



The Department of Sociology and Anthropology
SA 301: Contemporary Ethnography
Fall 2018

Course Information:

Class meeting time: Tuesdays, 8:30 AM to 12:20 PM

Location: Blusson Hall (BLU) 9655

Course website: <https://golubovicjelena.com/sa301-contemporary-ethnography/>

Instructor Contact Information

Instructor: Jelena Golubovic

Office: AQ 5069

Office hours: Mondays 12:30 PM to 13:30 PM *and* Thursdays 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM

Email: jelena_golubovic@sfu.ca

Course Description:

Ethnography is one of the most defining features of anthropological research. It is at once a method of research, a form of analysis, and a genre of representation – all premised on an ethnographer “being there.” This course explores key debates and developments that have shaped contemporary ethnographic research. Students will learn to critically assess ethnographic texts, asking such questions as: How do ethnographers establish credibility, and how can we make sense of conflicting ethnographic accounts? How are the “imponderabilia of everyday life” translated into anthropological arguments and theory? What constitutes evidence, and what constitutes description? Whose voices are foregrounded in ethnographic texts, and what are the possibilities for collaboration between researchers and participants?

The first half of the course involves an overview of issues and debates in contemporary ethnography, exploring themes such as reflexivity, empiricism, and ethical dilemmas. The second half of the course involves a close reading of several ethnographic texts that speak to the above themes. In addition to short writing assignments, students will conduct an independent research project in the form of an academic paper or podcast.

Required Texts:

All of the required texts for this course will be made available online either through the course website or through the SFU library website. However, if you prefer to read paper books, you may like to purchase the following texts:

Buch Segal, Lotte. 2016. *No Place for Grief: Martyrs, Prisoners, and Mourning in Contemporary Palestine*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Ghodsee, Kristen. 2011. *Lost in Transition: Ethnographies of Everyday Life after Communism*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 1992. *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Academic Calendar

Week	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments
1	Tues, Sept 4	Introduction to contemporary ethnography	<p>◆ Cohen 2015 – <i>Eating Soup Without a Spoon</i> – Preface (p. xi-xv); <u>and</u> “Chapter 1: Introduction” (p. 1-18).</p> <p>[18 pages total]</p> <p>◆ Watch <u>in class</u>: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story” (Link)</p>	
2	Tues, Sept 11	Tracing the field: From ethnographic realism to the “crisis” of representation	<p>◆ Malinowski 1922 – <i>Argonauts of the Western Pacific</i> – “Introduction: The Subject, Method, and Scope of this Inquiry” (p. 11-24)</p> <p>◆ Clifford 1986 – “Introduction: Partial Truths,” from <i>Writing Culture</i> (p. 1-26)</p> <p>[40 pages total]</p> <p><i>Recommended reading</i>: ◆ Asch 2015 – “Anthropology, Colonialism, and the Reflexive Turn” (p. 481-489)</p>	
3	Tues, Sept 18	Reflexive ethnographies	<p>◆ Rosaldo 1989 – “Grief and a Headhunter’s Rage” (p. 167-178)</p> <p>◆ Gibb 2005 – “An Anthropologist Undone” (p. 216-228).</p>	

