A blog about American humor and Humor Studies.* Access the article at <http://humorinamerica.wordpress.com/2014/03/24/craft-and-magic-on-the-u-s-comedy-club-stage/>.
- “Double-Voiced Parody: Stewart Huff Plays a Bigot.” 2013. In English and Chinese. 台閩民民間戲劇國際學術研討會論論文文集 [Proceedings of International Conference of Taiwan and Fujian folk drama]. Min-Nan, Tainan: Taiwan. pp.73-99.
- “Laughing at Domestic Violence: On Viewing Gender Roles and other Comedic Complexities on the Tamil Popular Stage.” 2013. Ch. 7, *Gender, Space, and Resistance: Women and Theatre in India.* Ed. Anita Singh & Tarun Tapas Mukherjee. New Delhi: D. K. Printworld LTD:123-180.
- “On the Uses of Obscenity in Live Stand-Up Comedy.” 2012. Abridged & Reprinted in *A Cultural Approach to Interpersonal Communication: Essential Readings, Second Edition.* Monaghan, L., J. Goodman, J. M. Robinson, eds. Malden, MA: Blackwell, pp. 220-232.
- “On the Uses of Obscenity in Live Stand-Up Comedy.” 2011. *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 84, No. 1, p. 209–234.
- “Offstage Negotiations of Stigma by Special Drama Actresses in South India.” 2010. 2nd revised edition, *Everyday Life in South Asia*, ed. D. Mines and S. Lamb. Bloomington:

Indiana University Press

- "Legacies of Discourse: Special Drama and its History," 2009. In *Play-House of Power: Gender and Theatre in Colonial and Postcolonial India*. Ed. Lata Singh. Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 70-104.
- "Gender Plays: Social and Spatial Paradigms on the Tamil Popular Stage." 2008. In *Tamil Geographies: Cultural Constructions of Space and Place in South India*. Ed. Martha Ann Selby & Indira Viswanathan Peterson. New York: SUNY Press.
- "Post-Field Positionings" and "The Afterlife of Fieldwork Relations." 2006. Issue Guest Editor, *Indian Folklife*, Serial No. 23, National Folklore Support Centre, Chennai: India.
- "Roadwork: Offstage with Special Drama Actresses in Tamilnadu, South India." 2000. *Cultural Anthropology*, V15N2:217-259.
- "Jokes, Gender, and Discursive Distance on the Tamil Popular Stage." 1997. *American Ethnologist*, V24N1:62-90, Feb.
- "Playing the Field." 1996. Review essay, Taboo: sex, identity and erotic subjectivity in anthropological fieldwork, D. Kulick and M. Wilson, eds. In *Transition: An International Review*. Issue 71, V6N3:100-113, Fall.
- "Paradoxes of Visibility in the Field: Rites of Queer Passage in Anthropology." 1995. *Public Culture*, V8N1:73-100, Fall.

### Field Experience and Foreign Exchange

- **India.** 6 months of research and fieldwork with the subsequent generations of families in Tamil drama acting lineages to see whether avenues of economic and social mobility have actually opened to this stigmatized community in post-liberalization India. Oct. 2014-March 2015.
- **United States.** 4 years of fieldwork with road comics on the U.S. comedy club circuit, 2008-2012.
- **India.** 22 months doctoral dissertation fieldwork in Tamilnadu, South India, 1991-93. Fieldwork support: Fulbright Scholarship, 1991-2; American Institute of Indian Studies, 1992-93 Fieldwork supervision: Dissertation committee: Bernard S. Cohn, Jean Comaroff, Nancy D. Munn and Norman Cutler (U Chicago); Dr. Mu. Ramaswamy (Tamil University, Tanjore, India)
- **India.** 9 mos intensive language study & preliminary site preparation, 1989-90 Scholarship support: AIIS Language Program, Dr. K. Paramasivam, Director & Tamil language instructor
- **Mexico & Nicaragua.** Three-month performance residency with "The Women's Circus," 1987 Residency support: Funded in part by the New York Foundation for the Arts, in part by private donors. Site supervision: El Comite Nicaraguense del Arte Internationale
- **Alaska.** Alaskan Internships Program. Craig, Alaska, 1976
- **Finland.** American Field Service Foreign Exchange Program. Helsinki, Finland; 1975

### Language Proficiencies

Tamil, fluent (Speaking, Reading, Writing)

