CÉCILE CANUT is a filmmaker, sociolinguist researcher, full professor at Sorbonne Paris Cité University, author of Une langue sans qualité and Le spectre identitaire, entre langue et pouvoir au Mali. After working for some 15 years on questions linked to sociolinguistics in Mali, Canut currently dedicates her research to the circulation of discourses about Gypsies in Bulgaria and France. Director of several documentary films, she focuses on the processes of language subjectivation embedded in power relationships. Recently, she directed the project MIPRIMO (la migration prise aux mots / migration put in words), a French National Research Agency funded project about migration narratives in West Africa.

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In France, Bulgarian and Romanian migrants identified as “Roma” and usually living in slums are regularly the targets of categorizations, of rejection and of xenophobic violence. Even though other immigrated populations, such as Africans, have been subject to this type of ostracism for some time, the spectre of racism and xenophobia has spread under the effect of the diffusion of a number of political and media discourses. Whether coming from the right or the left of the political spectrum, these differentialist discourses stem from the highest level of the State, and have been regularly relayed by the media, thus legitimizing their presence within the French public space.

Recently, several analysts (anthropologists, sociologists and politologists) have put forth the responsibility of political leaders in the ethnicization and racialization of French populations, by trivializing xenophobic comments, to the point where they are systematically relayed today. Though it is decisive, is this analysis sufficient? Is the process of division of the French population that is currently at hand only the result of recent discourses, coming from the top down, and only for electoral gain? By adopting a political sociolinguistic approach, Cécile Canut will attempt to show how processes of inter-subjective fluctuation imply apprehending the complexity of discourses as being partly linked, at the heart of the neoliberal logic, to the question of origin and of primitivism.

PLEASE NOTE: This lecture will be in French only.

Ja, a young woman from Cabral, never went elsewhere in “search her life” like so many others Cape Verdeans do. She never left her village. Ja decides to travel around her island, in order to meet women who, like her, are engaged in the amazing bodily practice of batuke. In the course of her journey, we discover “the women who stay behind” and who overcome together, through the artistic expression of batuke, the harshness and the acuity of separation.

Batuke is one of the oldest musical forms on the island of Santiago. Characterized by an euphoric pace, jerking movements of the body and an orchestration based on voices and percussions, it became primarily a feminine form of expression. Women have replaced the drum by a ball of fabric lodged between their legs, on which they bang. One of them sings poems that talk about daily life, difficulties of life as a couple, or separation. To survive, their husbands, brothers and also their sisters or mothers went away in order to feed the family that stayed home.

PLEASE NOTE: This program will be in English.