

Department of Anthropology
Princeton University
Fall 2010

ETHNOGRAPHY AND SOCIAL THEORY TODAY

ANT 541
Th 9:00-11:50 am
216 Aaron Burr Hall

Instructors: João Biehl & Didier Fassin

Postdoctoral Fellow: Ramah McKay

Seminar Description

The seminar explores the difference ethnographic methods and engagements brings to evidence-making and to social theorizing. We will probe the various theoretical frameworks that inform the ways anthropologists engage, think and write about social experience, subjectivity, and politics today. Which concepts do anthropologists use to approach lives caught in embattled geopolitics and in novel economic, technoscientific and legal constellations? Through which means can we highlight both larger social processes and human singularities? How theoretically generative is ethnographic fieldwork and what is the public role of anthropology today?

Requirements/Grading

The success of the seminar depends on your commitment to complete all required readings for each session, write and post weekly responses, and to participate actively in discussions.

Grading will be based on:

1. Attendance, participation and class presentation (20 %).
2. Weekly reading reports (20 %).
Reports shall be posted on blackboard every Wednesday by 6:00 pm.
3. A mid-term book review (20 %).
The 3-5 double-spaced review is due November 4, by 5:00 pm.
4. A final research paper or book review essay (40%).
The 10-12 double-spaced page paper is due January 11, 2011, by 5:00 pm.

See Princeton University's general standards for grading:
http://www.princeton.edu/~odoc/grading_policies.html

Books

The following books will be on reserve at Firestone Library. These books will also be available for purchase at Labyrinth Books (122 Nassau Street). Additional articles and book chapters can be downloaded from Blackboard's electronic reserve.

Required

- Biehl, João. Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005.
- Bourgois, Phillipe and Jeff Schonberg. Righteous Dopefiend. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009.
- Fassin, Didier. When Bodies Remember: Experiences and Politics of AIDS in South Africa. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007.
- Finnström, Sverker. Bad surroundings: War, History, and Everyday Moments in Northern Uganda. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.
- Englund, Harry. Prisoners of Freedom. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006.
- Ho, Karen. Liquidated. An Ethnography of Wall Street. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009.
- Kelly, Tobias. Law, Violence and Sovereignty among West Bank Palestinians. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Tsing, Anna. Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Optional

- Das, Veena. Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Deleuze, Gilles. Essays Critical and Clinical. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- Foucault, Michel. The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.
- Garcia, Angela. The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and Dispossession along the Rio Grande. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010.
- Roitman, Janet. Fiscal Disobedience: An Anthropology of Economic Regulation in Central Africa. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Sontag, Susan. Regarding the Pain of Others. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2003.
- Terrio, Susan. Judging Mohammed: Juvenile Delinquency, Immigration, and Exclusion at the Paris Palace of Justice. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009.

Office Hours

- João Biehl (jbiehl@princeton.edu): Thursdays 12:30-1:30 pm, 128 Aaron Burr Hall
- Didier Fassin (dfassin@princeton.edu): By appointment
- Ramah Mckay (rmckay@princeton.edu): Tuesdays 3:00-4:00 pm, 125 Corwin

September 16

INTRODUCTION

Didier Fassin: *On Critique*

João Biehl: *On Having an Idea in Anthropology*

- Foucault, Michel. "What is Enlightenment?" In The Foucault Reader edited by Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984, pp. 32-50.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "Having an Idea in Cinema." In Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy, and Culture edited by Eleanor Kaufman and Kevin Jon Heller. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998, pp.14-19.
- Walzer, Michael. "Preface" and "Introduction." In The Company of Critics: Social Criticism and Political Commitment in the Twentieth Century. New York: Basic Books, 2002, pp.xix-xx, 3-28.
- Marcus, George. "The end(s) of ethnography: Social/cultural anthropology's signature form of producing knowledge in transition." Cultural Anthropology 2008, 23(1): 1–14.

September 23

ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK AND ANTHROPOLOGY TODAY

- Tsing, Anna. Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Robben, Antonius & Jeffrey Szuka. Ethnographic Fieldwork. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007, pp. 1-32.
- Brettell, Caroline (ed.). When They Read What We Write. The Politics of Ethnography. Westport: Bergin & Garvey, 1993, pp. 1-24.
- Jackson, Michael D. "An Anthropological Critique of the Project of Philosophy." Anthropological Theory 2009, 9(3):235-251.

Suggested

- Geertz, Clifford. "The World in Pieces: Culture and Politics at the End of the Century." Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, pp. 218-263.
- Fischer, Michael M.J. "Culture and Cultural Analysis as Experimental Systems." In Anthropological Futures. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009, pp.1-49.
- Rabinow, Paul. Marking Time: On the Anthropology of the Contemporary. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- Biehl, João & Byron Good, Arthur Kleinman. "Introduction: Rethinking Subjectivity." In Subjectivity: Ethnographic Investigations edited by Biehl, Good, Kleinman. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007, pp.1-23.

September 30

VIOLENCE

- Das, Veena. "The Event and the Everyday;" "Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain." In Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007, pp.11-17, 38-58.
- Finnström, Sverker. Bad surroundings: War, History, and Everyday Moments in Northern Uganda. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.
- Fassin, Didier, Frédéric le Marcis & Todd Lethata. "Life and Times of Magda A.: Telling a Story of Violence in South Africa." Current Anthropology, 2008, 49 (2): 225-246.