French, passable (Speaking, Reading, Writing)  
Spanish, passable (Speaking, Reading, Aural Comprehension)

### Professional Memberships

American Anthropological Association (AAA)  
Society for Cultural Anthropology (SCA)  
Association for Asian Studies (AAS)  
Society for Linguistic Anthropology (SLA)  
Society for Visual Anthropology (SVA)  
Association for Queer Anthropology (AQA)  
Association for Feminist Anthropology (AFA)  
International Society for Humor Studies (ISHS)  
Australasian Humor Society Network (AHSN)

### Invited Addresses and Academic Conference Presentations

“Byte by Byte: mobility and ethnographic collaboration in the digital age”

- Paper presented at the *American Anthropology Association* annual meetings, Chicago IL., November 2013.

“Double-Voice Parody: Stewart Huff Plays a Bigot”

- Invited Keynote address, *Australasian Humour Society Network* annual conference. Newcastle University, Newcastle, Australia, Feb. 7-9, 2013
- Invited talk, *Media Arts and Sciences Speaker Series*, Dept. of Telecommunications, Indiana University. March 1, 2013
- Invited paper, Min-nan Center, Taiwan-Fujian Folk Drama International Symposium, Cheng Kung University, Tainan, Taiwan. May 25, 2013
- Invited speaker, CMCL Colloquium faculty speakers series, IU, March 2014
- Invited speaker, Department of Anthropology Four Field Colloquium Series, U Michigan, April 2014

“Place and the Comedic Voice.”

- Paper presented at the *American Anthropology Association* annual meetings, San Francisco, CA, November 2012.

“Comedy in Two Contexts: Surprising Continuities between Special Drama in South India and Road Comedy in Southern Indiana.”

- Invited talk given at Smith College, sponsored by the departments of Anthropology, Theater, the Program for the Study of Women & Gender, the Global Studies Center, and the Smith College Lecture Committee. Northampton, MA. March 29, 2012.

“Craft & Magic on the American Comedy Club Circuit.”

- Paper presented at the *International Society for Humor Studies* annual meetings, Boston University. July 2011
- Paper presented at the *American Anthropology Association* annual meetings, Montreal, Canada. November 2011
- Invited talk given in the *Invited Speakers Series* at the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan May 2013

“Five Generations, a Department Store, and a Wedding: Marital Moves and Middle-Class Aspiration in Madurai, South India,”

- Paper presented at the *South Asian Feminist Conference*, Indiana University, March 2011
- Paper presented at the *American Folklore Society* annual meetings, Indiana University, October 2011

“How Drunk Are They?”: Art in the Age of Alcohol on the Comedy Club Circuit”

- Paper presented at the *American Anthropology Association*, New Orleans, LA. December 2010

“Shake It Up: Narrative Moves Into Movement on the Stand-up Comedy Stage”

- Paper presented at the *American Anthropology Association*, Philadelphia, PA, December 2009
- Paper presented at the *American Folklore Society* annual meetings, Boise, ID, October 2009

“Road Comics: Big Work on Small Stages.”

- Invited talk, *Anthropology Department Speaker Series*, Indiana University, Feb 2009
- Invited talk, *Anthropology Department*, Bryn Mawr College, PA March 2009
- Colloquium faculty research presentation, *Communication & Culture*, Indiana University. April 2009

“On the Uses of Obscenity in Live Stand-up Comedy.”

- Paper presented at the *American Anthropology Association* annual meetings, SF, CA. Nov 2008
- *Cultural Studies/Performance Studies Conference*, Indiana University. Feb 2009

“Women with Swords, Women with Guns: Fierce Funny Women Onstage in South India & the U.S.”

- Invited Guest Speaker, *South Asia Institute*, U Texas-Austin, October 2007
- Invited Guest Speaker, *South Asia Center*, U Wisconsin-Madison, April 2009

“The Distances Appropriate to Humor: Success and Failure on the Standup Comedy Stage.”

- Paper presented at the 2007 *Obermann Center for Advanced Studies* Humanities Symposium on Obscenity: An Interdisciplinary Discussion. March 1-4, 2007.

“The Grotesque in Sheep's Clothing, Rearing its Head to Make Us Howl.”

- Paper presented at the *American Anthropological Association*, Dec. 2006.

“Postfield Positionings: Introductory Remarks & The Afterlife of Fieldwork Relations.”

