

# Friday Seminar



Department of Anthropology  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong  
香港中文大學人類學系

Spring  
2021

## Monsters, Transformation, and Change in Central Australia

**Date:**

26 March 2021

**Time:**

1:00 - 2:30 pm

**Speaker:**

**Yasmine Musharbash**

School of Archaeology and Anthropology,  
Australian National University

**Zoom Meeting Link:**

<https://cuhk.zoom.us/j/99884929383>

**Meeting ID:**

998 8492 9383

**Passcode:**

016621

Monsters, says Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (1996, p. 4), are born at “metaphoric crossroads, as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment—of a time, a feeling, a place”. Anthropology, I propose, can gain much by (a) focussing on monsters, and (b) understanding them as crucially entangled in all sorts of transformative processes, from neocolonialism via technological, infrastructural or economic changes to Anthropocene climate disasters.

Based on fieldwork with Warlpiri people at Yuendumu (Northern Territory, Australia), I explore some pressing issues facing them through analyses of their encounters with monsters. Concentrating on just two, kurdaitcha (humanoid killers with superhuman strength and powers) and pangkarlangu (giant hairy cannibals, I illuminate how the monsters haunting Warlpiri people today paint a bloodcurdling picture of what haunts Warlpiri people besides the monsters themselves: neo-colonial violence in the case of kurdaitcha and the threat of extinction in the case of the pangkarlangu. In conclusion I contextualise my ethnographic analyses in the broader framework of monsters and change that my colleague Geir Henning Presterudstuen and I (2020) have suggested in our latest book.

### About the speaker:

Yasmine Musharbash is Senior Lecturer in the School of Archaeology and Anthropology at the Australian National University. She has been conducting participant observation-based research in central Australia since the mid-1990s. Her work is broadly concerned with everyday relations, and she explores this by focussing on embodiments and the emotions (studying grief, boredom, sleep, the night, and fear) and on social relations (between Warlpiri people and nonindigenous people, strangers, monsters, animals, and the elements). She is the author of *Yuendumu Everyday* (2009) and co-editor of a number of volumes including *Monster Anthropology from Australasia and Beyond* (2014), *Monster Anthropology: Ethnographic Explorations of Transforming Social Worlds through Monsters* (2020), and *Living with Monsters* (forthcoming).



**ALL INTERESTED ARE WELCOME!**