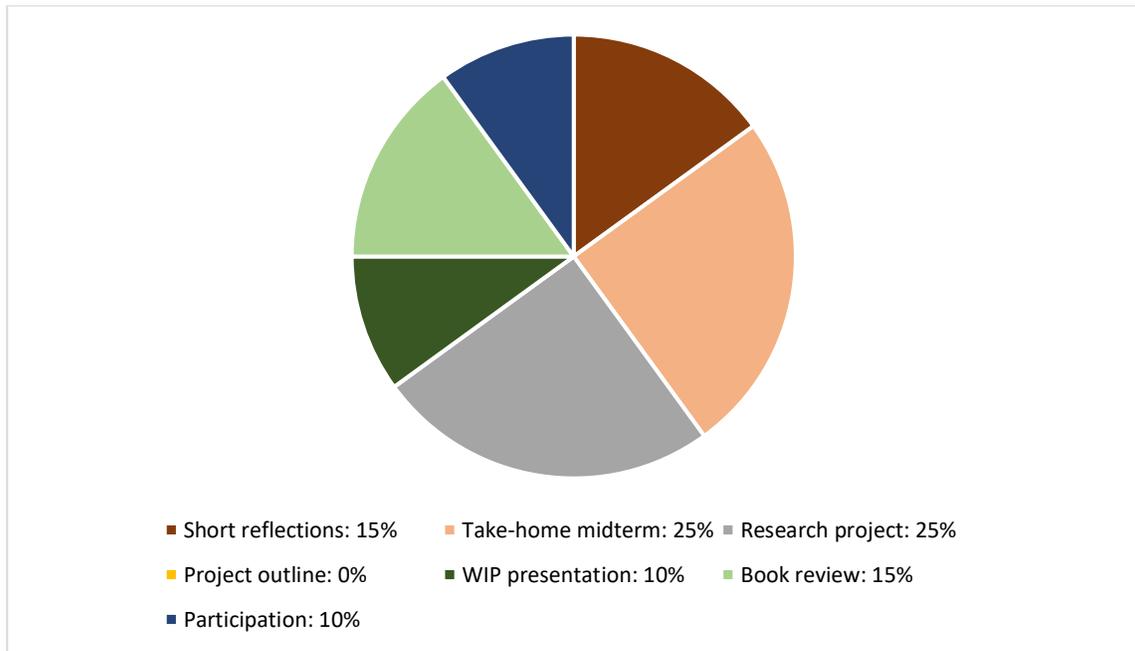
			<p>◆ Sylvain 2005 – “Loyalty and Treachery in the Kalahari” (p. 25-38).</p> <p>[39 pages total]</p> <p>◆ <u>Before class</u>: Listen to the New Books Network podcast: <i>Doing Reflexivity: An Introduction</i> (2017) by Jon Dean, 33 minutes (Link)</p>	
4	Tues, Sept 25	Credibility: Conflicting ethnographic accounts	<p>◆ Geertz 1988 – <i>Works and Lives</i> – “Chapter 1: Being There: Anthropology and the Scene of Writing” (p. 1-24)</p> <p>◆ Shore 1983 – “Paradox Regained: Freeman’s Margaret Mead and Samoa.” (p. 935-944)</p> <p>◆ Holmes 1983 – “A Tale of Two Studies.” (p. 929-935)</p> <p>[42 pages total]</p> <p>◆ Watch <u>in class</u>: <i>Margaret Mead and Samoa</i> – Heimans 1988, 51 minutes (Link)</p> <p><i>Recommended reading</i>: ◆ Steedly 2013 – <i>Rifle Reports</i> – From “Chapter 1: The Golden Bridge,” read the section titled “Audiencing Practice and Ethnographic Seduction” (p. 26-34)</p>	
5	Tues, Oct 2	Affect and Empiricism	<p>◆ Davies 2010 – “Introduction: Emotions in the Field” (p. 1-31 <i>but skim/skip the section titled “The Individual Chapters,” p. 14-22</i>)</p> <p>◆ Schoenberger & Beban 2018 – “They Turn Us into Criminals” (p. 1-16)</p>	<i>Sarah Vanderveer presentation</i>

			<p>◆ Favret-Saada 2012 – “Being Affected” (p. 435-445)</p> <p>[51 pages total]</p> <p><i>Recommended reading:</i> ◆ O’Meara 1989 – “Anthropology as Empirical Science” (p. 354-369)</p>	
6	Tues, Oct 9	Ethical dilemmas	<p>◆ Scheper-Hughes 1992 – <i>Death Without Weeping</i> – “Introduction: Tropical Sadness” (p. 1-30)</p> <p>◆ O’Connell Davidson 2008 – “If No Means No, Does Yes Mean Yes? Consenting to Research Intimacies” (p. 49-67)</p> <p>[49 pages total]</p> <p><i>Recommended reading:</i> ◆ Blee 1993 – “Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan” (p. 596-606)</p>	Take-home midterm assigned
7	Tues, Oct 16	Dark anthropology	<p>◆ Ortner 2016 – “Dark Anthropology and its Others: Theory since the 80s” (p. 47-73)</p> <p>◆ Robbins 2013 – “Beyond the Suffering Subject: Toward an Anthropology of the Good” (p. 447-462).</p> <p>◆ Kelly 2013 – “A Life Less Miserable?” (p. 213-216).</p> <p>[47 pages total]</p>	Take home midterm due at the start of class
8	Tues, Oct 23	Close reading	<p>◆ Scheper-Hughes 1992 – <i>Death Without Weeping</i> – “Chapter 7: Two Feet Under and a Cardboard Coffin” (p. 268-339)</p> <p>[72 pages]</p>	

9	Tues, Oct 30	Close reading	<p>◆ Scheper-Hughes 1992 – <i>Death Without Weeping</i> – “Chapter 9: Our Lady of Sorrows: A Political Economy of the Emotions” (p. 400-446)</p> <p>[47 pages total]</p>	Project outline due
10	Tues, Nov 6	Close reading	<p>◆ Buch Segal 2016 – <i>No Place for Grief</i> – “Preface” (p. ix); “Introduction” (p. 1-25); and “Chapter 2: Domestic Uncanniness” (p. 46-80)</p> <p>[35 pages total]</p>	Book review due (if you chose <i>Death without Weeping</i>)
11	Tues, Nov 13	Close reading	<p>Ghodsee 2011 – <i>Lost in Transition</i> – “Preface” (p. ix-xv); “Introduction” (p. 1-20); “Her Lover in Cuba” (p. 47-60); “Shopaholic in Eastern Europe” (p. 83-92); “Afterword” (p. 195-200)</p> <p>[53 pages total]</p>	Book review due (if you chose <i>No Place for Grief</i>)
12	Tues, Nov 20	Concluding discussion & review (No readings)		Book review due (if you chose <i>Lost in Transition</i>)
13	Tues, Nov 27	Project presentation workshop (Works in progress – WIP)		Project WIP presentations
14	Tues, Dec 4	No class		Final projects due via Canvas, by 11:59 PM