- Paper presented at the *American Anthropological Association*, Dec. 2005.

“Everything You See is Part of the History of This Place.”

- Paper presented at the Bernard S. Cohn Memorial Conference, University of Chicago, May 2005
- Paper presented on the Invited Session “Honoring the Scholarly Vision of B. S. Cohn.” *AAA annual meetings*, S.F., CA, Nov. 2000.

“Laugh ‘til it Hurts: Domestic Violence on the Tamil Popular Stage.”

- *Department of Folklore & Ethnomusicology Colloquium*, IU, Sept. 2006
- *United States Educational Foundation in India*, Chennai, India, Nov. 2001.
- *Conference on Visual Media, Mass Communication and Violence in South Asia*, Center for Asian Studies, U Texas-Austin, TX, April 2001.

- *Feminist Anthropology Speakers Series*, Occidental College, L.A., CA, April 2001

"The Drama Tongue and Local Eyes: A Secret Language among Theater Artists in India."

- *Asian Studies Speakers Series*, Pomona College, Claremont, CA, Feb. 2000
- *American Ethnological Society Annual Meeting*, Portland, OR, March 1999

"Road Work: Off-stage Scripts for Acting the Ideal Tamil Woman."

- *Scripps College Faculty Seminar*, Claremont, CA, March 2000
- *South Asian Women's Conference*, 2nd annual, L.A., CA, Sept. 1997
- *Graduate Conference on Space in South Asia*, Univ. of Chicago, May 1997
- *Association for Asian Studies*, Chicago, IL, March 1997
- *Conference on South Asia*, 25th annual meeting, Madison, WI, Oct. 1996

"Women with Swords: Matriarchal Queendoms on the Tamil Popular Stage."

- *Women in Religious Studies Salon*, Claremont Graduate University, Nov. 1998
- *American Anthropological Association*, Phil. PA, Dec. 1998

"Dancing while Wearing Anthropological Glasses."

- *American Anthropological Association*, Wash. D.C. November 1997

"Representations of the Reign of Tipu Sultan."

- *Centre of South Asian Studies conference* "The Place of the Past: Uses of History in South Asia," School of Oriental and African Studies, London. April 1997

"Jokes, Gender, and Discursive Distance on the Tamil Popular Stage."

- *Women's Studies Program Public Colloquium*, UCSB. Jan.1996
- *American Anthropological Association*, Wash. DC. Nov.1995
- *Association for Asian Studies*, Washington DC. April 1995
- *International Society for Humor Studies conference*, Ithaca, NY. June 1994

"Gender Plays: Sociospatial Paradigms on the Tamil Popular Stage."

- *American Anthropological Association* Atlanta, GA. December 1994
- *Conference on South Asia*, Madison WI. November 1994
- *South Asia Workshop*, University of Chicago, Chi, IL. October 1994

"Paradoxes of Visibility in the Field: Rites of Queer Passage in Anthropology."

- *Culture, Life Course, & Mental Health Workshop*, Univ. of Chicago, IL. May 1997
- *Graduate seminar on Religious Studies/Queer Studies*, UCSB, CA. April 1996
- *Gay and Lesbian Studies Workshop*, University of Chicago, IL. November 1994
- *National Graduate Student Conference on LGBT Studies*, UT-Austin. March 1994

### Professional Service

#### Peer reviewer

- For a range of journals and publishers including: *American Ethnologist*; *Cultural Anthropology*; *Ethnos*; *Transgender Quarterly*; *Journal of Folklore Research*; *Museum Anthropology Review: Asian Ethnology*; *Journal of American Folklore*; *Women's History*; and *Duke University Press*
- Reviewer of tenure cases for junior colleagues, including four recent successful cases at Occidental College, Bryn Mawr College, Indiana University, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Advisory Board Member, Mathers Museum of World Cultures, Indiana University

(2013-present)

Executive Committee member, Dhar India Studies Program, Indiana University, 2009-2011.

Advisory Board Member, Office of Student Disability Services, Indiana University

(2008- present)

Panel Co-organizer (with Susan Lepselter), "Open Sourcery: Collaboration & Confusion in the Digital Age." American Anthropology meetings, Chicago IL, Nov. 2013.

