Many minority ethnic groups interact with larger culturally-distinct groups. Inter-ethnic interaction sometimes leads to the replacement of minority cultural characteristics by those of a majority culture. Such cultural characteristics include norms for behavior and easily-observable markers of group membership. But replacement does not always occur, and we lack a detailed understanding of why replacement happens to some minority groups but not others. Dr. Bunce will first present a new mathematical model to examine changing distributions of norms and markers at a minority-majority ethnic boundary, and some conditions under which minority culture could be maintained in the face of sustained inter-ethnic interaction. He will also present individual accounts of cultural norms and inter-ethnic interaction collected during 18 months of fieldwork in neighboring Mestizo and indigenous Matsigenka communities in lowland Peru. Results suggest that inter-ethnic interaction in the context of education has a larger effect on distributions of Matsigenka cultural norms than does interaction in other contexts. This work is the beginning of a long-term research program examining cultural change at this and other ethnic boundaries, with an aim of suggesting strategies for cultural sustainability when this is desired by ethnic minorities.

John Bunce
Visiting Professor in the Department of Anthropology at Indiana University

GA 2067
Thursday, April 7, 12:00pm

SPONSORED BY
The Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies
The Minority Languages and Cultures Project