

Department of Anthropology and Sociology ANSO

Academic year 2021-2022

Melancholic diasporas. Towards a critical anthropology of migrations and its discontents

ANSO145 - Autumn - 3 ECTS

(S1)

7 October 2021 (16:15-18:00)

8 October 2021 (10:15-14:00)

21 October 2021 (12:15-14:00 and 16:15-18:00)

(S3)

22 October 2021 (10:15-14:00)

Course Description

Borders and boundaries are exemplary sites in which the neoliberal vocabulary of terms such as ‘choice’, ‘change’, ‘opportunity’ displays their thick contradictions; and where agency only translates the social request to be resilient. In these abject spaces, anthropology may represent a hermeneutic tool: a *knowledge-power* able to produce, under certain conditions, counter-practices of resistance (and not resilience).

As Gramsci recognized “the starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is and is ‘knowing thyself’ as a product of the historical processes to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory” (*Prison Notebooks*). He observed that “it is imperative to compile such an inventory”. The questions at the core of the course concern the way in which *outlaw subjects* (migrants, refugees, victims of human trafficking and their kids) made their own inventories; and the types of knowledges that emerge inside these complex fieldworks.

Ethnographic materials from Frantz Fanon Centre – a public ethnopsychiatric service for migrants, refugees, and victims of torture, based in Turin (Italy) – will be analysed so to explore and discuss the methodological challenges of a critical anthropology at work.

> PROFESSOR

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Office hours

Friday 8 and 22 October:
14h to 17h

The instructor is available in other days or hours, by appointment.

> ASSISTANT

Office hours

Photo: ‘Awaking’, World Press Photo 2020, by Tomek Kaczor
<https://www.worldpressphoto.org/collection/photo/2020/39606/1/Tomek-Kaczor-POY-nominee>



Syllabus

Course overview

Starting from the second half of the 20th century, we have been witnessing a re-signifying of the word 'drowned'. This process has changed the profile of the 'last' and carved their features. They were the wretched of the earth of the anti-colonial Fanonian perspective; the southern peasants in De Martino's anti-bourgeois ethnography, and in Basaglia's revolutionary psychiatry they were 'the mad' who were "incarcerated in total institutions". Most recently, the experience of asylum seekers and refugees – often simultaneously peasants in the underground economies, prisoners in administrative detention centres, psychiatric patients, unemployed, homeless, bad parents, and 'undesirables' (Agier) in this 'European apartheid' (Balibar) – clearly reveals the connection that links heterogeneous and sometimes blurred subalternities. The experience of increasing uncertainty regarding citizen rights and institutional racism, unveils the nation-state as a very ambiguous entity, with its left hand raised to protect, assist, and integrate fragile individuals or minority members, while its right hand excludes, jails, or mutes them. Such experiences are fully encapsulated by the meaning of intersectionality, overlapping threats that must be studied concurrently (increasing inequalities, volatile citizenship rights, racial and gender discrimination, reproductive health, vulnerability, etc.). Anthropology has to consider these issues, especially when migration became a stable process, and children grown up in the host country (Sayad). The course intends to examine the institutional violence and the forms of oppression with a specific focus on what we may call 'archives of exclusion', as well as on the ways in which 'the dominated' construct strategies of withdrawal, invisibility, and resistance. The abuse of concepts such as 'resilience' – inspired by the humanitarian paradigm of trauma (Fassin, Beneduce) – fuels *de facto* a medicalization of human life and disregards the multiple constraints that affect the experience of subalterns and the oppressed. In the scenario, notions such as 'agency' have grown in currency, but one may wonder if they only aptly describe the 'neoliberal subject' (Bracke, Gershon), the new silenced subaltern. This literature has convincingly underlined the risks of such a sociological and anthropological vocabulary, which ignores the powerful analytical "toolbox" (Foucault) that inspired the authors quoted above, whose thought will be analysed during the seminar.

The course will develop an anthropological perspective, in a constant dialogue with others human and social sciences such as history, sociology, psychology and psychiatry.

Objectives and Structure

The course intends to introduce students to theoretical and methodological issues concerning a medical anthropology of migration, within the Critical studies perspective, combining lectures and discussions of assigned readings. As a short course, only selected topics will be studied: these include both case studies as well as some of the classic literature on the social production of *prêt-à-porter* scientific categories (i.e., diagnosis, syndromes, symptoms, such as the so called 'north African syndrome' in France, the 'resignation syndrome' in Sweden, the 'nodding syndrome' in Uganda).

