

Anthro 722 Autumn 2018 Syllabus

ETHNOGRAPHIC THEORY AND RESEARCH METHODS

**Mondays, 10:30-1:30
CNH 307**

Instructor: Andrew Gilbert
Office: CNH 510
Office Hours: By appointment
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Course Description: Although located within the Department of Anthropology, this course is explicitly designed to engage graduate students from a range of disciplines and with a diverse set of research objectives. Ideally suited for graduate students who plan to carry out ethnographic fieldwork as part of their MA or PhD thesis research, it will also be valuable for students who are considering such fieldwork or who want to develop familiarity with ethnographic research methods. Themes and readings will balance an on-going discussion of research epistemology (How do we know what we know?) with an exploration of concrete research methods. We will explore the origins of ethnography within anthropology (What problems of knowledge was it designed to meet?), and consider each moment in the ethnographic research process: from conceptualization and design, to fieldwork practice, analysis, and writing. Students will get the most out of this course if they bring a specific research project or question to it.

Course Evaluation:

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|---------------------------------|-----|
| 10 Weekly Assignments (5% each) | 50% |
| Participation | 20% |
| Final Essay/Proposal | 30% |

Course Texts/Readings:

The course readings are a mix of articles, full books, parts of books, and chapters in edited volumes. The readings will be made available either through the usual way (electronic access to articles through the library, access to e-books through the library, hard copies of books on reserve), or supplied by the instructor. We will be reading the majority or all of some monographs, and students may wish to order their own copies through Amazon or another avenue.

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g., the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, Appendix 3, www.mcmaster.ca/senate/academic/ac_integrity.htm.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g., the submission of work that is not one’s own for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

In this course we will be using a software package designed to reveal plagiarism. Students will be required to submit their work electronically and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES E-MAIL COMMUNICATION POLICY

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Email Forwarding in MUGSI: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/uts/support/email/emailforward.html>

Most questions can and should be asked in class/discussion section or in person outside of class/discussion section. However, if you need to email the instructor, do so with very brief questions (a couple of sentences) and in a form that can be answered briefly (ideally “yes” or

“no”). We cannot respond to lengthy questions in writing but are happy to discuss them in office hours. Please do not expect an immediate answer. We will try and answer emails within two days (three if it is over a weekend).

When sending the instructor an email put **ANT 722** in the subject line of your email. Please sign it with your full name and student number. A final note on communication etiquette: when writing the instructor an email, please conform it to the standard greeting in letter-writing practices, i.e. “Dear Prof. Gilbert.”

LAPTOP AND PDA/CELL PHONE POLICY

In class lectures and discussion sections, laptops may only be used for taking notes or reading notes during discussion. Students using laptops for other purposes will be asked to turn their laptops off for the remainder of the course. Students using laptops are asked to sit in the first five rows of the class.

Students are required to silence and refrain from using cell phones and other PDAs during class meetings and discussion sections. This includes sending and receiving text messages. Students who violate this rule will be asked to leave the classroom.

LATE AND MISSING WORK

You are responsible for completing all of the learning assessments on the dates for which they are scheduled. In the event of missed course work and/or exam(s), the student must take the following actions:

1) Properly submit a McMaster Student Absence (MSAF) Form (note that this can only be used once per term). Please note that policies concerning the use of MSAFs have changed (see <http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>) OR contact your Faculty office if you have already used the MSAF once.

2) Contact the instructor immediately after having submitted the MSAF form or contact your Faculty office (within 24 hours) to provide an explanation for the missed coursework and/or missed exams. Grades will not be re-weighted. You are responsible to schedule an appropriate date to submit your assignment.

If you do not properly submit an MSAF Form, or if you have already submitted one during the semester, your late work will be assessed a late penalty of half a grade per day up to 5 days (i.e. if you earned a B, it becomes a B- after one day, a C+ after two, a C after three, and so on), after which the assignment will not be accepted without appropriate medical documentation. Emailed excuses do not constitute appropriate documentation. Extensions are almost never granted.

SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

All written work (essays and assignments) will be submitted in hard copy except when noted otherwise. Ungraded work will **not be accepted** or date stamped by the administrative staff in the Department of Anthropology. All written work is subject to evaluation for originality. This

course may use an evaluation service provided by Turnitin.com, which **students may opt out** of; in this case, Grammarly.com will be used. If you would like to opt out of evaluation by Turnitin.com, please let the instructor know before October 1.

ACCESSIBILITY

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

WEEK 1: SEPTEMBER 10: INTRODUCTION

WEEK 2: SEPTEMBER 17: OPENING STATEMENTS

Required Reading:

McGranahan, Carole. 2014. "What is Ethnography? Teaching Ethnographic Sensibilities without Fieldwork." *Teaching Anthropology*. 4: 23-36

Keane, Webb. 2005. "Estrangement, Intimacy, and the Objects of Anthropology." In George Steinmetz (ed). *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences. Positivism and Its Epistemological Others*. Duke University Press. (26)

Herzfeld, Michael. 2000. "Anthropology and the Politics of Significance" *Etnografica*. 4(1): 5-36

MWRG. 2009. "A new form of collaboration in cultural anthropology: Matsutake worlds." *American Ethnologist*. 36(2): 380-403.

Narayan, Kirin. 2012. "Story and Theory" in *Alive in the Writing*. University of Chicago Press. (22)

Recommended Reading (on other disciplinary traditions of ethnography):

Charmaz, Kathy. 2014. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. Sage. Selections.

Burawoy, Michael. 2000. "Introduction." In *Global Ethnography. Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World*. University of California Press. (40)

Schatz, Edward. 2009. "Introduction. Ethnographic Immersion and the Study of Politics." In *Political Ethnography. What Immersion Contributes to the Study of Power*. Chicago: U Chicago Press. (20)

Wedeen, Lisa. 2010. "Reflections on Ethnographic Work in Political Science" *Annual Review of Political Science* 13: 255-272

WEEK 3: SEPTEMBER 24: CLASSICS AND CRITIQUES (AND AFTER) IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Assignment: Students will pick one of the texts from the reading list below and prepare a five-minute presentation to be delivered in class, complete with a handout of the most important points for each student.

Required Reading:

Bronislaw Malinowski, 1922. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, pp. 1-26.

Mead, Margaret 1928 "Introduction"& "A Day in Samoa" in *Coming of Age in Samoa*.

Clifford, James 1983. "On Ethnographic Authority" *Representations* 2 (Spring) 118-146

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, 1991. "Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness"

Assignment Reading: Many of the following articles appear in *Cultural Anthropology* 27(3).

"The Legacies of Writing Culture and the Near Future of the Ethnographic Form: A Sketch" by George E. Marcus

"Ethnography in Late Industrialism" by Kim Fortun

"Kinky Empiricism" by Danilyn Rutherford

"Ethnography Is, Ethnography Ain't" by John L. Jackson Jr.

"Excelente Zona Social" by Michael T. Taussig

"Precarity's Forms" by Kathleen Stewart

Talal Asad, 1986, "The Concept of Translation in British Social Anthropology" in James Clifford and George Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 141-164.

John Borneman and Abdellah Hammoudi. 2009. "The Fieldwork Encounter, Experience, and the Making of Truth: An Introduction." In *Being There. The Fieldwork Encounter and the Making of Truth*. (20)

Ortner, Sherry. 2016. "Dark anthropology and its others. Theory since the 1980s." *Hau*. 6(1).

<http://www.haujournal.org/index.php/hau/article/view/hau6.1.004/2246>

Robbins, Joel. 2013. "Beyond the suffering subject: toward an anthropology of the good." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 19:447-462.

Aunger, Robert. "On Ethnography: Storytelling or Science?" *Current Anthropology* 36(1): 97-130

Further Reading:

Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, 1997, "Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity and the Politics of Difference" in *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, eds. A. Gupta and J. Ferguson (Durham: Duke University Press), pp. 33-51.

