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Course Syllabus

MA program in Anthropology,

National School of Political Sciences and Administration

Bucharest

Introduction to Fieldwork Methodology

The course presents the defining methodological and epistemological elements of anthropological practice. The usefulness of this course consists in its direct relation to the individual research projects of students. The aim of this course is to create the premise of rigour, efficiency, creativity, and individual reflexivity through a permanent comparison of these individual efforts with the academic exigencies of anthropology.

The course is meant to familiarize the students with the main epistemological and methodological issues addressed in the contemporary debates on anthropological knowledge. Fieldwork by participant observation is recognized within and outside anthropology as a hallmark of the discipline. How is it conceived and practiced? How is it written and “translated” in and for the community of anthropologists? How is it used as a legitimizing myth? How is it restored to “the natives” ? How can it be deconstructed? Is anthropological knowledge possible? These are the questions to which the course attempts to answer.

The course also includes a practical part, namely a short urban fieldwork experience as an exercise of applying the theoretical and methodological aspects discussed during the course.

Lecture 1.

Banalowski („banal” means „common”)

Bronislaw Malinowski *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (London: Routledge, 1983 [1922]) (Introduction)

Lecture 2.

Fieldwork – the hallmark of anthropology.

Max Caison “L’Indien, le détective et l’ethnologue” in *Terrain* 25 (Septembre 1995): 113-124.

Anita Lundberg “Being Lost at Sea. Ontology, Epistemology and a Whale Hunt” in *Ethnography*, vol. 2 (4) (2001): 533-556.

Lecture 3.

The preparation of the short fieldwork experience in Bucharest. Discussion of research methods.

Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan “La politique du terrain. Sur la production des données en anthropologie” in *Enquête* 1 (1995): 71-109.

Lorence Newman “Field Research”, *Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Boston, Ally&Bacon, 1997 (1991).

Roger Sanjek “A Vocabulary for Fieldnotes” in R. Sanjek (ed) *Fieldnotes. The Making of Anthropology* (Ithaca and London; Cornell University press, 1990): 92-138.

Lecture 4

Fieldwork Problems/ Problematic Fieldworks (part I)

Laura L. Adams „The Mascot Researcher. Identity, Power, and Knowledge in Fieldwork,” in *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, vol 28, no 4, (August 1999), 331-363.

Bahira Sherif “The Ambiguity of Boundaries in the Fieldwork Experience: Establishing Rapport and Negotiating Insider/Outsider Status” in *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 7, no. 4 (2001): 436-447.

Lecture 5

Fieldwork Problems/ Problematic Fieldworks (part II)

Olivier Schwartz „Une méthode ethnographique” in *Le monde privé des ouvriers. Hommes et femmes du Nord* (Paris: P.U.F., 1990), 35-57.

Nancy Scheper-Huges „Ire in Ireland” in *Ethnography*, vol. 1, no.1 (2000): 117-140.

Lecture 6

Interpretation (The use and misuse of ethnographic data. Competing interpretations. The anthropologist as a cultural expert).

Clifford Geertz “Thick description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture” in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan “La violence faite aux données. De quelques figures de la surinterprétation en anthropologie” in *Enquête* 3 (1996): 31-59.

Johannes Fabian “Ethnographic Misunderstanding and the Perils of Context,” in *American Anthropologist*, vol. 97, no. 1 (march 1995), 41-50.

Lecture 7

Ethnographic description

Mondher Kilani “Terrain, culture, texte. Sur la construction de l’objet anthropologique” in *L’invention de l’autre. Essais sur le discours anthropologique* (Lausanne: Editions Payot, 1994).

François Laplantine *Descrizione etnografica* (Iasi, Polirom, 2000).

Lecture 8

Concluding remarks.

Paul Stoller “Ethnographies as Texts/Ethnographers as Griots” in *American Ethnologist* vol. 21, no 2, 353-366.

Teaching Methodology

Each course consists of two parts: a lecture of one hour and a seminar of one hour. During the seminar, a team of two or three students leads the discussion (the number of students enroll in the MA program is maximum 15). Each member of the team presents a text from the reader and prepares a single sheet written presentation (argument, question, theoretical and experiential connections, and implications). All students are required to read the literature assigned and to participate in discussions.

Assessment

Marking of the course is based 25% on the written presentation of a text, 25% on the participation in class discussions and 50% on the presentation of fieldwork results.