

Department of Anthropology and Sociology (ANSO)

Academic year 2020-2021

Ethnographic Fieldwork

ANSO093 – Spring – 6 ECTS

[Schedule & Room](#)

Course Description

This seminar is the second part of the introduction to methods in the social sciences that spans over two semesters. This applied seminar builds on the introduction to research methods in anthropology and sociology that students have to attend during the first semester. The pedagogical approach is based on the assumption that anthropology and sociology are not meant to discover a pre-existing reality but construct their object in a reflexive movement. Empirical techniques cannot be only acquired studying textbooks but need to be experienced concretely. Building on the main techniques discussed during the previous semester, participants will be asked to conduct a small ethnographic fieldwork in Geneva punctuated by concrete exercises (writing the field report, observation and interview notes, coding). In relation to the topic selected, they will be encouraged to contact a variety of actors, including institutions (local associations, municipality and cantonal offices, international or nongovernment organizations, etc.).

A particular attention will be given to reflexivity, to the way researchers negotiate their presence with their interlocutors and how this negotiation influences the information they collect. The seminar will favor discussions where participants will share their experience.

> PROFESSORS

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[Office hours](#)

Syllabus

Structures and Objectives

The teaching is based on the assumption that the social sciences are not meant to discover a pre-existing object but construct their approach in a reflexive movement. Methods are not learned in the abstract reading textbooks, but through concrete research and communication with peers. Training in social sciences requires acquiring certain investigative techniques, including those that are

primarily qualitative, but also developing the capacity to assess critically the role of the researcher. The participants will thus be asked to conduct a small fieldwork in the region of Geneva related to the topic “Cosmopolitanism”.

The seminar will combine presentations by teachers, concrete exercises (observation, interviewing, description and coding), and discussions where participants will share their experiences in the field. Ethical issues will receive constant attention. The aim is to put the students in the position to learn from personal experience and debate, to encourage them to question common sense and illusion of immediate knowledge.

Considering the interactive format, a regular participation is required. Students must attend all of the scheduled classes, unless excused by the instructors. They will be asked to notify in advance if they are unable to come to a class.

Evaluation and Grading

The students’ performance will be evaluated on the basis of their involvement in the fieldwork, classroom participation, the quality and timelines of the assignments. More precisely students will be requested to:

- Conduct a small field research in the region of Geneva related to the topic “Politics of activism”
- Participate actively in the discussions during the whole semester.
- Present during the semester their work in progress, discuss the problems they are facing and confront their experience in a process of mutual learning.
- Conduct a collective observation and crossed interview and write the small assignments.
- Present their research in class on **3 June 2021**.
- Write a **final research report** of no more than **3000 words**, due by **27 May 2021**, to synthesize the methodological obstacles and the ethical issues met during the semester.

IMPORTANT: students working in groups should write individual research reports.

Grade will be determined as follows: 10% for general participation; 30% for the fieldwork and the various presentations of one’s research; 20% for final presentation, 40% for the final research report. The seminar provides 6 ECTS.

Course Policies

- Only students who have validated the seminar ANSO081, in autumn 2020, will be allowed to enrol. No auditors will be accepted.
- Students are encouraged to work in team of two (or of three, in some cases) on the field, but the written assignments are individual.
- Papers should be written in English or French, double-spaced, using standard 12 point font, with 1 inch margins. The student’s name, the paper’s title, the date, the course’s title and page numbers must be mentioned.
- Quotations and bibliography must follow the Chicago Manual of Style or the Harvard Referencing System.
- Students must hand in papers on time electronically as a Word file (no need to provide a hard copy). Papers that are sent late without a good reason or exceed importantly the word limit will not receive anything higher than a 4.0.
- Students who missed more than two classes without being excused by the instructor will not receive anything higher than a 4.0.
- Plagiarism constitutes a breach of academic integrity and will not be tolerated. Students who present the work of others as their own will receive a 0.

- Laptops may be used only for legitimate classroom purposes, such as taking notes, downloading class information, or working on an in-class exercise. All other devices should remain off or in silent mode.

Course Schedule

Please note that the theme of each week and the reading list might be modified during the semester. Students will be informed in due time.

Week 1 (25 February) – Introduction to the course

Organizational issues; Research protocol presentation, prepare Cornavin observation

Week 2 (4 March) – Collective observation: train station of Cornavin and its surroundings

Suggested readings:

BEAUD Stéphane, WEBER Florence, "Observer," in: *Guide de l'enquête de terrain: Produire et analyser des données ethnographiques*, Paris: La Découverte, 2010, pp. 125-153.

BECKER Howard, "Problems of Inference and Proof in Participant Observation," *American Sociological Review* 23(6), 1958, pp. 652-660.

BERNARD H. Russell, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Lanham, New York, Toronto, Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2011, fifth edition, chap. 12 & 14, pp. 256-290 & 306-336.

BERNARD H. Russell, GRAVLEE Clarence C. (eds), *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, 2nd ed., chap. 8, pp. 251-292.

PETONNET Colette, "L'observation flottante: L'exemple d'un cimetière parisien," *L'Homme* 22(4), 1982, pp. 37-47.