WEEK 4: OCTOBER 1: FIELDWORK RELATIONS, ETHNOGRAPHIC OPENNESS AND ANALYTIC CLOSURE

Assignment: Student will fill out a series of short written exercises designed to "people" your project with the types of relevant research subjects in your site, and identify the social and political fields they are a part of. These memos will form part of our discussion in class, and a copy will be submitted to the instructor.

Required Reading:

Bashkow, Ira. 2006. "Introduction. The Cultural Construction of Whitemen." *The Meaning of Whitemen. Race and Modernity in the Orokaiva Cultural World*. U Chicago Press.

Dumont, Jean-Paul. 1978. *The Headman and I. Ambiguity and Ambivalence in the Fieldworking Experience*. Selections.

Gable, Eric. 2014. "The anthropology of guilt and rapport. Moral mutuality in ethnographic fieldwork" *HAU*. 4(1). <http://www.haujournal.org/index.php/hau/article/view/hau4.1.010/651>

Narayan, Kirin. 2012. "Person" in *Alive in the Writing*. University of Chicago Press. (21)

Recommended:

White, Bob W. 2012. "From Experimental Moment to Legacy Moment: Collaboration and the Crisis of Representation." *Collaborative Ethnographies*. 5: 65-97

Clifford Geertz, 2000 [1968], "Thinking as Moral Act: Ethical Dimensions of Anthropological Fieldwork in the New States" in *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), pp. 21-41.

AAA Code of Ethics (+other resources) <http://www.aaanet.org/cmtes/ethics/Ethics-Resources.cfm>

Case Studies in Ethics: <http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ch3.htm>

THANKSGIVING: 8 OCTOBER.

WEEK 5: OCTOBER 15: READING/WRITING ETHNOGRAPHY I

To Be Determined in Consultation with Students

WEEK 6: OCTOBER 22: DEFINING THE FIELD (AND TOPIC AND QUESTION)

Assignment: Write a statement, of no more than two single-spaced pages, outlining a topic, the social scientific problem it presents, some ruling question/s, and a specification of field site. The subject matter may be your research project or an imaginary, but otherwise feasible project. Please email your assignment by 6pm on Saturday, October 21. I will then circulate them to the class. Please read them before Monday's class.

Booth, et. al. 1995. "From Topics to Questions" and "From Questions to Problems" in *The Craft of Research*. (32 pages)

Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, 1997, "The Field as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology" in *Anthropological Locations*, eds. A. Gupta and J. Ferguson (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 1-46.

Passaro, Joanne. 1997. "You can't take the Subway to the Field!": 'Village' Epistemologies in the Global Village" In *Anthropological Locations. Boundaries and Grounds for a Field Science*. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson. Eds. Berkeley, London, Los Angeles: University of California Press

Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. "The Production of Locality" in *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. 178-199.

Recommended Reading:

Ferguson, James and Akhil Gupta. 2002. "Spatializing States: Toward an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality" *American Ethnologist* 29(4): 981-1002

Michel-Rolph Trouillot. 2003. "Making Sense: The Fields in which We Work." In *Global Transformations. Anthropology and the Modern World*. Palgrave. 117-139

WEEK 7: OCTOBER 29: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION & FIELD NOTES

Assignment: Spend two hours observing (and participating) at a public event or in a public site such as a grocery store, a shopping mall, a hotel lobby, bus or train stop, or a university library. Before beginning, conduct a risk assessment, and clear the interview subject, site and topic(s) with course instructor. *Keep field notes*. You should have a fairly focused question in mind before you begin. Some possible themes to explore include the negotiation of difference in shared spaces, negotiating and performing identities and relations, the relation between commodities and identities, and/or the generation of geographies of security. Please email your field notes and two single-spaced (12 pt) pages of commentary on the exercise no later than 5pm on Saturday, October 28. These will be pre-circulated and read before our class meeting on Monday.