During the seminar, we will take time to reflect upon methods and the ethics of social research. As Gramsci has recognised: "The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical processes to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory" (*Prison Notebooks*). In his famous book *Orientalism*, Edward Said maintains that "The only available translation inexplicably leaves Gramsci's comment at that, whereas in fact Gramsci's text concludes by saying, 'therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory'". The inventory may be stretched, of course, but what is crucial is to recognise the impossibility for these subaltern subjects to become political agents because of the lack of critical elaboration of their material and immaterial condition. Scholars and researchers may represent, in this sense, an opportunity for holding up this process of becoming human as agents of history.

The course will be structured into four intensive meetings, or six sessions – two half days consisting of two double sessions (on Thursday), plus other two sessions (on Friday). Each session includes a brief lecture part, and then extensive group discussions based on readings notes prepared by the students. The seminar is worth 3 ECTS. As the class is very short, attendance is mandatory.

Evaluation and Grading

The evaluation aims to encourage critical reading, critical thinking, and critical writing. To this end, students are required to come to each session prepared. The seminar is based on classroom participation, so the more interested and prepared you are, the better the class will be.

Final grades will be calculated as follow:

1. Participation in class discussion (20% of the final grade).
2. Reading note (30% of the final grade).
3. Final paper (50% of the final grade).

More precisely students will be requested to:

1. Read all articles indicated as “core readings” prior to class.
2. Read one essay from the lists of “suggested readings” and prepare 500 words reading note to be submitted on the last day of the course. Reading notes should briefly summarise the article, outline and discuss its core contribution and concepts, and how it connects to the course’s theme as well as possibly to the student’s own research.
3. Present a paper (max 3000 words, excluding bibliography and annexes, in English or French) or another outcome agreed upon with the instructor and related to the course (video, recording, etc.). Students may choose one of the topics developed during the seminar.

The evaluation will be done considering:

- coherence between the issues analysed and the main subjects proposed during the seminar.
- connections to literature (at least one author has to be studied and analysed deeply).
- accuracy of language (if paper) or of the quality of the sound and/or images (if video or other outcomes).

Course Policies

Papers should be written in English, double-spaced, using standard 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. It must include the student’s name, the paper’s title, the date, the course’s title, and page numbers. 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 hard copies).

Papers that are submitted with an unjustified delay, significantly exceed the word limit, and do not comply with the general guidelines will receive a negative grade. Papers without clear links to the anthropological approach in the course could be put at a disadvantage. 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.

All of the articles and book chapters indicated in the course schedule will be made available as electronic reserve on the course site.

Sessions and readings

Meeting 1: Thursday 7 October (Session 1: 16h15-18h00)

Session 1: Borders, Exile and Subalternity

Core readings

- Sayad A. 1990, "Les maux-à-mots de l'immigration. Entretien avec Jean Leca", *Politix*, vol. 3, n°12, 7-24. DOI : <https://doi.org/10.3406/polix.1990.1420>
www.persee.fr/doc/polix_0295-2319_1990_num_3_12_1420
- Cabot, H. 2019, "The business of anthropology and the European refugee regime", *American Ethnologist*, 46: 261-275 - <https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12791>

Suggested readings

- De Genova N., 2013, "Spectacles of migrant 'illegality': the scene of exclusion, the obscene of inclusion", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36:7, 1180-1198. DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2013.783710
https://f7687beb-3eb9-469c-8cfb-f5a0fe324552.filesusr.com/ugd/4fd32d_43bce7ae98c24c7f88fc1e5df6da1a9d.pdf
- De Genova, N. 2016, "The 'native's point of view' in the anthropology of migration", *Anthropological Theory*, Vol. 16, No. 2-3. 227-240.
- Khosravi, S. 2007, "The 'illegal' traveller: an auto-ethnography of borders", *Social Anthropology*, 15: 321-334. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0964-0282.2007.00019.x>
- Jaggar, M.A. 1989, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in feminist Epistemology", *Inquiry*, 32, 2, 151-176.
- Sayad A., 1979, "Les enfants illégitimes", *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*. Vol. 25, 61-81. DOI : <https://doi.org/10.3406/arss.1979.2623>
www.persee.fr/doc/arss_0335-5322_1979_num_25_1_2623
- Sayad A., 1979, "Les enfants illégitimes" (II partie), *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*. Vol. 26-27, 117-132. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3406/arss.1979.2633>
www.persee.fr/doc/arss_0335-5322_1979_num_26_1_2633
- Smith, K. 2010, Gramsci at the margins: subjectivity and subalternity in a theory of hegemony, *International Gramsci Journal*, 1(2), 2010, 39-50. <https://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci/vol1/iss2/7>