Week 3 (11 March) – Visual Anthropology: presentation Sarah Bittel and Marie de Lutz, ANSO PhDs

Suggested readings:

BARTSCHERER Thomas, COOVER Roderick (eds), *Switching Codes: Thinking Through Digital Technology in the Humanities and the Arts*, Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

HEIDER Karl G., *Ethnographic Film*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006.

LAPLANTINE François, "Penser en images." *Ethnologie française* 37, 2007/1, pp. 47-56.

MACDOUGALL David, "Visual Anthropology and the Ways of Knowing." In: *Transcultural Cinema*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, pp. 61-92.

--, "New Principles of Visual Anthropology." In: *The Corporeal Image: Film, Ethnography, and the Senses*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, pp. 264-273.

Week 4 (18 March) – Debriefing on Cornavin observation, sharing fieldnotes

Please post your one-page observation notes and one-page personal reflections on moodle by 16 March 2021.

Suggested readings:

BEAUD Stéphane, WEBER Florence, "Travailler les entretiens et le journal de terrain," in: *Guide de l'enquête de terrain: Produire et analyser des données ethnographiques*, Paris: La Découverte, 2010, pp. 205-225.

BERNARD H. Russell, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Lanham, New York, Toronto, Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2011, fifth edition, chap. 13, pp. 291-305.

GEERTZ Clifford, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture," in: *The Interpretation of Cultures – Selected Essays*, New York: Basic Books, 1973, pp. 3-30.

GLASER Barney G., STRAUSS Anselm L., "The Discovery of Grounded Theory," in: *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, Chicago: Aldine, 1967, pp. 1-18.

LAPLANTINE François, *La description ethnographique*, Paris: Nathan, 1996.

Week 5 (25 March) – Entering the field and first field observation/office hours

Françoise and Alessandro will receive students in their offices to discuss their fieldwork.

Week 6 (1 April) – Digital Ethnography: presentation Nina Khamsy, ANSO PhD

Suggested readings:

COLEMAN E. Gabriella, "Ethnographic Approaches to Digital Media", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 39(1), 2010, p. 487-505.

DE SETA Gabriele, "Three Lies of Digital Ethnography", *Journal of Digital Social Research* 2(1), 2020, p. 77-97.

HINE Christine, "Ethnographies of Online Communities and Social Media: Modes, Varieties, Affordances", in: Nigel G. FIELDING, Raymond M. LEE, Grant BLANK (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Online Research Methods*, London: Sage Publications, 2017, p. 401-415.

Week 7 (8 April) – No class (Easter break)

Week 8 (15 April) – Crossed interviews among participants

Suggested readings:

BEAUD Stéphane, WEBER Florence, "Préparer et négocier un entretien ethnographique;" "Conduire un entretien," in: *Guide de l'enquête de terrain: Produire et analyser des données ethnographiques*, Paris: La Découverte, 2010, pp. 155-198.

BERNARD H. Russell, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Lanham, New York, Toronto, Plymouth: AltaMira Press, 2011, fifth edition, chap. 8, 9 & 10, pp. 156-237.

BERNARD H. Russell, GRAVLEE Clarence C. (eds), *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, 2nd ed., chap. 10 & 11, pp. 313-390.

KAUFMANN Jean-Claude, *L'entretien comprehensive*, Paris: Nathan, 1996.

PIALOUX Michel, "L'ouvrière et le chef d'équipe ou comment parler du travail," *Travail et emploi* 62, 1995, pp. 4-39

Please write the synthesis of the interview, transcribe one-paragraph and write one-page personal reflections about the interview and post all that on moodle by 20 April 2021.

Week 9 (22 April) – Crossed interviews: debriefing

Week 10 (29 April) – Feminist Methods: guest lecture by Katarzyna Grabska, Senior researcher, Peace Research Institute Oslo, Norway

Suggested readings:

GUNARATNAM Yasmin, HAMILTON Carrie, "Introduction the Wherewithal of Feminist Methods", *Feminist Review* 115, 2017, 12 p.

CHILDERS Sara M., "The materiality of fieldwork: an ontology of feminist becoming", *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 26(5), 2013, p. 599-609.

WOLF Diane L., "Situating Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork", in: *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1996, p. 1-55.

Week 11 (6 May) – Collective debriefing on your fieldwork

Week 12 (13 May) – No class (Ascension)

Week 13 (20 May) – Analysis & Coding

Suggested readings:

GIBBS Graham R., "Thematic Coding and Categorizing," in: *Analyzing Qualitative Data*, London: Sage, 2007, pp. 38-55.

HENNING Elisabeth *et al.*, "Making Meaning of Data: Analysis and Interpretation," in: *Finding your Way in Qualitative Research*, Pretoria: Van Schaik, 2004, pp. 101-140.

OLIVIER DE SARDAN Jean-Pierre, "La violence faite aux données: Autour de quelques figures de la surinterprétation en anthropologie," *Enquête*, 3, *Interpréter, Surinterpréter*, 1996, pp. 31-59.

WEITZMAN Eben A., "Software and qualitative research," in: Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2000, pp. 803-820.

Week 14 (27 May) – Exercise on Coding

Week 15 (3 June) – Presentation of Final Projects (3-hour session)