

ANT 521B
PEOPLING CRITICAL THEORY
Second Half of Fall 2014

Mondays 7:00-9:50 pm
Aaron Burr Hall, Room 216

Instructor: João Biehl
Teaching Assistant: Sebastian Ramirez

Seminar Description:

This seminar explores how contemporary anthropologists study, think, and write about power, agency, and the nature of social change, and probes the various theoretical frameworks that inform their work. We will engage scholars who mine ethnography as a mode of expression through multiple media and for diverse publics. Through which means can we illuminate both political-economic and personal realities-in-flux, and how can we bring this plasticity and unfinishedness into our storytelling? How does ethnography challenge present-day regimes of veridiction and how can the lives of our subjects become alternative figures of thought and critique?

Requirements/Grading:

The success of the seminar depends on your commitment to complete all required readings for each session, post weekly responses on blackboard's discussion board, and to participate actively in discussions. Grading will be based on:

- Participation and class presentation (60%).
- Weekly reading postings (40%).

Books:

Books will be on reserve at Firestone Library and 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.

- Bessire, Lucas. 2014. *Behold the Black Caiman: A Chronicle of Ayoreo Life*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Biehl, João. 2013. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment* (Updated with a New Afterword and Photo Essay). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Coleman, Gabriella. 2014. *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous*. New York: Verso.
- Ralph, Laurence. 2014. *Renegade Dreams: Living through Injury in Gangland Chicago*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Schull, Natasha Dow. 2014. *Addiction by Design: Machine Gambling in Las Vegas*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Sontag, Susan. 2004. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador.

November 3

On the Shape and Flux of Lives and the Human Thing/Compulsion to Narrate

Watch Lecture: Greenblatt, Stephen. 2014. *Tell my story: The human compulsion to narrate*.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvtgLkhij2s>

Biehl, João. 2013. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment* (Updated with a New Afterword and Photo Essay). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Foucault, Michel. 2000. "Lives of Infamous Men." *Power (The Essential Works of Foucault, Vol. 3)* edited by James Faubion. New York: The New Press, pp. 157-175.

Deleuze, Gilles. 2006. "Desire and Pleasure." *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995*. New York: Semiotext(e), pp. 122-134.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1997. "Literature and Life." *Essays: Critical and Clinical*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 1-6.

Suggested Reading:

Lacan, Jacques. 1980. "A Lacanian Psychosis: Interview by Jacques Lacan." *Returning to Freud: Clinical Psychoanalysis in the School of Lacan* edited by Stuart Schneiderman. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 19-41.

November 10

**Worlds of Becoming:
Actuality, Image/Concept-Work, Distributive Agency**

Deleuze, Gilles. 1998. "Having an Idea in Cinema." *Deleuze and Guattari: New Mappings in Politics, Philosophy, and Culture* edited by Eleanor Kaufman and Kevin Jon Heller. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp.14-19.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1995. "Control and Becoming." *Negotiations*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp.169-176.

Sontag, Susan. 2004. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador.

Mbembe, Achille. "At the centre of the knot." *Social Dynamics* 38 (2012): 8-14.

Berlant, Lauren. 2011. "Introduction: Affect in the Present" and "Slow Death: Obesity, Sovereignty, Lateral Agency." *Cruel Optimism*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp.1-21, 95-119.

Connolly, William. 2012. "Prelude" and "Chapter 1: Complexity, Agency, and Time." *A World of Becoming*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 1-16, 17-42.

Biehl, João and Peter Locke. 2010. "Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming." *Current Anthropology* 50(3): 317-337.

November 17
Negative Immanence

Bessire, Lucas. 2014. *Behold the Black Caiman: A Chronicle of Ayoreo Life*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Clastres, Pierre. 1987. "Society against the State." *Society against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology*. New York: Zone Books, pp. 189-218.

Taussig, Michael. 1984. "Culture of Terror—Space of Death. Roger Casement's Putumayo Report and the Explanation of Torture." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2(3):467-497.

Gordillo, Gaston. 2014. "Bright Objects." *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 185-190.

Film: *From Honey to Ashes* by Lucas Bessire, 2006.

Guest Speaker: Lucas Bessire, University of Oklahoma

Suggested Reading:

Taussig, Michael. 2006. "Transgression." *Walter Benjamin's Grave*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 157-172.

Taussig, Michael. 1993. "With the Wind of World History in Our Sails." *Mimesis and Alterity*. New York: Routledge, pp. 70-87.

Gordillo, Gaston. 2014. "Return of the Indian." *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 230-252.

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 2010. "The Untimely, Again." Pierre Clastres, *Archaeology of Violence*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), pp.9-51.

Bessire, Lucas and David Bond. 2014. "Ontological Anthropology and the Deferral of Critique." *American Ethnologist* 41(3):440-456.

November 24
Machine Life

Schull, Natasha Dow. 2014. *Addiction by Design: Machine Gambling in Las Vegas*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1995. "Postscript on Control Societies." *Negotiations*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 177-182.

Bateson, Gregory. 1972. "The Cybernetics of 'Self: A Theory of Alcoholism,'" in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essay in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., pp. 315-345.

Latour, Bruno. 1994. "On Technical Mediation." *Common Knowledge* 3(2): 29-64. (A Selection)

Turkle, Sherry. 2005. "Video Games and Computer Holding Power," in *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, pp. 65-91.

Zizek, Slavoj. 1998. "Risk Society and its Discontents." *Historical Materialism* 2(1): 143-164.

Film: Buffet: *All You Can Eat Las Vegas* by Natasha Dow Schull.

Guest Speaker: Natasha Dow Schull, MIT

Suggested Reading:

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books, pp. 412-453.

December 1

Enchantment as a Political Act and the Powers of the False

Coleman, Gabriella. 2014. *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous*. New York: Verso.

Bennett, Jane. 2001. "Chapter 1: The Wonder of Minor Experiences." *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp.1-16.

Bennett, Jane. 2010. "Preface" and "The Force of Things." *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. vii-xix; 1-19.

Deleuze, Gilles. "The Powers of the False." *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 126-155.

Skype: Gabriella Coleman, McGill University

December 8

Renegade Dreams

Ralph, Laurence. 2014. *Renegade Dreams: Living through Injury in Gangland Chicago*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Benjamin, Walter. 1986. "Critique of Violence," in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*. New York: Schocken Books, pp. 277-300.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1997. "Whitman." *Essays: Critical and Clinical*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 56-60.

Derrida, Jacques. 2004. "The Last Interview." www.studiovisit.net/SV.Derrida.pdf

Guest Speaker: Laurence Ralph, Harvard University

Suggested Reading:

Judith Butler. 2006. "Precarious Life." *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. New York: Verso, pp.128-151.