



## **Deborah Michaels**

Assistant Professor of Education  
Grinnell College

### **“Blood, Land, and Graves: The Persistence of an Exclusionary National Identity in Slovak Textbooks, 1910-2010”**

**WHEN:** Monday, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015  
12:30 PM – 2:00 PM

**WHERE:** Encina Hall East Wing, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room  
Lunch will be provided.

**Open to the public.**

**About the Topic:** How do school narratives in history and civics textbooks negotiate the competing demands of promoting a sense of national belonging and social stability, on the one hand, while simultaneously legitimating drastic overhauls in state structure and ideology, on the other hand? In this talk, Michaels focuses on the use and frequency of what she calls *primordial tropes* of blood, land, and graves in Slovak history textbooks across these multiple regimes. She illustrates how these tropes promote an exclusionary concept of the nation, positing non-Christians and non-Slavs as eternal outsiders. Moreover, Michaels evidences the persistence of these primordial tropes in school texts even during periods of democratization, revealing a discordant lamination of exclusive, ethnic narratives on top of declarations of human rights and liberal democratic values. Michaels argues that this narrative dissonance presents a rich opportunity for educators to guide students in the kind of historical inquiry that would foster critical civic consciousness and, thus, positively contribute to a democratic, multicultural society (Wineburg, 2002; Callan, 2004).

**About the Speaker:** Deborah Michaels is an Assistant Professor of Education at Grinnell College. She earned her B.S. at Cornell University and her M.A. and Ph.D. in Educational Foundations and Policy at the University of Michigan. Her research focuses on national identity politics and the exclusion of minorities in schooling. She is currently working on a book project tentatively titled *Revising the Nation: Citizenship and Belonging in Slovak Schooling, 1910-2010*. She is a co-editor and author in three special journal issues (2011-2012) dedicated to investigating how schools teach the Holocaust in post-socialist Europe. Deborah has been conducting research since 2009 with Native Americans on how to make history teaching more inclusive of indigenous peoples' perspectives.