Discussant and Co-Chair, "Off Stage and In the Field: Unconventional Theaters of Memory and Historical Presence." Double session, AAA annual mtgs., S.F. CA, Nov. 2008

Discussant, "Sabhas: Changing the Landscape of Chennai's Music, Dance, and Drama," *Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies*. Boston MA, March 21-24, 2007

Panel Organizer and Chair, "Post-field Positionings." AAA meetings, Wash. DC, Dec. 2005

Convener and organizer, Interdisciplinary Faculty Working Group on LGBTQ Histories.

Funded by a J. Stanley Johnson Faculty Grant, Scripps College, 2005-2006.

Faculty Board Member, South India Term Abroad (SITA) program, 2005-2006

Panel Organizer and Co-chair. "The Significance of Live Performance in Media-Saturated Locales." American Anthropological Association meetings, New Orleans Nov. 2002

Curator, Gender & Women's Studies Event Series. Scripps College, 1998-2005

Panel Organizer and Chair, "Embodied Feminisms." PSWSA Conference, SD, CA, Apr 2000

Chair, Ruth Benedict Prize Committee, SOLGA, American Anthropological Assoc., 1999

Curator, *South Asia at Chicago: Fifty Years of Scholarship*. Regenstein Library Special Collections, University of Chicago, 1997

Panel Chair, "Sharing the Dance: Essays on Performance in Memory of Cynthia J. Novack." American Anthropological Association, 96th Annual Meeting, Nov. 1997

Panel Organizer and Chair, "Worldly Women and Homely Acts: Cultural Codes and Spatial Practices in South Asia." South Asian Women's Conference, L.A., CA, Sept. 1997; Association of Asian Studies annual meeting, Chicago, IL, March 1997; South Asia Conference, Madison, WI, Oct. 1996

Panel Organizer and Chair, "Gendered Cartographies: the politics of space and sexuality in South Asia." American Anthropological Assn Meetings, Atlanta, GA, 1994

Curator and Photographer, *Special Drama: stage artists and publicity materials from South India*. Haskell Hall exhibit, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Chicago, 1994-95

### **Administrative Service (selected)**

- *Curriculum Committee Member*, Dept. of Anthropology, Indiana University, 2015-16
- *Director of Undergraduate Studies*. Department of Communication & Culture, IUB. 2010-2015.
- *Chair of the Tenure Review committee* for Prof. Susan Lepselter, 2013
- *Faculty Affairs Committee* member, Indiana University. 2011-12.
- *Committee on Gender Equity in Anthropology (COGEA)* committee member and Chair of the Awards Committee. American Anthropological Association, 2011-2014.
- *Executive Committee* member. Dhar India Studies Program, IU, 2010-12.
- *Chair of the Executive Committee*. Dept. of Communication & Culture, IU. 2008-09.
- *Chair of the Mentoring Committee*, Dept. of Communication & Culture, 2007-09.
- *Executive Committee* member. Dept. of Communication & Culture, IU. 2007-2008.
- *Advisory Board* member, GLBT Student Support Services Office, IUB. 2009-2011.
- *Advisory Board* member, Office of Disability Services, IUB. 2008-present.
- *Department Chair*, Department of Anthropology, Scripps College, Claremont CA. 1998-2006.

- *Department Chair*, Department of Gender & Women's Studies, Scripps College. 1999-2001; co-chair 2002-2003.

### **Theatrical Performance History & Employment**

Director of Development, *Circus Amok*. Brooklyn-based circus-theater company, 1996-98

Editorial Consultant, *Juggling Gender*, video documentary by Tami Gold, 1992

Curatorial Committee Member, Time-Arts Programming Committee, Randolph Street Gallery, Chicago, 1990-91

Independent choreographer, performer, and teacher of experimental dance, theater, and circus-theater productions. NYC (multiple venues), 1982-87

Performer and Co-founder:

- "Theater With Alienating Tendencies," a feminist agit-prop theater collective, Chicago 1991
- "The Women's Circus." Traveling circus-theater. Mexico and Nicaragua, 1986-7
- "The Soft Shoulder Roadside Revue." A two-woman traveling circus, with Jennifer Miller. U.S. & Canada, 1986

Performer and Company member:

- "Johanna Boyce and The Calf Women," a dance company. NYC, 1984-87
- "They Won't Shut Up," an improvisational performance collective. NYC, 1983-85
- Tim Miller Dance Company, NYC and touring, 1984
- "More Fire! Productions," a women's theater company. NYC, 1982-84
- Program Moderator, *Open Performance*, School for Movement Research, NYC, 1986