ANTH 5401: Reading Ethnography
SPRING 2017

However far from the groves of academe anthropologists seek out their subjects – a shelved beach in Polynesia, a charred plateau in Amazonia; Akobo, Meknes, Panther Burn – they write their accounts with the world of lecterns, libraries, blackboards, and seminars all about them. This is the world that produces anthropologists, that licenses them to do the kind of work that they do, and within which the kind of work that they do must find a place if it is to count as worth attention. .. It is Being Here, a scholar among scholars, that gets your anthropology read ... published, reviewed, cited, taught.


Lecture Time: Monday 6:30 p.m. to 9.15 p.m.

Venue: NAH 11

Lecturer: Dr. Erika Evasdottir (Evasdottir at gmail dot com)

Consultation Hours: After class and by appointment

Teaching Assistant: Lin Qichun

Course Description:
Reading, doing, and writing ethnography is crucial to becoming an anthropologist and understanding our discipline and its role among other disciplines and in society. This course uses a mix of theoretical and ethnographic readings to provide tools to unpack all aspects of ethnography.

Learning Outcomes:
- Learn how to read an ethnography (a.k.a. critical reading)
- Learn how to critique the writing of anthropologists (and your own)
- Understand the connection between anthropology as a discipline and ethnography
- Understand the use of method and theory in ethnography
- Explore methodological and theoretical debates in ethnography

Medium of Instruction: Lecture: In English

Assessment:
Participation: 10%
Presentation 1: 15%
Presentation 2: 10%
Presentation 3: 15%
Short Paper 1: 10%
Short Paper 2: 15%
Final Paper: 25%
Course Texts

We will not be using any particular text book in this course as readings will be taken from a number of books and articles which will all be put on reserve at the Central Library.

Academic Honesty

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on academic honesty, and adopts a policy of zero tolerance on cheating in examinations and plagiarism. Any such offence will lead to disciplinary action including possibly termination of studies at the University. Students should know how to properly use source material and how to avoid plagiarism. Students should read the detailed guidelines and examples for the acknowledgement of sources in the University’s website at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty.

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Classes

Week 1: January 9
Week 2: January 16
Week 3: January 23
[Jan 30 = New Year’s = no class]
Week 4: February 6
Week 5: February 13
Week 6: February 20
[Feb 27 = I have no idea why there is another holiday here, but = no class]
Week 7: March 6
Week 8: March 13
Week 9: March 20
Week 10: March 27
Week 11: April 3
Week 12: April 10
[April 17 = Easter Monday = no class]
Week 13: April 24
[Final Papers due: TBA]
Readings

Class 1: Introduction & Learning to “Read”

Introduction: Our goals for the class & how we are going to achieve them.

- Introduction to Ethnography
- Introduction to Critical Reading and the art of Critique

READING: we will read together excerpts in class of Malinowski, A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term. We will be looking at his experiences from December 20, 1817 through December 25, 1817.

Class 2: Reading Space, Time & Things

The Interpretation of Things: What is “observation” to an anthropologist?

READING:

- “Why Late Night Hosts Place their Desks on the Right”, Slate Magazine Article, at url: http://www.slate.com/id/2242937/
- Clifford Geertz: Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture: Chapter 1 and “the wink”

Extra Reading (Voluntary)

- “From Work place to my place”, Haaretz.com [Teacher will provide pdf]


Class 3: An Introduction to Words

An Introduction to Words and Writing: dictionary definitions; history of use; language in context; antonyms & synonyms: the biography of a word; words and numbers

READING:

- Mary Douglas, Introduction to How Institutions Think.
- Edmund Leach, Introduction to Political Systems of Highland Burma (on “kachin” and “shan”)
- “Why 9 out of 10 Americans like statistics”, The Independent, 10 October 2010 [Teacher will provide PDF]
- “Work” and its meanings [Teacher will provide PDF]

Extra Reading (voluntary):

- J.L. Austin: How to do Things with Words
*****PAPER 1:

Due: TBA, by email.

Assignment: A descriptive observational paper about a meal you had over New Years. Will be further explained in class.

Class 4: An Advanced Course in Words

Words are never alone: genre, metaphors, poetics & stories, stereotypes: ways of world-making

READING:
- Chapters 1 through 10 (and beyond if this topic fascinates you) of Metaphors We Live By, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. 1980.

Extra Reading (voluntary):
- Dorothy Holland and Andrew Kipnis, “Metaphors for Embarrassment and Stories of Exposure: The Not-So-Egocentric Self in American Culture,” Ethos, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Sep., 1994), pp. 316-342. – example of how to use this kind of approach in ethnography
- Nelson Goodman, Ways of Worldmaking
- Charles Briggs: Learning How to Ask: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science Research

Class 5: Method and Theory

Method and Theory are your friends: learning to use method and theory (rather than being used by them).

