In memory of
John Rex, 1925-2011

Professor John Rex, our former Guest Professor in IMER in the Memory of Willy Brandt at Malmö University (in spring 2001) has passed away aged 86, on 20 December 2011.

John Rex can be said to be the father of the subject discipline of IMER. We were and still are very proud that he wanted to join us at Malmö University as Guest Professor in IMER in 2001. At that time Malmö University and the Department of IMER were quite new and rather unknown internationally but that didn’t bother John Rex who saw our potential as a coming research milieu in migration and ethnicity.

Eminent University of Warwick sociologist Professor John Rex, is best known for his influential work on race and ethnic relations. John Rex left his native South Africa after being branded an "undesirable" as a result of his opposition to apartheid, and went on to produce influential work on race relations throughout his career. John Rex was one of the first sociologists in Britain to bring class to the study of "race" – as Race, Community and Conflict (1969), his pioneering study, with Robert Moore, of housing in Sparkbrook showed so starkly.

In 1970, he joined the University of Warwick, where he taught until 1979, returning to the institution for a second stint from 1984 to 1990. He set up Warwick's department of sociology and, after retiring from the role of research professor in ethnic relations, accepted an emeritus professorship at the university.

Professor Rex also taught at Aston University between 1979 and 1984, and took on visiting roles at institutions across the globe, including the University of Toronto, the University of Cape Town and New York University.

John Rex was well known as an expert on race. He was a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation’s international experts committee on racism and race prejudice in 1967 and served as president of the International Sociological Association's research committee on racial and ethnic minorities between 1974 and 1982.


One of his last books (written together with Montserrat Guibernau) The Ethnicity Reader: Migration, Nationalism and Multiculturalism (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997) is considered a classic, and is included in the course literature of many universities throughout the world.

Professor Rex gave two lectures and one seminar during his stay spring 2001 at Malmö University, which comprised: “The Development of Research on Ethnic Relations in Europe”, “Multicultural Institutions in an Egalitarian and Multicultural Society” (public lectures, 9th and
14th May 2001) and “Political Aspects of Multiculturalism and Research in the Multiethnic City” (research seminar). Professor Rex generously shared his long experience within IMER and its constituent research fields with colleagues and students alike in individual discussions, lectures, seminars and more informal encounters. In his experience of having founded the subject discipline of IMER, Professor Rex had access to insights, historical perspectives and background knowledge that were of great interest for everyone connected with the subject areas. Researchers and university lecturers from other disciplines also attended professor Rex’s lectures and seminars at Malmö University.

Björn Fryklund

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