Meeting 2: Friday 8 October (Session 2: 10h15-12h00 / Session 3: 12h15-14h00)

Session 2: 10h15-12h00 A Glossary of migration: agency, resilience, resistance

Core readings

Bracke S., 2016, "Is the subaltern resilient? Notes on agency and neoliberal subjects", *Cultural Studies*, 30:5, 839-855. DOI: 10.1080/09502386.2016.1168115

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09502386.2016.1168115?journalCode=rcus20>

Suggested readings

Gershon I., 2011, "Neoliberal Agency", *Current Anthropology*, 52, 4, 537-555.

<http://hecat.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Recommended-Gershon.neoliberal.agency.current.anthropology.pdf>

Kim, D K., 2007, *Melancholic Freedom. Agency and the Spirit of Politics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press [see: Introduction].

Neocleous, M., 2013, "Resisting resilience", *Radical philosophy*, 178, 2-7.

https://www.radicalphilosophyarchive.com/issue-files/rp178_commentary_neocleous_resisting_resilience.pdf

Ortner S. B., 1995, "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal", *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History*, 37 (1), 173-193.

<https://www.socialworldsresearch.org/sites/default/files/4co523.pdf>

Session 3: 12h15-14h00 Suspected subjects and compromised futures

Core readings

Beneduce, R., 2015) "The Moral Economy of Lying: Subjectcraft, Narrative Capital, and Uncertainty in the Politics of Asylum", *Medical Anthropology*, 34 (6), 551-571.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01459740.2015.1074576>

Fanon F., 1952 [1967], 'The North African Syndrome', in Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, trs. Haakon Chevalier, New York: Grove Press.

Suggested readings

Beneduce, Roberto, 2019, "'Madness and Despair are a Force': Global Mental Health, and How People and Cultures Challenge the Hegemony of Western Psychiatry", *Cult. Med. & Psychiatry*, 43: 710-723.

Fanon F., 1959 [1967], "Medicine and colonialism", In *A dying colonialism*, New York: Grove Press [Chapter 4].

Fassin D., 2011, "Ethnopsychiatry and the Postcolonial Encounter: A French Psychopolitics of Otherness". In *Unconscious Dominions: Psychoanalysis, Colonial Trauma, and Global Sovereignities*, Warwick Anderson, Deborah Jenson, Richard C. Keller (eds), Durham: Duke University Press.

Gibson, N., 2011, "The New North African Syndrome: A Fanonian Commemoration", *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy*, v. 19, n. 1, 23-35. <https://jffp.pitt.edu/ojs/index.php/jffp/article/view/475>

Haddour, A. 2019, "The North African syndrome", In *Frantz Fanon, postcolonialism and the ethics of difference*, Manchester, England: Manchester University Press. [Chapter 4].

Taliani S., 2016, "In and around 1956. Frantz Fanon and his hand-to-hand struggle with cultures", *Politique africaine*, 3, 143, 93-111. DOI: 10.3917/polaf.143.0093 [article in French].

URL: <https://www.cairn-int.info/journal-politique-africaine-2016-3-page-93.htm>

Taliani S., 2012, "Intuitions délirantes et désirs hypothéqués : penser la migration avec Frantz Fanon", *L'Autre*, 3, 13, 285-295. DOI : 10.3917/lautr.039.0285

URL : <https://www.cairn.info/revue-l-autre-2012-3-page-285.htm>

Meeting 3: Thursday 21 October (Session 4: 12h15-14:00 and Session 5: 16h15-18h00)

Session 4: 12h15-14h00 Migration and its discontents: syndromes, culture, and cure

Core readings

Kirmayer L.J., Gómez-Carrillo A., 2019, "Agency, embodiment and enactment in psychosomatic theory and practice", *Medical Humanities*, 45:169-182.

<https://mh.bmj.com/content/medhum/45/2/169.full.pdf>

Briggs, C., and Mantini-Briggs, C., 2000, "Bad Mothers' and the Threat to Civil Society: Race, Cultural Reasoning, and the Institutionalization of Social Inequality in a Venezuelan Infanticide Trial", *Law & Social Inquiry*, 25, 2, 299-354. doi:10.1111/j.1747-4469.2000.tb00964.x

Suggested readings

Ticktin M. 2005, "Policing and Humanitarianism in France: immigration and the turn to law as state of exception", *Interventions*, 7:3, 346-368, DOI: 10.1080/13698010500268148.