Evaluation Policy:

2 x Short reflections: 15%	due weeks 2 through 7
Take-home midterm: 25%	due week 7
Research Project: 25%	due week 14
Project outline: 0%	due week 9
WIP Presentation: 10%	due week 13
Book review: 15%	due week 10, 11, <i>or</i> 12
Participation: 10%	ongoing



Assignments:

All assignments are due in hard copy at the start of class, except for the final research project which may be submitted via Canvas. Please note that all written work should be double-spaced, standard margins, Times New Roman, 12-point font, and stapled. You may use whichever citation style you prefer, but be consistent.

Short Reflections (15%): For 2 weeks of your choice (you may choose between weeks 2 through 7), write a 2 page critical reflection on 2 or more of the week's readings (comparative) *or* on 1 specific reading (in-depth). This reflection should not be a summary of the text, but a critical, reflective response to, for example, its major themes, implications, methodologies, and/or theoretical insights. These reflections are marked for content, rather than for grammar, writing style, or organization. They do not need to be polished, but they do need to be thoughtful and engaging. They are due the same day that we discuss that text in class.

Take-Home Midterm (25%): The take-home midterm will be assigned at the end of class on week 6, and will be due in hard copy at the beginning of class on week 7. It will cover material from weeks 1 through 6. As this is a take-home midterm, it is “open book.” However this also means that the quality of responses should be higher than an in-class test.

Book Review (15%): For the book review assignment, choose only 1 of the ethnographies from weeks 8 to 11. The book review should be 3 to 4 pages, and should include a brief (1 to 2 paragraph) summary of the main arguments of the book, followed by a review. The review may address questions such as: whether you agree with the author’s arguments (why or why not?); what kind of evidence was presented and did you find it compelling?; how does the author structure the book, and do you find this structure effective?; does the author’s work speak to broader issues in ethnography, and what does it contribute to this discussion?; what does the book do effectively? is anything missing from the work, and how could this gap be filled by future research? In order to write an effective book review, I encourage you to read published book reviews to get a sense of the genre. The book review is due 1 week after we discuss the text in class.

Research Project (25%): The research project is an opportunity for you to conduct independent research on a topic that interests you. You may choose from the topics covered in the course or a related topic (if you choose a related topic, please confirm it with me). As for the format, you have two options: (1) Write a 12 to 15-page research paper (not including references), or (2) record a 12 to 15-minute podcast. Come see me in person if you choose the podcast option.

Project Outline (not graded): In preparation for the final research project, submit a draft 1 to 2-page outline of your research plan (topic introduction, possible themes, possible arguments), as well as a prospective bibliography of at least 6 sources. The project outline is not graded. It is intended to get you started thinking about your research project early so you are not overwhelmed by work at the last minute. Feel free to bring your outline to my office hours so we can discuss it in more detail.

Project WIP Presentation (10%): On the last week of the class, we will have a project fair where everyone will present their “work-in-progress” final project. This presentation involves synthesizing the most important insights of your essay or podcast into an engaging 8-minute talk which may (but does not have to) involve power-point or comparable media. The project fair is intended to mimic a conference/workshop setting. Sharing your work will give you an opportunity to receive critical feedback from your classmates which you can incorporate into your final research project, if you so choose, which will be due 1 week later.

Participation (10%): The most efficient way to really understand something is to learn how to use it and to discuss it with others. This also applies to things we want to understand in the course. Participation here refers to *engagement* rather than attendance; it is not enough to simply show up to class. You are expected to keep up with the readings, engage in discussion, and work collaboratively with your peers. Part of the discussion grade is earned through Canvas: Every week I will open a “discussion” on Canvas concerning the upcoming week’s readings; by 6pm on the evening before each class, post 1 discussion question related to any of that day’s readings. Make sure to have a look at your peers’ discussion questions after 6pm. Use these questions as resources in the next day’s discussion.