Required Reading:

Clifford Geertz, 1973, "Thick Description" in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books), pp. 3-32.

Kirin Narayan, 1993, "How Native is the Native Anthropologist?" *American Anthropologist* 95,3: 671-686.

Causey, Andrew. 2017. *Drawn to See. Drawing as an Ethnographic Method*. University of Toronto Press. **Excerpts**.

Roger Sanjek, 1990, "A Vocabulary of Fieldnotes," *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*, ed. Roger Sanjek (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), pp. 92-138.

Recommended Reading:

Bernard, Russell H. 2006 "Participant Observation" in *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (fourth edition). AltaMira Press.

Burawoy, Michael. 1998. "The Extended Case Method." *Sociological Theory*. 16:1

George E. Marcus, 1998, "The Uses of Complicity in the Changing Mise-en-Scene of Anthropological Fieldwork" in *Ethnography through Thick and Thin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), pp. 105 -132.

Jean E. Jackson, 1990, "'I Am a Fieldnote': Fieldnotes as a Symbol of Professional Identity" in *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*, ed. Roger Sanjek (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), pp. 3-33.

Tedlock, Barbara. 1991. "From Participant Observation to Observation of Participants: The Emergence of Narrative Ethnography." *Journal of Anthropological Research* 47(1): 69-94.

WEEK 8: NOVEMBER 5: RESEARCH COMMUNICATION I

Assignment: Select a person of your choice to interview. It should not be someone you already know well. Before beginning, conduct a risk assessment (see handout), and clear the interview subject and topic(s) with course instructor. Then, send your potential interviewee the letter of information (following the template provided), and after gaining consent, conduct an interview of 30-40 minutes on a topic such as the following:

- (a) a (nontrivial) dispute in which he/she was involved
- (b) an encounter with the police, state bureaucracy, or legal system
- (c) participation in a significant historical event
- (d) another topic of your choice

Tape record the interview, transcribe the first ten minutes, and write up a brief report on the exercise, covering, *inter alia*, (a) what you found difficult and surprising about doing the interview; (b) what you would do differently if you did it again; (c) what kinds of knowledge you hoped would be produced but (perhaps) were not; (d) what the problems would be in deriving "ethnographic data" from your informant's answers to your questions. This report should be no

more than two single-spaced pages in addition to the transcription. Please email your assignment to me no later than 5pm on Saturday, November 4. These will be pre-circulated and read before our class meeting on Monday.

Required Reading:

Bernard, Russell H. 2006 "Interviewing: Structured and Semi-structured" in *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (fourth edition) [210-250] AltaMira.

Madison, D. Soyini. 2005 "Formulating Questions" (p. 26-36) in *Critical ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance* Thousand Oaks: Sage Press

_____. 1984. "Learning How to Ask: Native Metacommunicative Competence and the Incompetence of Fieldworkers." *Language in Society* (13): 1: 1-28

_____. 1983. "Questions for the ethnographer. A critical examination of the role of the interview in fieldwork." *Semiotica* 46-2/4, 233-261.

Recommended:

Briggs, Charles. 1986. *Learning How to Ask. a sociolinguistic appraisal of the role of the interview in social science research.* Cambridge U Press.

WEEK 9: NOVEMBER 12: RESEARCH COMMUNICATION II

Assignment: Select a person of your choice to interview. It should not be someone you already know well. Before beginning, conduct a risk assessment, and clear the interview subject and topic(s) with course instructor. Then, send your potential interviewee the letter of information (following the template provided), and after gaining consent ask them to narrate:

- (a) their life as the product of significant events
- (b) a moment in their lives of great success or failure/regret
- (c) their witnessing of a moment or event of historical relevance

Do NOT tape record the interview. Write up a 2-page report, covering, *inter alia*, (a) what you found difficult about doing the interview; (b) what most surprised you about it; (c) what you would do differently if you did it again; (d) what kinds of knowledge you hoped would be produced but (perhaps) did not; (e) what the problems would be in deriving "ethnographic data" from your informant's answers to your questions. These notes should be no more than 2 single-spaced pages (12 pt). Please email your assignment to me no later than 5pm on Saturday, November 11. These will be pre-circulated and read before our class meeting on Monday.

