

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH & ITALIAN presents a lecture by

# Micah True

(Duke University)

## “Une Vive Image de l'Enfer” : Torture, Conversion and Ethnography in the *Jesuit Relations* from New France

This lecture examines accounts in the publication *Jesuit Relations* from New France of the torture practices of Amerindian groups in relation to debates in 17<sup>th</sup> century Europe about the nature of the inhabitants of the New World. Beginning from the notion that the missionary authors approached their task as pedagogues attempting to communicate a specific religious message both to potential converts and to readers at home in France, True argues that accounts of violent torture in the texts double as edifying scenes of religious conversion. He engages the work of ethnohistorians of various theoretical perspectives to argue that a full appreciation of the ethnographic richness of the *Jesuit Relations* requires attention not only to how cultural knowledge was produced in encounters between priests and potential converts—regardless of how one theorizes that process—but also to how it was produced in the pages of the *Relations*. As the case of accounts of torture in the texts suggests, passages that superficially seem to mark the radical and violent alterity of the Amerindian Other are concerned just as much with rendering familiar the unfamiliar.

Micah True is a PhD candidate in French at Duke University and a finalist for the position of Assistant Professor of French (17th century studies) at IUB. His lecture will be in English.



The torture of Fr. Jean de Brebeuf at the hands of the Iroquois.

3:30 pm, Friday, January 23, 2009  
Maple Room  
Indiana Memorial Union

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