Suggested

- Benjamin, Walter. "Critique of Violence." In Reflections edited by Peter Demetz. New York: Schocken Books, 1978, pp.277-300.
- Nordstrom, Carolyn & Antonius Robben (eds.). Fieldwork Under Fire. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995.
- Appadurai, Arjun. Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

October 7

INTERVENTIONS

- Becker, Howard. "Whose Side Are We On?" Social Problems, 1967, 14 (3): 239-247.
- Fassin, Didier . "Heart of Humanness." In Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions edited by Didier Fassin & Mariella Pandolfi. New York: Zone Books, 2010, pp.269-293.
- Englund, Harry. Prisoners of Freedom. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006.

Suggested

- Fassin, Didier & Mariella Pandolfi. "Introduction." In Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions edited by Fassin, Didier & Mariella Pandolfi. New York: Zone Books, 2010, pp.9-25.
- James, Erica. Democratic Insecurities. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010.
- Wilson, Richard & Richard Brown. Humanitarianism and Suffering. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

October 14

A LIFE

- Biehl, João. Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "What Children Say." In Essays Critical and Clinical. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pp.61-67.
- Derrida, Jacques. The Last Interview. In: www.studiovisit.net/SV.Derrida.pdf

Suggested

- Agamben, Giorgio. Homo Sacer. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Agamben, Giorgio. "What is a Paradigm?" In The Signature of All Things: On Method. Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2009, pp. 9-32.
- Fassin, Didier. Ethics of Survival. A Democratic Approach to the Politics of Life, Humanity. International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism and Development, 2010 1 (1): 82-95.
- Kleinman, Arthur. What Really Matters: Living a Moral Life amidst Uncertainty and Danger. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

October 21

WRITING/BECOMING

- Film: Santiago by João Moreira Salles
- Deleuze, Gilles. "Preface to the French Edition;" "Literature and Life;" "Whitman." In Essays Critical and Clinical. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pp.lv-lvi, 1-6, 56-60.
- Cixous, Hélène. "Coming to Writing." In Coming to Writing and Other Essays edited by Deborah Jenson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991, pp. 1-58.
- Rancière, Jacques. The Emancipated Spectator. London: Verso, 2009, pp.1-23.
- Biehl, João and Peter Locke. "Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming." Current Anthropology, 2010, 51(3):317-351 (with comments and a reply).

Suggested

- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. "A talent for life: reflections on human vulnerability and resistance." Ethnos, 2008, 73(1): 25-56.
- Stewart, Kathleen. Ordinary Affects. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007.

October 28

ADDICTION

- Bourgois, Phillipe & Jeff Schonberg. Righteous Dopefiend. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009.
- Garcia, Angela. "The Elegiac Addict." In The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and Dispossession along the Rio Grande. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010, pp.69-110.
- Sontag, Susan. Regarding the Pain of Others. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2003, pp.104-126.

Suggested

- Bauman, Zygmunt. Wasted Lives. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2004.

FALL BREAK

November 11

EMBODIMENT

- Fassin, Didier. When Bodies Remember: Experiences and Politics of AIDS in South Africa. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007.
- Csordas, Thomas. "Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology." Ethos, 1990, 18 (1): 5-47.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. "Delírio de Fome: The Madness of Hunger." In Death Without Weeping. The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, pp. 128-166.

Suggested

- Bourdieu, Pierre. "Structures and the Habitus." In Outline of a Theory of Practice. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, pp. 2-95.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "Preface." Phenomenology of Perception. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Wade, Peter. "Human Nature and Race." Anthropological Theory, 2004, 4 (2): 157-172.

November 18

POLITICS

- Ferguson, James. "Global Shadows: Africa and the World." In Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006, pp.1-25.
- Spencer, Jonathan. "Locating the Political." In Anthropology, Politics and the State. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 19-47.
- Fassin, Didier. "Compassion and Repression. The Moral Economy of Immigration Policies in France." Cultural Anthropology, 20 (3), 362-387.

Suggested

- Das, Veena & Deborah Poole (eds.). Anthropology at the Margins of the State, Santa Fe, NM: SAR Press, 2004.
- Shore, Cris & Susan Wright (eds.). Anthropology of Policy. London: Routledge, 1997.

November 25

THANKSGIVING

December 2
ECONOMICS

- Foucault, Michel. The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp.27-50, 291-325.
- Ho, Karen. Liquidated. An Ethnography of Wall Street. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009.
- Roitman, Janet. "The Pluralization of Regulatory Authority." In Fiscal Disobedience: An Anthropology of Economic Regulation in Central Africa. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005, pp.151-199.

Suggested

- Zelizer, Viviana. The Social Meaning of Money: Pin Money, Paychecks, Poor Relief, and Other Currencies. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 1997.
- Greenhouse, Carol (ed.). Ethnographies of Neoliberalism. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.

December 9
JUSTICE

- Kelly, Tobias. Law, Violence and Sovereignty among West Bank Palestinians. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Terrio, Susan. "Rendering Justice in Chambers" and "Judging Delinquents in the Juvenile Courts." In Judging Mohammed: Juvenile Delinquency, Immigration, and Exclusion at the Paris Palace of Justice. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009, pp. 168-255.

Suggested

- Greenhouse, Carol J. Praying for Justice: Faith, Order, and Community in an American Town. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986.
- Taussig, Michael. Law in a Lawless Land: Diary of a Limpieza in Colombia. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Comaroff, Jean and John. "Introduction." Law and Disorder in the Postcolony. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006, pp.1-56.

December 16
FINAL DISCUSSION