

Department of Anthropology and Sociology (ANSO)

Academic year 2019-2020

Research Methods in Anthropology and Sociology

ANSO081 - Autumn - 6 ECTS [Schedule & Room](#)

Course Description

In this introductory seminar on research methods in anthropology and sociology, we will discuss different ways to frame a research problem, to read and analyze research findings, and to critically evaluate claims of “truth” about the social world. Challenging the quantitative and qualitative divide, we will focus on the strengths and weaknesses of different research approaches and techniques (e.g. fieldwork through participant observation and description, various forms of interviews, questionnaires, as well as analysis through statistical or theoretical generalization) as well as the benefits of putting them in dialogue in multidisciplinary academic and professional environments. Epistemological and practical issues as well as ethical questions that arise from research practice will also be discussed. The teaching will pave the ground for a more applied seminar that will take place in the spring and a third seminar on how to conceive a research design in the fall of the second year.

> PROFESSORS

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Syllabus

Structures and Objectives

The teaching is based on the assumption that the social sciences are not meant to discover a pre-existing object but construct their approach in a reflexive movement. Methods are not learned in the abstract reading textbooks, but through concrete research and communication with peers. Training in social sciences requires acquiring certain investigative techniques, both qualitative and quantitative, but also developing the capacity to assess critically the role of the researcher.

The seminar will consist in interactive lectures on the case selection, observation, in-depth interview, and analysis. Ethical issues will receive constant attention. The aim is to put the participants in the position to learn from personal experience and debate, to encourage them to question common

sense and illusion of immediate knowledge. The seminar will prepare the students to the small fieldwork they will conduct during the spring semester for the second part of their methodological training and on a longer term to the research they will carry out for their MA thesis.

Considering the interactive format, a regular participation is necessary. Students must attend all of the scheduled classes, unless excused by the instructors. They will be asked to notify in advance if they are unable to come to a class.

Evaluation and Grading

The students' performance will be evaluated on the basis of classroom participation, the quality and timelines of the assignments. More precisely students will be requested to:

- Participate actively in the exercises and discussions in class during the whole semester.
- Write an essay of no more than **2000 words**, due by **23 November 2019**, examining the methodological aspects of a classic monograph in anthropology or sociology (list provided by us). The various papers will be made available to all the participants on the internet class site for the **discussions** that will take place on **28 November & 5 December 2019**.
- Prepare a protocol for the field research they will conduct during the following semester (spring 2020) of no more than **2000 words**, due by **21 December 2019**. It will present the first ideas related to the strategy for approaching people and negotiate one's presence, as well as an outline of the interview and observation grids (these documents will be discussed collectively at the beginning of the spring semester)

Grade will be determined as follows: 30% for general participation; 40% for the essay on a monograph and its discussion in class; 30% for the research protocol. The seminar provides 6 ECTS.

Course Policies

- Papers should be written in English or French, double-spaced, using standard 12 point font, with 1 inch margins. The student's name, the paper's title, the date, the course's title and page numbers must be mentioned.
- Quotations and bibliography must follow the Chicago Manual of Style or the Harvard Referencing System.
- Students must hand in papers on time electronically as a Word file (no need to provide a hard copy). Papers that are sent late without a good reason or exceed importantly the word limit will not receive anything higher than a 4.0.
- Students who missed more than two classes without being excused by the instructor will not receive anything higher than a 4.0.
- Plagiarism constitutes a breach of academic integrity and will not be tolerated. Students who present the work of others as their own will receive a 0.
- The assigned readings (selected excerpts of the books indicated in the course schedule) will be made available as pdf files on the class site at least one week in advance.
- Laptops may be used only for legitimate classroom purposes, such as taking notes, downloading class information, or working on an in-class exercise. All other devices should remain off or in silent mode.

Course Schedule

Please note that the theme of each week and the reading list might be modified during the semester. Students will be informed in due time.

Week 1 (19 September) – Introduction; organizational issues

Week 2 (26 September) – Social sciences as science?

- ALFORD Robert R., *The Craft of Inquiry: Theories, Methods, Evidence*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, chapters 1, 2 & 3, pp. 11-53
- HARDING, Sandra. "After the neutrality ideal: Science, politics, and" strong objectivity"." *Social research* (1992): 567-587
- WEBER Max, "'Objectivity" in Social Science and Social Policy," *The Methodology of Social Sciences* (translated and edited by Edward Shils and Henry Finch), Glencoe: Free Press, 1949 [1st ed. 1904], pp. 49-112.

