

070.273 – Ethnography

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Department of Anthropology, Johns Hopkins University
Spring 2016, Fridays 1:30-3:50 PM, Hodson 303

This seminar explores ethnography as a craft essential to anthropology. Ethnography is one of the most important ways in which we pull the experience of others into focus. The very notion of *ethnography* evokes not only the fieldwork that anthropology is known for, but also the bringing of a world to life through the making of a text. In this seminar, we will closely read a handful of contemporary ethnographic books, and pursue experiments of our own in ethnographic description. Working collaboratively in the spirit of a workshop, we will do exercises in reading and writing, trying out various ways of describing scenes, characters, problems, and situations. We approach ethnography as a creative practice, revealing unknown depths and faces of the realities we confront as anthropologists.

Texts. There are seven books to purchase for the course (by Stevenson, De Leon, Pandian, Myers, Reno, Tsing, and Le Guin), all of which are available at the campus bookstore. You will also need a dedicated notebook for ethnographic fieldnotes and writing exercises.

Requirements (and % of overall grade). This class is a seminar; attendance at all class sessions is required, as is active participation in classroom discussion and exercises (10%). By the crack of dawn each Friday, you will post a brief reaction to the week's reading, broaching a topic for discussion (10%). You will write three brief response papers (3 pp 1.5-spaced) over the course of the semester (20% each). You will keep a field notebook throughout the semester, contributing at least one entry of observations and notes in narrative form each week, on a subject of study that you will choose and follow over the semester (10%). These fieldnotes and our in-class writing exercises will be the foundation of a short ethnographic essay (5-7 pp 1.5-spaced) due at the end of the semester (10%). All written assignments will be due by email to the TA no later than 5:00 PM on the concerned day.

Policies – (1) *Email*. You will receive periodic notices and instructions concerning coursework on your JHU email account; you are responsible for ensuring receipt of these messages.

(2) *Attendance*. Unexcused absences from class will compromise your grade, so please ensure that your name is recorded during each session on the class attendance sheet.

(3) *Electronic devices*. Use of such devices is distracting and disallowed during class sessions. If this expectation will pose any significant problems for you, please talk to me about this individually.

(4) *Disability*. Any student with a disability who may need accommodations in this class should obtain an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services.

(5) *Assignments*. Late assignments will be marked down 10% per day.

(6) *Academic integrity*. The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition.

* Office hours Tuesdays 1:30-3:30 PM, Macaulay 111 / pandian@jhu.edu

† Office hours Fridays 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM, Macaulay 411 / babiral1@jhu.edu

Schedule

- January 29 Introduction
Please complete CITI Classroom Protocol course online by next Friday
- February 5 Lisa Stevenson, *Life Beside Itself*, 2014
Ursula Le Guin, *Steering the Craft*, Introduction and Chapter 1
- February 12 Stevenson, *Life Beside Itself*, continued
Le Guin, *Steering the Craft*, Chapter 2
- February 19 Jason De Leon, *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*, 2015
Le Guin, *Steering the Craft*, Chapter 3
- February 26 De Leon, *Land of Open Graves*, continued
Le Guin, *Steering the Craft*, Chapter 4
- March 1 *First response paper due; field notebooks due*
- March 4 Anand Pandian, *Reel World: An Anthropology of Creation*, 2015
Le Guin, *Steering the Craft*, Chapter 5
- March 11 Pandian, *Reel World*, continued
Le Guin, *Steering the Craft*, Chapter 6
- March 25 Natasha Myers, *Rendering Life Molecular: Models, Modelers, and Excitable Matter*, 2015
Le Guin, *Steering the Craft*, Chapter 7
- April 1 Myers, *Rendering Life Molecular*, continued
Le Guin, *Steering the Craft*, Chapter 8
- April 5 *Second response paper due; field notebooks due*
- April 8 Joshua Reno, *Waste Away: Working and Living in a North American Landfill*, 2016
Le Guin, *Steering the Craft*, Chapter 9
- April 15 Reno, *Waste Away*, continued
Le Guin, *Steering the Craft*, Chapter 10
- April 22 Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*, 2015
- April 26 *Third response paper due; field notebooks due*
- April 29 Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*, continued
- May 6 *Ethnographic essay due*