

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.

> PROFESSOR

[Shaila Seshia Galvin](#)

[Office hours](#)

> ASSISTANT

[Meenakshi Nair Ambujam](#)

[Office hours](#)

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*

Nader, Laura. 1969. "Up the Anthropologist: Perspectives Gained from Studying Up." *In* Reinventing Anthropology. D. Hymes, ed. Pp. 285-311. New York: Pantheon Books.

Smith, Dorothy E. 2005. *Institutional ethnography: a sociology for people*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press. Introduction.

*** *Ethnographic Fieldwork at the Human Rights Council, February 24-March 20****

Week 2 | February 27, Re-imagining Fieldwork

- Gluckman M. 1958. *Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand*, Manchester University Press, Manchester. pp.2-8.
- Gupta, Akhil, and James Ferguson. 1997. *Anthropological locations : boundaries and grounds of a field science*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Chapter 1: Discipline and Practice: "The Field" as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology.
- Babül E. 2017. "Morality: Understanding Police Training on Human Rights (Turkey)." In *Writing the World of Policing: The Difference Ethnography Makes*, ed. D Fassin, pp. 139-61. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Recommended reading: Marcus, George E. 1995. "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24(1):95-117.

Week 3 | March 5, Ethnographies of International Organizations

- Regina F. Bendix. "The Power of Perseverance : Exploring Negotiation Dynamics at the World Intellectual Property Organization." In *The Gloss of Harmony : The Politics of Policymaking in International Organizations*, ed. Birgit Müller. London, Pluto Press, 2013.
- Jennifer E. Telesca. 2015. "Consensus for Whom? Gaming the Market for Atlantic Bluefin Tuna through the Empire of Bureaucracy." *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology* 33(1):49-64.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight."

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

- Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, selections.
- Riles, Annelise. 1998. Infinity within the Brackets. *American Ethnologist* 25(3):378-398.
- Mathur, Nayanika. "The Reign of Terror of the Big Cat: Bureaucracy and the Mediation of Social Times in the Indian Himalaya." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 20 (2014): 148-65.
- Recommended: Hull, Matthew S. 2012. "Documents and Bureaucracy." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (1):251-67.

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*

Harper R. 2000. The Social Organization of the IMF's Mission Work: An Examination of International Auditing. In *Audit Cultures: Anthropological Studies in Accountability, Ethics and the Academy*, ed. M Strathern, pp. 21-53. London and New York: Routledge

Seshia Galvin, Shaila. 2018. "The Farming of Trust: Organic Certification and the Limits of Transparency in Uttarakhand India." *American Ethnologist* 45 (4):495-507.

Weichselbraun, Anna. "Of Broken Seals and Broken Promises: Attributing Intention at the IAEA." *Cultural Anthropology* 34, no. 4 (2019): 503-28.

Recommended: Strathern M. 2000. *Audit cultures : anthropological studies in accountability, ethics, and the academy*. New York: Routledge. Introduction.

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

Knorr-Cetina, Karin. *Epistemic Culture: How the Sciences Make Knowledge*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003. Chapter 3, "Particle Physics and Negative Knowledge."

Mathews, Andrew S. 2005. "Power/Knowledge, Power/Ignorance: Forest Fires and the State in Mexico." *Human Ecology* 33 (6):795-820.

Mallard, Grégoire, and Linsey McGoey. 2018. "Strategic Ignorance and Global Governance: An Ecumenical Approach to Epistemologies of Global Power." *The British Journal of Sociology* 69 (4):884-909.

Recommended: Foucault, Michel. 1980. *Power/knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon Books. See especially, "Truth and Power."

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

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

Bruno Latour. Circulating Reference. In *Pandora's Hope : Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1999.

Sheila Jasanoff, *Designs on Nature: Science and Democracy in Europe and the United States*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005. Choose one of: Chapter 1, "Why Compare? or Chapter 8, "Making Something of Life" to focus on, and then skim the other chapter.

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

Readings TBA

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*

Lowrie, Ian. "Algorithms and Automation: An Introduction." *Cultural Anthropology* 33, no. 3 (2018): 349-59.

Seaver, Nick. "What Should an Anthropology of Algorithms Do?". *Cultural Anthropology* 33, no. 3

(2018): 375-85.

Week 14 | May 14, *Ethics and Dilemmas of Institutional Ethnography*

Dove, Michael R. 1999. "Writing for, versus about, the Ethnographic Other: Issues of engagement and reflexivity in working with a tribal NGO in Indonesia." *Identities Global Studies in Culture and Power* 6(2-3):225-253.

Pierce, Jennifer L. 1995. "Reflections on Fieldwork in a Complex Organization: Lawyers, Ethnographic Authority and Lethal Weapons." In *Studying Elites Using Qualitative Methods*. R. Hertz and J.B. Imber, eds. Pp. 94-110. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Mosse, David. "Politics and Ethics: Ethnographies of Expert Knowledge and Professional Identities." In, Cris Shore, Susan Wright, and Davide Però. *Policy worlds: anthropology and the analysis of contemporary power*. Eds, New York: Berghahn Books, 2011.

Week 15 | May 21, Ascension (no class)

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