Required Reading:

Cruikshank, Julie. *Life Lived Like a Story* (selections)

Pierre Bourdieu, 1987, "The Biographical Illusion," Working Papers and Proceedings of the Center for Psychosocial Studies, No. 14. Chicago: Center for Psychosocial Studies. (reprinted in 2000. *Identity: A Reader*. Paul du Gay, Jessica Evans and Peter Redman (eds), Sage)

Vincent Crapanzano, "The Life History in Anthropological Field Work," *Anthropology and Humanism Quarterly* 2 (2-3): 3-7.

Portelli, Alessandro. 1991. "The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Memory and Event." In *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories*. Albany: State University of New York Press. Pp. 1-26.

McGranahan, Carole. 2012. "Mao in Tibetan disguise: History, ethnography, and excess." *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*. 2(1): 213-245.

Recommended Reading:

Alessandro Portelli, 1997, Chapter 1, "Oral History as Genre" in *The Battle of Valle Guilla: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), 3-24.

Dipesh Chakrabarty, 2000, Chapter 3, "Translating Life Worlds into Labor and History" in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), pp. 72-96.

WEEK 10: NOVEMBER 19: ARCHIVES AND ARTEFACTS

Assignment: From popular media, the web, archival sources, published memoirs, or fictional writing, gather three to five short texts (or extracts from texts) that relate to your own ethnographic research topic. Prepare a one-page annotated list of these sources, describing each and noting its potential usefulness as a source of ethnographic understanding. Then present one of these texts in an interpretive discussion, showing how your reading might advance your anthropological project, but also how the text must be positioned in a social field. Please email your assignment to me no later than 5pm on Saturday, November 18. These will be pre-circulated and read before our class meeting on Monday.

Required Reading:

Nicholas Dirks, 2002, "Annals of the Archive: Ethnographic Notes on the Sources of History" in *From the Margins: Historical Anthropology and its Futures*, Brian Keith Axel, ed. (Duke: Duke University Press), pp. 47-65.

Lyons, Laura E. 2003 "Hand-to-hand History Ephemera and Irish Republicanism" *Interventions : international journal of postcolonial studies*. Vol 5(3):407-425

Dumit, Joseph. 20. "Writing the Implosion. Teaching the World One Thing at a Time." *Cultural Anthropology* 29(2): 344-362.

Hoffman, Daniel. 2014. "Corpus: Mining the Border." *Cultural Anthropology*. January 31.
https://culanth.org/photo_essays/1-corporis-mining-the-border

Recommended Reading:

Povinelli, Elizabeth. 2002. "The Poetics of Ghosts: Social Reproduction in the Archive of the Nation." From *The Cunning of Recognition. Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism*.

WEEK 11: NOVEMBER 26: READING/WRITING ETHNOGRAPHY

Assignment: Students will be required to fill out a series of short written exercises designed to interrogate the many facets of how written ethnography is put together (based upon this week's readings). These memos will form the basis of our discussion in class, and a copy will be submitted to the instructor.

Required Reading: To be determined in consultation with students.

WEEK 12: DECEMBER 3: DECOLONIZING ANTHROPOLOGY

Assignment: Students will be required to fill out a series of short written exercises designed to consider the stakes of the decolonization debates in cultural anthropology. These memos will form the basis of our discussion in class, and a copy will be submitted to the instructor.

Required Reading:

<https://savageminds.org/series/decolonizing-anthropology/>

WEEK 13: DECEMBER 10: READING/WRITING ETHNOGRAPHY

Assignment: Students will be required to fill out a series of short written exercises designed to interrogate the many facets of how written ethnography is put together (based upon this week's readings). These memos will form the basis of our discussion in class, and a copy will be submitted to the instructor.

Required Reading: To be determined in consultation with students.