

“NOTHING IS LESS UNIVERSAL THAN THE IDEA OF RACE”:

Anti-Racism & Social Science at UNESCO, 1950-1962

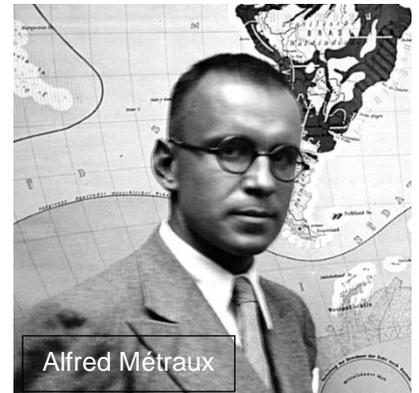
A lecture by Professor Alice Conklin (OSU)

Monday October 30, 2017, Cohen Hall 327, 3:30-5:00 p.m.



HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGY NEWSLETTER 2017 lecture- All Welcome!

In the spring of 1950 Alfred Métraux, the Swiss born, French-trained anthropologist of Amerindians, became head of the newly created Race Bureau at UNESCO in Paris, a position that he occupied until his retirement in 1962. Métraux had worked in both South and North America since the early 1930s, and his appointment offered French social scientists an opportunity to participate in the global attempt to fight prejudice through the study of race following World War II. The role of Claude Lévi-Strauss in drafting **UNESCO's first Race Statement**, on the biological aspects of race, is well known; but how many other French intellectuals became involved in Métraux's decade-long efforts to promote action on the social aspects of race? Given that American sociologists were world leaders in the study of race relations, did Métraux manage to introduce their methods and findings to a global audience? Preliminary analysis suggests that there was nothing universal about the language of race in the postwar decade, making transatlantic exchanges on the subject especially fraught.



Alice Conklin is Professor of History at Ohio State University and author of *In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology and Empire in France, 1850-1950* (2013, winner of the David Pinkney Prize); *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (1997); and co-author of *France and Its Empire since 1870* with Sarah Fishman and Robert Zaretsky (2nd ed, 2014) and *European Imperialism, 1830-1930: Climax and Contradictions*, with Ian Fletcher (1998).



support from the Department of Anthropology and the Mellon Penn Digital Humanities Initiative.

This public lecture marks the second year of the online **History of Anthropology Newsletter**, founded in 1973 by George W. Stocking and edited for a decade by Henrika Kuklick (U Penn, HSS). The journal was relaunched in digital form in 2015 by an editorial collective based in Penn's History and Sociology of Science Department, with

www.histanthro.org