Week 3 (3 October) – Urban wondering in Geneva/ Déambulations Urbaines à Genève

Week 4 (10 October) – Quantifying in Sociology and Anthropology

- MENNICKEN, Andrea and Wendy Nelson Espeland "What's New with Numbers? Sociological Approaches to the Study of Quantification". *Annual Review of Sociology* 2019 45:1
- List of papers for exercise

Week 5 (17 October) – Deciphering quantitative data

- Group exercise in class

Week 6 (24 October) – Mixing methods

- SMALL Mario Luis, "'How Many Cases Do I Need?' On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field-based Research," *Ethnography* 10(1), 2009, pp. 5-38.
- SMALL, Mario Luis. "How to conduct a mixed methods study: Recent trends in a rapidly growing literature." *Annual review of sociology* 37 (2011): 57-86.
- Matias LÓPEZ, Graziella MORAES SILVA and Chana TEEGER. "Economic and cultural determinants of elite attitudes toward redistribution". (working paper under review)

Week 7 (31 October) Observation

- BEAUD Stéphane, WEBER Florence, "Observer," in: *Guide de l'enquête de terrain: Produire et analyser des données ethnographiques*, Paris: La Découverte, 2003, pp. 139-175.
- BECKER Howard, "Problems of Inference and Proof in Participant Observation," *American Sociological Review* 23(6), 1958, pp. 652-660.
- BERNARD H. Russell, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Lanham, New York, Toronto, Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2011 [fifth edition], chap. 12 & 14, pp. 256-290 & 306-336.
- BERNARD H. Russell, GRAVLEE Clarence C. (eds), *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015 [2nd ed.], chap. 8, pp. 251-292.
- PETONNET Colette, "L'observation flottante: L'exemple d'un cimetière parisien," *L'Homme* 22(4), 1982, pp. 37-47.

Week 8 (7 November) – Interviewing

- BEAUD Stéphane, WEBER Florence, "Préparer et négocier un entretien ethnographique," "Conduire un entretien," in: *Guide de l'enquête de terrain: Produire et analyser des données ethnographiques*, Paris: La Découverte, 2003, pp. 176-230.
- BERNARD H. Russell, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Lanham, New York, Toronto, Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2011 [fifth edition], chap. 8, 9 & 10, pp. 156-237.
- BERNARD H. Russell, GRAVLEE Clarence C. (eds), *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015 [2nd ed.], chap. 10 & 11, pp. 313-390.
- KAUFMANN Jean-Claude, *L'entretien compréhensif*, Paris: Nathan, 1996.
- PIALOUX Michel, "L'ouvrière et le chef d'équipe ou comment parler du travail," *Travail et emploi* 62, 1995, pp. 4-39.

Week 9 (14 November) – Interviewing 2

- LAMONT, Michèle, and Ann SWIDLER. "Methodological pluralism and the possibilities and limits of interviewing." *Qualitative Sociology* 37.2 (2014): 153-171.
- MORAES SILVA, Graziella, Luciana SOUZA LEÃO, and Barbara GRILLO. "Seeing whites: views of black Brazilians in Rio de Janeiro." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (forthcoming, online first).

Week 10 (21 November) Description and field notes

- BEAUD Stéphane, WEBER Florence, "Travailler les entretiens et le journal de terrain," in: *Guide de l'enquête de terrain: Produire et analyser des données ethnographiques*, Paris: La Découverte, 2003, pp. 237-263.
- BERNARD H. Russell, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Lanham, New York, Toronto, Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2011 [fifth edition], chap. 13, pp. 291-305.
- GEERTZ Clifford, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture," in: *The Interpretation of Cultures – Selected Essays*, New York: Basic Books, 1973, pp. 3-30.
- GLASER Barney G., STRAUSS Anselm L., "The Discovery of Grounded Theory," in: *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, Chicago: Aldine, 1967, pp. 1-18.
- LAPLANTINE François, *La description ethnographique*, Paris: Nathan, 1996.

Week 11 (28 November) – Discussion of monograph methods critical reviews

Week 12 (5 December) – Discussion of monograph methods critical reviews

Week 13 (12 December) – Material culture and the study of non-humans, by Olivier Schinz (Musée d'ethnographie de Neuchâtel)

- BERGER Arthur Asa, *What Objects Mean*, Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 2009.
- JULIEN Marie-Pierre, ROSSELIN Céline, *La culture matérielle*, Paris: La Découverte (Repères), 2005.
- LATOUR Bruno, *Changer de société: refaire de la sociologie*, Paris: La Découverte, 2006.

Week 14 (19 December) – Conclusion; research protocols

- BURAWOY Michael, "Introduction: Reaching for the Global," "Grounding Globalization," in: Michael Burawoy *et al.*, *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections, and Imaginations in a Postmodern World*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, pp. 1-40, 337-350.
- DA COL Giovanni, GRAEBER David, "The Return of Ethnographic Theory," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 1(1), 2011, pp. vi–xxxv.
- GUPTA Akhil, FERGUSON James, "Discipline and Practice: 'The Field' as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology," in: Akhil Gupta, James Ferguson (eds), *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, pp. 1-46.
- ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND, *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*, 6th ed., London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951.
- STOCKING George W. Jr., "The Ethnographer's Magic: Fieldwork in British Anthropology from Tylor to Malinowski," in: George W. Stocking Jr. (ed.), *Observers Observed: Essays on Ethnographic Fieldwork*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983, pp. 71-120.