

**Department of Sociology
Faculty of Social Sciences
South Asian University - New Delhi**

Ethnographic Writing and Writing Ethnography
(Optional Course for PhD)

Total Credits: 4

Objectives of the Course

Key outcomes of sociological and anthropological research and theorization are texts, whether descriptive, analytical and reflective in their orientation. This seminar seeks to reflect on the practice of producing texts, particularly in the case of anthropological studies wherein writing ethnography has been both a key distinctive and subject of key debates, especially in recent decades.

To this end, the seminar seeks to 1) introduce students to seminal debates on ethnographic writing, narratives, voice and representation and 2) consider new genres of ethnographic writing, including the affective, multi-modal and multi-sited.

The seminar is also attuned to the requirement of graduate students to produce various kinds texts as they proceed through their dissertation programme. Thus, the seminar will also focus on academic writing conventions, forms and formats. In both cases, students will be asked to produce a series of texts through the seminar, and to contribute to a collective conversation about writing.

Unit 1: Classical Ethnography and the Writing Culture Debates

This first module of the course looks at classical ethnographic forms and their critiques including the *Writing Culture* debates. It also seeks to introduce question of ethnographic perspective and positioning, while introducing some examples of texts and critiques of texts considered canonical.

Trevor-Roper, H, 1983. 'The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland' in Hobsbawm E and Ranger, T. eds *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Radcliffe Brown, 1922. *The Andaman Islanders*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, Introduction and Chapter 1

David Thomas, 1991. 'The Production of Ethnographic Observation on the Andaman Islands, 1858-1922' in George Stocking, ed. *Colonial Situations: Essays on the Contextualization of Ethnographic Knowledge*. University of Wisconsin Press.

Malinowski, B. 1922. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An account of native enterprise and adventure in the Archipelagos of Melanesian New Guinea*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

Damon, Fred. 2015. 'Anthropology of Kula Ring', *International Encyclopaedia of Social and Behavioural Science (Second Edition)*, pp 139-143, Elsevier

Uberoi, J.P.S. 1962. *Politics of the Kula Ring: An Analysis of the Findings of Bronislaw Malinowski*, Manchester: Manchester University Press

Hurston, Zora Neale. 1927. 'Cudjo's Own Story of the Last African Slaver', *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 12, No. 4, pp. 648- 663

Haraway, Donna. 2004. 'Morphing in the Order: Flexible Strategies, Feminist Science Studies, and Primate Revisions' in Donna Haraway ed. *The Haraway Reader*, London and New York: Routledge.

Clifford, J. 1986. 'Introduction: Partial Truths' in Marcus, G and Clifford, J eds *Writing Culture*, Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.

Marcus, G and Cushman, D. 1982. 'Ethnographies as Texts,' *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 11, pp. 25-69

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 2003. "Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness." In *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 7-28.

Starn, O., 1991. 'Missing the revolution: anthropologists and the war in Peru'. *Cultural Anthropology*, 6, 1, pp.63-91.

Bose, Nirmal K. 2018. *The Structure of Hindu Society*, New Delhi: Orient Blackswan
Fei Xiaotong (1992). *From the soil: the foundations of Chinese society: a translation of Fei Xiaotong's Xiangtu Zhongguo*. Translated by Hamilton, Gary G.; Zheng, Wang. Berkeley: University of California Press

Guha, R., 1994. 'The prose of counter-insurgency'. *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*, pp.336-371.

Unit 2: On the practice of Seeing, Participating, Writing

This module pay attention to the development of resonances, linkages and discrepancies between the practice of anthropology (fieldwork and analysis) and the writing of ethnography.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973, 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture', in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books

Rosaldo, Renato, 1989. *Culture and Truth*, Boston: Beacon Press.

Kim Fortun, 'Figuring Out Ethnography' in Faubion and Marcus, eds, *Fieldwork: Learning Anthropology's Method in a Time of Transition*

Wolf, Margery. 1992. *A Thrice Told Tale: Feminism, Postmodernism and Ethnographic Responsibility*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press

Fabian, Johan. 2012. 'Cultural anthropology and the question of knowledge', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 18, no 2, Pages 439-453

Spencer, Jonathan. 1989. 'Anthropology as a Kind of Writing,' *Man*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 145-164

Visweswaran, Kamala. *Fictions of Feminist ethnography*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Unit 3: Reading Ethnographies

This module will focus on reading ethnographies in their entirety to consider how they are put together as texts, and how and why they succeed (or not), with the idea of looking closely to how texts are constructed. Each year different ethnographies will be selected for this purpose.

