Department of Anthropology and Sociology (ANSO)
Academic year 2019-2020

Anthropology in/of Institutions
ANSO088- Spring - 6 ECTS
Schedule & Room

Course Description

This course considers state bureaucracies, international organizations, financial institutions, and NGOs as sites of anthropological research. Drawing on classic social theory and contemporary work in the areas of political anthropology, the anthropology of policy, and science and technology studies, among others, we examine conceptualizations of fieldwork and the field site, the challenges and dilemmas of conducting ethnographic research within institutional settings, and the relation of theory and method. Class readings and discussions are complemented by assignments that offer students the opportunity to conduct original research and produce their own institutional ethnographies. The course aims to demonstrate the ways in which anthropology can expand and deepen understandings of institutional power and practice, as well as the ways in which anthropological theory and practice have developed through the study of institutions.

Syllabus

This course combines assignments based on readings and academic writing with the opportunity to pursue participant observation outside the classroom. Consequently, managing your time in order to complete assignments successfully will require a considerable amount of self-direction and organization on your part.

Class Participation (30 %)
Attendance in class is mandatory, and I expect you to come to class on time, having read and reflected on the readings, ready to participate by contributing your ideas and questions. If you cannot attend class, please inform me by 9am on the day of class.
**Reading Responses (30%)**

To complement your reading, and prepare for class discussion, you will be required to write a reading response of 500 words (with the exception of weeks 1, 6, and 16). Your responses should be 500 words in length. They should briefly highlight the central idea of each reading, discuss connections, similarities, or differences among them; and where relevant make connections to course material by addressing conceptual, theoretical, or methodological issues or questions related to institutional ethnography and/or the anthropology in/of institutions. You may also choose to discuss what you perceive to be their merits and/or weaknesses, raise questions and provide critical assessment of the arguments and ideas, and draw on examples from everyday life where relevant.

There are a total of 10 weeks for which reading responses are due, however you are required to submit a minimum of 8 responses (thus you may opt out of up to two). If you choose to submit all 10 responses, the lowest two grades among these will be excluded from the final tally. These responses should be posted on Moodle by 8am on the morning of class.

**Final Assignment (40%) : Ethnographic Essay**

The final assignment, an ethnographic essay, will be grounded importantly in participant observation you undertake over the course of the semester. You will have the opportunity to pursue participant observation at the Human Rights Council meeting from February 24 – March 20 and the AI for Good: Global Summit 2020 from May 4-8 (see below). Using this research, you will undertake and complete your own institutional ethnography. This essay is intended to further to allow you to bring your own fieldwork into conversation with course material, and other relevant literature.

You may choose to draw from your research in one or both of these settings. We will incorporate into our classes some discussion of these assignments and the range of possibilities they present in terms of the design and focus of your essay. Your essay should be 3,000 words in length. More specific guidelines pertaining to these essays will be discussed in class, and you are encouraged to discuss with me and the course TA your ideas and plans.

This essay will be due on Wednesday, June 3, at 9am.

**Human Rights Council Meeting**

From 24 February – 20 March 2020, the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council will take place at the Palais des Nations. You will need to register and will be issued a pass allowing you access to the meeting, where you will undertake participant observation during this period. It is up to you to determine how often you visit, how much time you spend and which sessions you attend. We will dedicate some time in our classes during these weeks to discussing your observations, questions, and challenges as you pursue this fieldwork.

Our class on March 26, Week 6, of the course will take the form of a workshop, led by course TA Meenakshi Nair Ambujam, on Ethnographic Writing, and will provide you with the opportunity to think about and develop approaches to ethnographic writing in the context of this research.

**AI for Global Good: Global Summit 2020**

From 4-8 May 2020, a global summit on AI for Global Good will take place in Geneva. You will need to register and be issued a pass for this event and will undertake
participant observation during this period. Part of our class on May 7 will be dedicated to a discussion of your experience and observations.

Contact
Email is the best way to contact me, and between 9am and 5pm during the working week I will do my best to respond to your email as soon as possible. At other times of day, and on the weekends, it may take me longer to respond. I will use Moodle to circulate class announcements, assignments, resources, and other course-related information. I encourage you to attend my office hours, and I can also meet with you by appointment.

Academic Honesty
The free exchange of ideas, at the Graduate Institute and as members of a larger intellectual community, hinges on academic honesty and integrity. Plagiarism involves deliberately or inadvertently representing the work of others as one’s own. Please refer to the Graduate Institute's policy on academic honesty and plagiarism, available in the "Academic Policies and Regulations" section of the Student Portal.

While research and knowledge advance in part because we use and build on the ideas of others, it is vital that we always acknowledge our sources. I encourage each of you to develop a consistent system for note taking, referencing, and citing your sources. Please use the Chicago author-date system for both in-text citations and bibliographies. See: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html

I encourage you to visit the Graduate Institute's Library where you will find information on training presentations for using bibliographic and referencing software such as EndNote and Zotero.

Please do not hesitate to see me if you ever have any questions about academic honesty and how it applies to your work.

Late Work
Late assignments will lose ¼ point for each day of lateness. Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances.

Technology in the Classroom
Use of technology within the classroom must be limited to only that which is necessary for note-taking or consulting course material. Please disable Wi-Fi settings on laptops or tablets to minimize sources of distraction to you and others during class. I do not allow the use of cell phones or other mobile devices inside the classroom.

Week 1 | February 20, Introduction


* Ethnographic Fieldwork at the Human Rights Council, February 24-March 20*
Week 2 | February 27, Re-imagining Fieldwork


Week 3 | March 5, Ethnographies of International Organizations


Week 4 | March 12, Documents and Bureaucracy as Ethnographic Objects


Week 5 | March 19, Universal Human Rights: Anthropological Perspectives, Guest lecture by Julie Billaud

Readings TBA

Week 6 | March 26, Ethnographic writing & institutional ethnography workshop (facilitated by Meenakshi Nair Ambujam)

For this class, you will be asked to explore and develop your ethnographic writing based on fieldnotes and other materials you gathered during the course of your fieldwork at the Human Rights Council meeting. Further details to follow.
Week 7 | April 2, Technologies and Infrastructures of Transparency, Accountability, and Trust


Week 8 | April 9, Knowledge/Ignorance in Science, Policy, and Global Governance


Week 9 | April 16, Vacances de Pâques (no class)

Week 10 | April 23, Networks and Relations, Human and Nonhuman


Week 12 | April 30, Guest class given by Meenakshi Nair Ambujam

Readings TBA

*M May 4-8: Ethnographic Fieldwork at “AI for Good: Global Summit 2020”*

Week 13 | May 7, Ethnography, institutions, and the posthuman & discussion of fieldwork observations from AI for Good Summit


Seaver, Nick. "What Should an Anthropology of Algorithms Do?”. Cultural Anthropology 33, no. 3
Week 14 | May 14, **Ethics and Dilemmas of Institutional Ethnography**


Week 15 | May 21, Ascension (no class)

Week 16 | May 28, Discussion of final assignments & course wrap-up