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Report on the Teaching Workshops

Date: 16 May 2004

Location: Casa Folk Eliad

Participants: 7 students at the SNSPA- Political Sciences Department, second year of study (Colotelo Cristina, Munteanu Petru, Marza Constantin, Munteanu Cristina, Fugaciu Adrian, Ignat Mihai, Preda Oana)

Objectives of the meeting:

1. Improving the relation with the students
2. Informal discussions on the following issues: improving the seminary thematic, developing the critical skills, analyzing their feedback on the seminary's content
3. Debating on the "ideal" seminary

Summary of the discussion:

I hold two seminars with the second year of study at the Political Sciences Dep.- SNSPA Bucharest: Introduction in Anthropology (first semester) and Social Communities (second semester).

Each seminar had a different concept: the first one was focused on: presentation of the concepts, theories in anthropology. Thus, the content of the seminar had as base for the discussion the "classical" lectures (Levi Strauss, Malinowski etc.). The idea was to encourage the students to read classical literature and to get familiarize with the concept, theories and issues and to develop their critical abilities in a collective debate. But, the feedback was not very satisfying: many students hadn't read or participated on discussions.

After this workshop I realized that the students don't reject the theoretical content but the classic discussion on the text: they would want to read the text, to ask question

about what they haven't understand and than to find similarities between science and life: to understand the utility of this literature through practical things. They are students in Political Science and they want to discover that the university helps them to understand better their society in order to make some changes. They don't deny the concepts and theories' s value but I would have to adopt my strategy in order to attract them: what is the use of Malinowsky's Kula for the Romanian society. Why should they learn it from school and not see it on the Discovery TV channel?

So: to use this content (because I will use this literature the next year also) but to have another type of conduct the debates for them to understand that the classic issues in anthropology are contemporary and usefully anymore.

They appreciated more the second seminary (Social Communities) because the content was done by case studies: we select a problem (e.g.: migration), the theories and concepts regarding the specific problem, the appropriate methods and then they had to read a case study made on this issue. They were very content because they understood how to design a project, how could be use the theory in practical matters and what are the Romania's problems from the sociological and anthropological point of view.

Concluding, I think that there are no problems with the content but with the way to present the utility to the students (they are students in social sciences after all). This is my personal benefit as a teacher from this meeting.

Another benefits of this workshop were:

- I told them about my fieldwork experience and the problems I had to face; I detailed using my personal experience the important of gender, age, ethnic appartenance for the anthropologist on the fieldwork adapted with specific researched issues; the methodological problems
- They told me what kind of seminaries they don't like (e.g. presentation made by a colleague on a text)
- We discussed about their projects and problems faced in the university
- Their expectation from the university and after graduating

- We improve our informal relation and I noticed that, after our meeting, they we more involved in the seminaries
- I invited former CEU students to present them the way the classes are held at CEU: what are the requests and the rules.