- Taussig, M., 2007. *Shamanism, colonialism, and the wild man: A study in terror and healing*. Duke University Press.
- Varzi, Roxanne. 2006. *Warring Souls: Youth, Media and Martyrdom in Post-Revolution Iran*, Durham: Duke University Press
- Pandian, A. 2014. *Ayya's Accounts*. Indiana University Press.
- Thiranagama, S., 2011. *In My Mother's House: Civil War In Sri Lanka*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Cohen, L., 1998. *No Aging In India: Alzheimer's, The Bad Family, And Other Modern Things*. Univ of California Press.
- Gombrich, R. and Obeyesekere, G., 1990. *Buddhism transformed: religious change in Sri Lanka*. Princeton University Press.
- Hansen, T.B., 2018. *Wages of violence: Naming and identity in postcolonial Bombay*. Princeton University Press.
- Saria, V., 2021. *Hijras, Lovers, Brothers: Surviving Sex and Poverty in Rural India*. Fordham University Press.
- Santner, E.L., 1997. *My own private Germany: Daniel Paul Schreber's secret history of modernity*. Princeton University Press.
- Dow, Katie. 2018. *Making a Good Life: An ethnography of nature, ethics and reproduction*, Princeton, Princeton University Press
- Niranjana, Semanthini 2001. *Gender and Space Femininity, Sexualization and the Female Body*. New Delhi: Sage Publications
- Khan, Naveeda. 2012. *Muslim Becoming: Aspiration and Skepticism in Pakistan*. Orient Black Swan
- Ralph, Lawrence. 2014. *Renegade Dreams: Living Through Injury in Gangland Chicago*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Boellstorff, Tom. 2015. *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*, Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Chowdhury, Nusrat. 2019. *Paradoxes of the Popular: Crowd Politics in Bangladesh*. Stanford University Press
- Das, Veena. 1990. 'Our Work to Cry: Your Work to listen'. In Veena Das (ed.) *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia*. Pp345-398. New Delhi: Oxford University Press
- Perera, Sasanka. 2016 *Violence and the Burden of Memory: Remembrance and Erasure in Sinhala Consciousness*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan
- Govindrajana, R., 2018. *Animal intimacies: interspecies relatedness in India's Central Himalayas*. University of Chicago press.
- Callon, Michel .1986. "Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St Brieuc Bay." pp. 196-233 in *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by John Law. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Mintz, Sidney Wilfred .1985. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Viking

Unit 4: Multisited/Multimodal/Multisensual

Recently, debates around ethnographic writing have attempted to grapple with seemingly new conditions of/for ethnographic production, including both in how the object of inquiry maybe multi-scaler, multi-species, multi-sensual or multimodal. This module will focus on anthropological writing that address key questions or provide possible examples of writing

Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson. *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and grounds of a field science*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Marcus, George. 1995. 'Ethnography in/out of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography.' *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 95-117.

Comaroff, Jean and John Comaroff. 2003. 'Ethnography on an Awkward Scale: Postcolonial Anthropology and the Violence of Abstraction'. *Ethnography* 4(2): 147-179.

Fortun, Kim. 2012. 'Ethnography in Late Industrialism'. *Cultural Anthropology* 27(3): 446-464.

Tsing, Anna. 2005. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Raymond Williams. 1977.'Structures of Feeling.' *Marxism and Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press.128-136.

Goffman, Erving. 1967. 'Interaction ritual: essays on face-to-face behavior.' Garden City: Anchor Books

Barthes, Roland . 'The Third Meaning: Research Notes on Some Eisenstein Stills.' In *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, 317-33. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999

Taussig, M., 1991. 'Tactility and distraction'. *Cultural Anthropology*, 6(2), pp.147-153.

Stewart, K., 2011. 'Atmospheric attunements.' *Environment and Planning D: Society and space*, 29(3), pp.445-453.

Thrift, N., 2004. 'Intensities of feeling: Towards a spatial politics of affect.' *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 86(1), pp.57-78.

Aneesh, A., 2015. *Neutral accent: How language, labor, and life become global*. Duke University Press.

Krishnamurthy, Mathangi (2018) *1-800-Worlds: The Making of the Indian Call Centre Economy*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Stewart, K., 2014. 'Road registers.' *Cultural Geographies*, 21(4), pp.549-563.

Datta, Ankur. 2020. The Dull Pain of Simmering Anger: Affective and Emotional Experiences among Displaced Kashmiri Pandits. *HIMALAYA* 40(1): 49-62

Pink, Sarah (2011). 'Multimodality, multisensoriality and ethnographic knowing: social semiotics and the phenomenology of perception.' *Qualitative Research*. 11 (3): 261-276

Bonilla, Yarimar and Jonathan Rosa. 2015. '#Ferguson: Digital protest, hashtag ethnography and the racial politics of social media in the United States.' *American Ethnologist* 42(1): 4-17

Module 5: Alternative Ethnographic genres

In recent years, many scholars have been exploring and experimenting with

ethnographic forms beyond the monograph and peer review journal. This module will address different forms of ethnographic writing aimed at different audiences. We will explore how ethnographers have expanded on forms of writing as well consider how these new forms may feed back into ethnography.

Gutierrez-Garza, Ana Paola. 2020. 'The dilemmas of lying and caring.' *Otherwise* <https://www.otherwisemag.com/dilemma>

Chowdhury, Manosh. 2020. *Khuchro Sangskriti, MicroEthnographic Jibon Japon*.

Schmidt, Nancy. 'Ethnographic Fiction: Anthropology's hidden literary style.' *Anthropology and Humanism* 9(4): 11-14

Matt Jacobson & Soren C. Larsen. 2014. 'Ethnographic fiction for writing and research in cultural geography.' *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 31:2, 179-193

Ghodsee, Kristen. 'Writing Through Political Despair: A case for Ethnographic fiction.' <https://dukeupress.wordpress.com/2021/01/18/writing-through-political-despair-a-case-for-ethnographic-fiction-a-guest-post-by-kristen-ghodsee/>

Flash Ethnography: <https://americanethnologist.org/features/collections/flash-ethnography/flash-ethnography-an-introduction>

Evaluation:

Writing portfolio: through the course of the semester, students will put together a writing portfolio comprising 1) a brief topic analysis that outlines a potential research project 2) four pieces of ethnographic writing on a topic of their choosing. The focus of inquiry can in any genre – cultural studies, fieldwork based, multi-modal etc. Pieces can be separate but must be interconnected.