READING:
- Shane, the lone ethnographer: a beginner's guide to ethnography, by Sally Campbell Galman. GN345.G35 2007
- “Introduction”, Hunting and Gathering in the Corporate Tribe, Wilcock, Keith, 2004, Agora. [Teacher will provide PDF]

Extra Reading (voluntary):
- Erving Goffman, Frame Analysis
- Wayne Fife, Doing fieldwork: ethnographic methods for research in developing countries and beyond.

VIDEO: The ax fight [videorecording] / Center for Documentary Anthropology ... [et al.] ; film by Timothy Asch and Napoleon A. Chagnon ; script, Napoleon A.Chagnon
Publisher Watertown, MA : Documentary Educational Resources, [2001?], c1975. (30 mins)

******* Prepare for Presentation 1: “dissecting an ethnography” *******
- CHOICE!
- Read introduction in either of the following:
  o MediaSpace [electronic resource]: place, scale and culture in a media age, edited by Nick Couldry and Anna McCarthy.
  o Bettina Gransow’s introduction (pp. 3-18) in China: New Faces of Ethnography
- Choose one article to present. Presentation: (1) what method was used; (2) what other methods could have been used; (3) what theory was used; (4) what other theory could have been used and why

Class 6: Presentations: Method & Theory
Class 7: The Ethnographer

Performance Theory: Beyond Etic/Emic: Who is the Ethnographer and Why does it matter?

READING:
- Norah Vincent; Chapter 1 “Getting Started” in The Self-Made Man (in Chinese or English)
- Lifehacker, “Know what your Email Address says about you”; from http://lifehacker.com/5447335/know-what-your-email-address-says-about-you
- Introduction to Sex, sexuality, and the anthropologist, edited by Fran Markowitz and Michael Ashkenazi


Class 8: Your Audience is in Control

Reception Theory (Part I): What Audience do you want to speak to, and why does it matter?
Extra Reading (voluntary):

OR:

What do Anthropologists study and what do they not study: What is the difference between sociology and anthropology? Economics and anthropology? Material science and anthropology? LAW and anthropology?

OR: Learning to write

Will assign one each from: http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/ Writing for Specific Fields

- Anthropology
- Art History
- Communication Studies
- Drama
- History
- Literature (Fiction)
- Music
- Philosophy
- Political Science
- Psychology
• Religious Studies
• Sciences
• Sociology

******* Prepare for Presentation 2 “Being a Different Person” *******
• Same topic as Presentation 1 – but including everything you have learned about Positionality and Audience….

Class 9: Presentations 2

******PAPER 2:*******

Due: TBA by email.

Assignment: Write up your presentation experience
• See the very helpful hints on writing at: http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/

Class 10: Learning to Critique

Method, Theory, Audience… You can read, you can write … now, can you critique: [Example: ethnography with (overt) political goals]

READING:
• Mao, Zedong, Report on the Peasant Movement in Hunan, found at: http://www.marx2mao.com/Mao/HP27.html#c8 (or read it in Chinese).
• Huan Hsu, “The Name’s Du Xiao Hua, but call me Steve”, Slate Magazine; http://www.slate.com/id/2217001

Extra Reading (voluntary):
• Edmund Leach, Conclusion to Political Systems of Highland Burma.

Class 11: The Politics of Academic Anthropology

*Reception Theory, (part 2): Being the Right Kind of Anthropologist*

**READING:**


**Extra Reading (Voluntary)**

  - Guide to reading: Why is Mr. Freeman famous?

**VIDEO:** *Margaret Mead and Samoa* [videorecording] / Wombat Film & Video, ; produced, directed & written by Frank Heimans. c1988. (51 mins)

Class 12: Instrumental Anthropology and Ethnography

*An instrumental approach to ethnography*. How anthropologists can use their skills outside anthropology.

**READING:**

- Stein, Howard, Chapter 4, “Ordinary Brutality at Work,” in *Nothing Personal, Just Business: A Guided Journey into Organizational Darkness*.
- Stein, Howard, Chapter 5, “How Long Can We Circle the Wagons?” A Study in the Sense of Doom at Work”, in *Nothing Personal, Just Business: A Guided Journey into Organizational Darkness*.

**Extra Reading (voluntary)**


**********Prepare for Final Presentation: Topic to be discussed
• Presentations in genre of your “choice” of your proposed Final Paper

Class 13: Final Presentations

*****FINAL PAPER:

*Due: TBA, by email.*

Assignment: This is the real thing. Your first paper (that meal one) gets entirely rewritten. 10-15 pages, proper title, full citations, linking paragraphs, excellent deployment of words, with method, theory, understanding of positionality, evaluation of audience, and critique of some other theorist/ethnographer…