

Department of Anthropology and Sociology (ANSO)

Academic year 2019-2020

The Anthropology of International Intervention

ANSO120- Autumn - 3 ECTS

[Schedule & Room](#)

Course Description

Ethnographic approaches have identified significant analytic blind spots in the scholarship on international intervention, blind spots rooted both in the limits of technocratic problem-solving paradigms as well as in critiques which are concerned mostly with showing such interventions as a species of transnational neo-imperialism. Both are limited in what they can account for, particularly the unpredictable and creative processes of social and cultural production and transformation that happen at the scene of intervention. This course develops such an accounting by a focus on and theorization of 'intervention encounters' the engagements across difference and inequality set in motion by policies, projects, and programs that aim to accomplish some goal of transformation, whether under the sign of humanitarianism, peace-building, democratization, development, transitional justice, or state-building. We will build an analysis of such engagements to reveal powerful dynamics and instabilities that decisively shape the politics and effects of such interventions as they unfold, one interaction at a time.

> PROFESSOR

Andrew Gilbert
Andrew.Gilbert@pm.me

[Office hours](#)

> ASSISTANT

Dorota Kozaczuk
dorota.kozaczuk@graduateinstitute.ch

[Office hours](#)

Syllabus

Objectives and Structure

This seminar introduces students to a sustained argument about the particular contribution anthropology has to make to the study of international intervention, drawing in large part on the instructor's forthcoming book. In doing so, we will consider various features of intervention encounters: their performative dimensions, diverse ways of constructing and claiming authority and legitimacy, and the understudied role of mass media and documentary or textual production. Our study of these features will be valuable to all graduate students, regardless of whether they have a specific research interest in international intervention.

Meeting 1 is built around a set of introductory readings designed to flesh out the main contours of the course objectives. We begin with an example of a critical essay written within the success/failure paradigm, and an essay that makes a strong claim that international interventions are a form of transnational domination. Students are required to read **only one** of these; they illustrate, in part, some of the limits this course seeks to push past. Next we move onto an article that introduces the concept of “the encounter” in anthropology, followed by a chapter that provides background on the concepts of performance and performativity. The final reading fleshes out the promises of an encounters approach for an anthropology of international intervention and outlines the approach to authority and legitimacy that the course will take. The suggested reading by Cepek is an excellent illustration of the limits of a Foucauldian focus on governmentality for an anthropology of intervention.

Meeting 2 is built around case studies from the Balkans and Haiti that focus on the understudied role of mass media and documentary production in intervention encounters. They illustrate well the unpredictable and contested nature of international intervention. In addition to the sustained focus on encounters and legitimacy, topics include publics and publicity, governmentality, bureaucracy, and the political economy of aid.

Meeting 3 is built around case studies from Bosnia, Nepal, and East Timor that illustrate the complexity, unpredictability, and productivity of intervention encounters. In addition to the sustained focus on encounters and legitimacy, topics include democratization, state-building, development, and recontextualization.

Meeting 4 continues the focus of previous meetings on Bosnia and Haiti with attention to face-to-face interactions, a site and problem-space which has curiously been overlooked in many studies of international intervention. In addition to the sustained focus on encounters and legitimacy, topics include humanitarianization, the sense-making function of ideologies about ethnic identity, and the performative requirements involved in fulfilling roles of authority.

Course Requirements and Grading:

It should go without saying that with such a tight schedule and limited number of meetings, attendance is mandatory, as is coming with all the readings completed. **A special note:** Most of the readings are case studies, and they often contain lots of detail that requires close attention, so give yourself time with them.

Participation: 30%

Participation includes taking part in class discussion, which requires having completed the readings and coming ready to discuss them. I will pre-circulate questions to help you prepare for our discussion in class, but you should always be ready to answer core question, such as: What is the main point(s) or argument(s) of this text? What are the stakes of the argument/why, according to the author, does this argument matter? What kind of evidence does the author use to make their points/arguments?

We will also have a few exercises that we complete *during* our seminar meetings, and this will also be evaluated as participation.