Grading Scale (Department of Sociology and Anthropology)

A+	95-100	A	90-94	A-	85-89	Excellent performance
B+	80-84	B	75-79	B-	70-74	Good performance
C+	65-69	C	60-64			Satisfactory performance
C-	55-59	D	50-54			Marginal performance
F	0-49					Fail
N						Did not complete course

Grading Criteria *Adapted from Dr. Parin Dossa*

- A Cutting-edge, original and insightful showing competency in articulating the relevant literature with critical analysis. Demonstrates a solid understanding of key debates and issues raised in the literature and class discussions; originality; exceptional writing and/or oratorical skills such as organization, clarity of thought, grammar, and style.
- B Competent, well focused, and clearly articulated. Demonstrates a good understanding of the key debates in the literature. Critical analysis and ability to identify key themes and discuss relevant examples. Well organized with few errors in grammar.
- C Fair ability in identifying key themes, debates and questions from the literature. Lack of competency in writing or conveying a well-organized and well-articulated piece of work. Lacks clear focus or coherence. Fundamental errors in grammar and organization.
- D Lack of sources and understanding of the literature. Shows no effort to identify a clear-cut argument or organization. Major errors in writing and/or style. Lacks coherence.
- F Demonstrates poor understanding of the literature. Does not show capacity to convey a coherent piece of work.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology follows SFU policy in relation to grading practices, grade appeals (Policy T 20.01) and academic dishonesty and misconduct procedures (S10.01- S10.04). It is the responsibility of students to inform themselves of the content of SFU policies available on the SFU website: <http://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/student.html>

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's work or ideas without giving them full credit. For example, if you were to reproduce a section of an article or book and present it as your own, that would be an instance of plagiarism. Or if you were to rely on a webpage when you formulate an argument but fail to note where you got the argument from, that would be an instance of plagiarism. Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty and will be treated in the same way as cheating on an exam. I will discuss the issue of plagiarism in lecture and will go over the norms regarding academic philosophy papers—norms that you are required to comply with.

Late Assignments

Assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late assignments will be penalized by 10% per day including weekends. Extensions may be granted in exceptional circumstances, due to illness, emergency, or crisis, but must be arranged no later than the day the assignment is due.

Communication

The password-protected course website contains the syllabus and most of the readings. We will use Canvas in order to post discussion questions (see “Participation” under “Assignments”) as well as to submit the *final* research project. Remember that the course syllabus is a live document and is subject to change. You are responsible for all announcements made in lecture, via Canvas, or via e-mail.

If you need to notify me of an illness or if you need to arrange an appointment outside of office hours, please e-mail me. Be sure to use a subject line that includes “SA 301”, otherwise your message may be treated as spam. Please allow up to 24 hours (48 hours over the weekends) for my reply, before sending another e- mail.

Student with Disabilities

Students with hidden or visible disabilities who believe they may need classroom or exam accommodations are encouraged to register with the SFU Centre for Students with Disabilities (1250 Maggie Benson Centre) as soon as possible to ensure that they are eligible and that approved accommodations and services (e.g. extensions, a computer for notes) are implemented in a timely fashion.

Special Circumstances

Please see me within the first two weeks of class if you wish to seek accommodation to observe religious holidays that are not recognized university holidays.

Electronic Devices

The majority of the course readings are available online, therefore you may prefer use your laptops in order to reference the readings in class. However, research has shown that taking notes by hand helps memory retention and learning. Putting away your laptops will allow you to be more present in the course, and will also help to foster discussion. Therefore I encourage you to use your laptops only minimally in class. Other electronic devices (mobile phones, cameras, recording devices) may not be used during class.

Office Hours

If you have questions about course content, or if you simply would like to discuss the course content, you are very much encouraged to visit me during my office hours. Sometimes there is a misconception that office hours are for students who are struggling, or that they are for keeners. Office hours are for everybody and they are a fantastic resource. Even when you think you understand the course content, simply discussing it with another person (in this case me) will often help you to reach a whole new level of understanding, or to find questions that you did not know you had. I will be holding *two* office hours, one before class on Mondays and one after class on Thursdays. You don't need an appointment to attend office hours. If I am with another student or my door is closed when you arrive, just knock on the door to let me know you are waiting.

Lectures

You are responsible for all of the material covered in lecture. Please bear in mind that the lectures and the readings are meant to *complement* one another. The lectures do not simply rehash the readings. That would be pretty boring.

Here are some tips from philosopher Eric Margolis to help you get the most out of the lectures: (1) Come prepared. Most lectures in this course are based on the assumption that you have done the reading. If you haven't done the reading, you won't be able to assess the significance of parts of the lecture, you are likely to misunderstand some of what is said, and you won't be able to retain all of the essential material. (2) Soon after the lecture, review the arguments and positions that were discussed and fill out your lecture notes. If you wait to review the lecture until later in the term, you may find that you have forgotten what was said and have trouble interpreting your own notes. (3) Ask questions and become an active participant in the class discussion. (4) Make use of office hours. I am here to answer your questions.