

Ethnographic Methodology: Social/Cultural Anthropology

Sociology and Anthropology 875

Section: D100

Term: 2012 Summer

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Discussion Topics: SA 875-5 invites to students to engage in an exploration of ethnography as this Method? Methodology? Genre? Epistemology? Practice? Theory? Art form? Emerges as a focus of contemporary debates in anthropology, and across the arts, humanities and social sciences. We will examine ethnography as a process of inquiry, of knowledge and meaning creation and recirculation, and of communication that emerges and is created and performed within and through social relationships. This course is organized around key debates surrounding ethical/political challenges facing ethnographers, relationships between ethnography and theory, the politics of knowledge, and dilemmas of political engagement. In particular, we will focus on new work that responds to critiques of conventional hierarchies of knowledge, and challenges ethnographers to take embodied, multisensory, affective, experiential, narrative knowledge seriously.

How, though, might we actually study and communicate such other forms of knowledge and expression, and develop methodologies that facilitate such explorations? The question why to do ethnography will be considered as inseparable from, and primary to, the question how to do ethnography.

Students will have an opportunity to engage in a study of the practice of ethnographic methodology in diverse contemporary contexts. (1) Students will participate in explorations in the practice of sensory ethnography through two in-depth exercises that pay particular attention to embodiment, affect, narrative, and experience. (2) Students will also keep a field notes journal and post entries to a class blog throughout the course. (3) As a class, we will undertake close reading of a selection of contemporary ethnographies together. (4) In consultation with graduate supervisors, and with SA 875 instructor, students will select for independent reading and critique one anthropologist/ethnographer whose work is particularly relevant to them (Life and Times Project). (5) The final assignment consists in a reflexive paper, drawn from field notes journal, that addresses the question: Why do ethnography? (5) Students will have an opportunity to explore diverse modes of representation and communication of ethnographic research that include but are not limited to conventional academic papers. E.g.: new ethnographic writing forms, posters, image-based and/or text and image presentations, audio &/or visual, live performance. To be discussed in class.

Grading: (1)\x09Ethnographic exercise 1, report: 25%
(2)\x09Ethnographic exercise 2, report: 25%
(3)\x09Life and Times project: 20%
(4)\x09Term paper: Why and How I may do ethnography, 20%
(5) Blog postings: 10%

Grading and Academic Honesty:

All 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 honesty and misconduct procedures (S10.01-S10.04). It is the responsibility of students to inform themselves of the content of these policies available on the SFU website: <http://www.sfu.ca/policies/teaching/index.htm>

Required Texts: PRE-READING (Yes! Please read before first class)

(1) Hecht, Tobias (2007) AFTER LIFE: an ethnographic novel. Durham, SC: Duke University Press. Available in SFU library as e-book

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- (2) Cerwonka, Allaine and Liisa H. Malkki (2007) IMPROVISING THEORY: PROCESS AND TEMPORALITY IN ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Available in SFU library as e-book.
- (3) Stewart, Kathleen (2007) ORDINARY AFFECTS. Durham, SC: Duke University Press. Available in SFU library as e-book.
- (4) Pena, Elaine. Performing Piety: Making Space Sacred with the Virgin of Guadalupe. University of California Press, 2011.
- (5) Ethnographies for class reading to be assigned after student/instructor consultations.
- (6) Each student is responsible for compiling bibliography for individual Life and Times project, after consultation with graduate advisors and 875 instructor.
- (7) Readings to support assignments as set out in full syllabus.

Recommended Texts: None

Materials/Supplies: None

Prerequisite/Corequisite:

Notes: 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. culhane@sfu.ca; 778-987-6132.

Students from departments other than Sociology and Anthropology are welcome.

This outline is derived from a course outline repository database that was maintained by SFU Student Services and the University's IT Services Department. The database was retired in 2014 and the data migrated to SFU Archives in 2015.