

Ethnographic Methodology: Social/Cultural Anthropology

Sociology and Anthropology 875

Section: G100

Term: 2009 Spring

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Discussion Topics: ethnography is simultaneously a critical theoretical practice, a quotidian ethical practice, and an improvisational practice.

- Cerwonka, Allaine and Liisa H. Malkki (2007) IMPROVISING THEORY: PROCESS AND TEMPORALITY IN ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 164.

SA 875-5 will critically examine Cerwonka and Malkki's description of ethnography in the context of contemporary work in anthropology, and debates about research methodologies across the humanities and social sciences.

As a practice central to their discipline, anthropologists have long wrestled with the problems and promises of practicing ethnography in diverse and ever changing contexts. Ethnographic methodology is also a subject of interest to researchers in many other disciplines, offering as it does the potential to participate in original, unique research in a wide range of settings, to work closely with people in diverse circumstances, and to communicate ethnographic knowledge through conventional and creative modes of representation.

This course offers students an opportunity to engage in a study of the practice of ethnographic methodology through (a) close reading and viewing of a selection of texts and films; (b) in depth exploration of two exercises in practicing ethnography; (c) participation in discussion and debate with other students, guests, and the instructor; and, (d) completion of reports, presentation and essay. We will examine ethnography as a process of inquiry, of knowledge creation and recirculation, and of communication that emerges through social relationships. The question why to do ethnography will be considered as inseparable from the question how to do ethnography.

The class will meet weekly for five hours. Class meetings will be divided between lecture/seminar and workshop.

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Grading: (1) Ethnographic exercise 1, report: 25%

(2) Ethnographic exercise 2, report: 25%

(3) Term paper, 5000 7000 words: 25%

(4) Seminar presentation, 15 minutes: 25%

All the assignments in this course must be completed for a final grade to be assigned. The Department of Sociology and Anthropology follows SFU policy in relation to grading practices, grade appeals (Policy T 20.01) and academic dishonesty and misconduct procedures (Policy T 10.03). It is the responsibility of students to inform themselves of the content of these policies (available on the SFU website under Administration, SFU Policies & Procedures).

Required Texts: 1. PRE-READING (read before first class)

Hecht, Tobias (2007) AFTER LIFE: an ethnographic novel. Durham, SC: Duke University Press.

2. Cerwonka, Allaine and Liisa H. Malkki (2007) IMPROVISING THEORY: PROCESS AND TEMPOR

Recommended Texts: None

Materials/Supplies: None

Prerequisite/Corequisite:

Notes: All students are expected to read and understand SFU's policies with regard to academic dishonesty (T 10.02 and T 10.03). These policies are available at the following web addresses: <http://www.sfu.ca/policies/teaching/t10-02.htm> and <http://www.sfu.ca/policies/teaching/t10-03.htm>

If you are interested in taking this course please make arrangements to meet with the instructor prior to registration to discuss preparation of independent reading lists.

Students from departments other than Sociology and Anthropology are welcome.

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