

## *Joint Seminar*

THE DEPARTMENT OF ANCIENT HISTORY *and* THE DEPARTMENT OF MODERN HISTORY

The inaugural

### **HISTORY, RACE, AND ETHNICITY COLLOQUIUM**

An occasional series of presentations by visiting and Macquarie scholars that considers ancient, modern, and contemporary conceptions of race and ethnicity and how these have shaped historiographic understandings of past societies and events.

### **PROFESSOR NORMAN ETHERINGTON**

University of Western Australia

Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Social Sciences

Former president of the Australian Historical Association

### **BARBARIANS ANCIENT AND MODERN**

Two current historical controversies – one about the role of ‘barbarians’ in the fall of Rome and the founding of European nations (the *Völkerwanderung*), the other about conflict among nineteenth-century African societies and its contribution to the ethnic divisions of the twentieth century apartheid regime (the *mfecane*) – raise similar questions about how previous generations of historians constructed ideas of ‘tribes,’ ‘barbarians,’ and mass migrations. Similarities in the framing of the traditional narratives of barbarian warfare and migration stemmed from common origins in Victorian and Edwardian historiography in Classical and Biblical scholarship. Likewise the impetus to question those narratives arose almost simultaneously due to widespread questioning of old certainties about colonial ‘others’ and the nature of ethnicity. This paper examines parallels between the *mfecane* debate and the discussion of ‘barbarian’ identity among historians of Late Antiquity and the early medieval period, in order to trace the political and intellectual contexts that shaped both the common origins and the parallel but separate reconsiderations of conventional wisdom on the *mfecane* and the barbarians of classical literature.

**Date:** 11.00-12.00, Monday 19 November 2007

**Venue:** W6A 127, floor 4 Modern History Seminar Room (rotating venues)

**For further information,** please contact:

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