See also:

Ticktin M. 2011, *Casualties of Care: Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France*, Berkeley: University of California Press, <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520950535>

The students are invited to search autonomously articles, carefully reading the bibliography of the two core readings, and choosing materials from there. You may be inspired by topics or authors. I invite to write reading notes at least of two articles.

Session 5: 16h15-18h00 Resignation and despair

Core readings

De Martino, E. 2012, "Crisis of presence and religious reintegration" [Prefaced and Translated by Tobia Farnetti and Charles Stewart], Vol. 2, 2:

<https://www.haujournal.org/index.php/hau/article/view/hau2.2.024>

Suggested readings

On Resignation syndrome

Aviv, Rachel, 2017, "The trauma of facing deportation", *The New Yorker*

URL: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/04/03/the-trauma-of-facing-deportation>

Butler D.G., 2020, "A Child is Being Caged: Resignation Syndrome and the Psychopolitics of Petrification", *J. Am Psychoanal Assoc.*, 68(3):333-357. doi: 10.1177/0003065120935594

Sallin K., Lagercrantz H., Evers K., Engström I., Hjern A., Petrovic P., 2016, "Resignation Syndrome: Catatonia? Culture-Bound?", *Front Behav Neurosci*, 10:7. doi:10.3389/fnbeh.2016.00007

On nodding syndrome

Irani J., Rujumba J., Mwaka A.D., Arach J., Lanyuru D., Idro R., et al. 2019, "Those who died are the ones that are cured". Walking the political tightrope of Nodding Syndrome in northern Uganda: Emerging challenges for research and policy. *PLoS Negl Trop Dis* 13(6): e0007344. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pntd.0007344>

Mwaka A.D., Semakula J.R., Abbo C., Idro R. 2018, "Nodding syndrome: recent insights into etiology, pathophysiology, and treatment", *Res Rep Trop Med*. 9: 89-93. doi:10.2147/RRTM.S145209

van Bommel, K. 2020, "Conceptualizing Illness: Nodding Syndrome in Northern Uganda", *Afrika Focus*, 33(1), 143-152. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/2031356X-03301010>

On Ernesto De Martino and magic

De Martino E., 2015, *Magic: A Theory from the South*, [translated and annotated by Dorothy Louise Zinn, Chicago, HAU Books.

<https://haubooks.org/magic-a-theory-from-the-south/>

Pels, P. 1998, "The Magic of Africa: Reflections on a Western Commonplace", *African Studies Review*, 41, 3, 193-209.

Meeting 4: Thursday 22 October (Session 6: 10h15-14h00)

Session 6: 10h15-14h00 Ethnographies, Writings and Ethics

Core readings

Giordano, C. 2008, "Practices of Translation and the Making of Migrant Subjectivities in Contemporary Italy", *American Ethnologist*, vol. 35, no. 4, 588–606.

Taliani, S. 2015, "Histoires comme ça", *Sociétés politiques comparées*, 37.

http://fasopo.org/sites/default/files/charivaria1_n37.pdf

Suggested readings

On Nigerian migration

Taliani, S. 2012, "Coercion, Fetishes and suffering in the daily lives of Young Nigerian Women in Italia", *Africa*, 82, 4, 579-608. doi:10.1017/S0001972012000514

Taliani, S. 2018, "Du Dilemme Des Filles Et De Leurs Réserves De Vie: La Crise Sorcellaire Dans La Migration Nigériane", *Cahiers D'Études Africaines*, 58, 231/232, 3-4, 737–762.

On ethnographic writing

de Certeau Michel. 1981, "Une pratique sociale de la différence : croire", *Faire croire. Modalités de la diffusion et de la réception des messages religieux du XIIe au XVe siècle. Actes de table ronde de Rome (22-23 juin 1979)* Rome : École Française de Rome, 363-383. (Publications de l'École française de Rome, 51).

www.persee.fr/doc/efr_0000-0000_1981_act_51_1_1386

Graeber, D. 2015, "Radical Alterity is just another Way of saying "Reality". A Reply to Eduardo Viveiros de Castro", *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 5, 2, 1-41.

Pels, P. 2014, "After objectivity. An historical approach to the intersubjective in ethnography", *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 4, 1, 211-236.

Viveiros de Castro, E. 2014, "Who is afraid of the ontological Wolf? Some Comments on an ongoing anthropological Debate", CUSAS Annual Marilyn Strathern Lecture.