One short paper: 15%

Students will be required to submit a short paper in response to questions about the readings for Meetings 3 and 4. These papers will be submitted halfway between Meeting 2 and 3. Further instructions will be handed out during the first seminar meeting.

One short oral presentation:15%

During Meeting 3 or 4, students will be required to offer comments on a response paper of another student. Further instructions will be handed out during the first seminar meeting.

One final paper: 40%

A final paper of 2000 words will constitute the final assignment for the course. Further instructions will be handed out during the first seminar meeting.

Course Policies

- Papers should be written in English, 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 included.
- 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 valid reason, significantly exceed the word limit, and do not comply with the general guidelines will not receive a grade higher than 4.0. Word limits must be adhered to within +/- 10%. Word limits exclude references
- Students who missed more than one class without being excused by the instructor will not receive a grade higher than 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.
- Assigned readings will be made available as electronic reserve on the class' website.

Schedule:

Meeting 1, Thursday 10 October, 10.15-12.00 (S5)

Why Encounters for an Anthropology of International Intervention?

Required Readings:

Stewart, Rory. 2011. "The Plane to Kabul." In Rory Stewart and Gerald Knaus, *Can Intervention Work?* New York: W.W. Norton and Company. Pp. 7-50, 58-60, 77-80. **OR** Pandolfi, Mariella. 2010. "From Paradox to Paradigm: The Permanent State of Emergency in the Balkans" In Fassin, Didier, and Mariella Pandolfi, eds. 2010. *Contemporary States of Emergency. The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions*. New York: Zone Books. 153-172

Faier, Lieba and Lisa Rofel. 2014. "Ethnographies of Encounter." *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 363-377.

Jeffrey, Alex. 2013. *The Improvised State: Sovereignty, Performance, and Agency in Dayton Bosnia*. Malden: Wiley & Sons. Chapter Two: 20-40.

Gilbert, Andrew. 2020. *International Intervention and the Problem of Legitimacy: Encounters in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Introduction + Interlude.

Highly recommended: Cepek, Michael L. 2011. "Foucault in the forest. Questioning environmentality in Amazonia." *American Ethnologist*. 38(3): 501-515.

Meeting 2, Friday October 11, 08.15-10.00 (S1) + 16.15-18.00 (S2)

Sites of Intervention Encounters: Mass Media, Reports, and Other Documents

Required Readings:

Gilbert, Andrew. 2020. *International Intervention and the Problem of Legitimacy: Encounters in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Chapter 1.

Graan, Andrew. 2016. "Strategic publicity: On international intervention and the performativity of public communication in postconflict Macedonia." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6(3): 277-303.

James, Erica Caple. 2010. *Democratic Insecurities. Violence, Trauma, and Intervention in Haiti*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 2. 81-131.

Meeting 3, Thursday October 17, 08.15-12.00 (S5)

Recontextualization and the Social and Cultural Production of Intervention Encounters

Required Readings:

Gilbert, Andrew. 2020. *International Intervention and the Problem of Legitimacy: Encounters in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Chapter 2 + Conclusion (esp. 305-312)

Hohe, Tanja. 2002. "The Clash of Paradigms: International Administration and Local Political Legitimacy in East Timor" *Contemporary Southeast Asia*. 24(3): 569-589

Pigg, Stacy Leigh. 1997 "'Found in Most Traditional Societies': Traditional Medical Practitioners between Culture and Development" in *International Development and the Social Sciences. Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 259-290

Recommended Reading:

Levitt, Peggy and Sally Merry. 2009. "Vernacularization on the ground: local uses of global women's rights in Peru, China, India and the United States" *Global Networks*. 9(4): 441-461

Meeting 4: Friday, October 18, 08.15-12.00 (S4)

Authority and Legitimacy in Face-to-Face Intervention Encounters

Required Readings

Gilbert, Andrew. 2020. *International Intervention and the Problem of Legitimacy: Encounters in Postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Chapter 3 and 4 (Optional: Interlude 2)

James, Erica Caple. 2010. *Democratic Insecurities. Violence, Trauma, and Intervention in Haiti*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 5. 223-269