ANT 7491-U01 (19204)

Contemporary Theory in Social Anthropology
Theory and Ethnographic Writing Styles

Spring 2015
Thursdays 11:00am – 1:45pm
LC 309
Instructor: Dr. Jean Muteba Rahier, Professor of Anthropology
jrahier@fiu.edu
Office hours: Th. 1:45pm – 3:00pm or on appointment. To make appointments, approach the professor or call 305 348-4156 (the person who answers the phone has access to his calendar). The instructor will NOT meet with anyone before 11:00am on Th.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This graduate seminar is grounded on the premise that there is no ethnography without theory. Seminar sessions will provide opportunities to discuss the connections existing between identified ethnographic writing styles and specific theorizing, and within the framework of what paradigm: modern or post-modern... Ethnographic realism, ethnographic autobiography, self- and auto-ethnography, ethnographic fiction, ethnographic poetry are non-exhaustively as many ethnographic writing styles that will be in focus in this course. The literary aspects of ethnography will be explored. The seminar will be helpful for students to develop skills necessary to read ethnographies critically, something we will do throughout the semester. The ethnographer as a visible “self,” “subject,” and “agent” will be deconstructed, and enrolled students will be asked to write a short ethnography (using any style but ethnographic realism) as term paper.

Self = The total, essential, or particular being of a person; the individual. The essential qualities distinguishing one person from another; individuality. One's consciousness of one's own being or identity; the ego.
Subject = The mind or thinking part as distinguished from the object of thought or research.
Agent = One who acts or has the power or authority to act. A means by which something is done or caused. A force or substance that causes a change.

As the course unfolds, we will read and discuss texts about the history of the discipline of anthropology; the racialist foundation of modern anthropology; modern and postmodern ethnographic methodologies and writing styles; cosmopolitanism and anthropology; etc. Students will be able to write their ethnography/term papers on the region of the world that is of interest to them. The professor is both a Latin Americanist and an Africanist, among other things. Students will be asked to share their ethnographies with their peers, and to in turn assess and comment upon and provide feedback on their peers’ ethnographies.
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
By the end of this course, students will:
1. Have an excellent knowledge of the history of the discipline of anthropology as it relates to ethnographic writing.
2. Have an excellent understanding of the kinds of linkages existing between specific theorizing and identified ethnographic writing styles.
3. Have acquired skills to engage in critical readings of ethnographic texts.
4. Be better informed as to what writing styles would be best appropriated for their own research.
5. Be able to understand and appreciate the many linkages existing between the discipline of anthropology and creative writing.
6. Hopefully have become better writers of ethnographies.

ATTENDANCE
It is expected that all students attend all classes throughout the semester. Informed participation in class discussions is required and will be evaluated at the end of the semester.

ASSESSMENT OF PEERS’ ETHNOGRAPHIES
All students will be asked to assess and comment upon the ethnographies written by their peers. These assessments and comments will be graded.

BLACKBOARD
All students are REQUIRED to use Blackboard regularly for this course. On the Blackboard site associated with this course, students will be able to access all course information and materials (pdf copies of articles and book chapters, films, etc.); take the required examinations; view course announcements; participate in Blackboard class discussions; and access grades. To access Blackboard, go to: online.fiu.edu

REQUIRED READINGS
ALL READINGS MUST BE DONE IN ADVANCE, ACCORDING TO THE SCHEDULE OF CLASSES (see below). THE BOOKS ARE ON SALE AT THE MMC FIU BOOKSTORE (unless otherwise indicated). THE ARTICLES ARE AVAILABLE IN PDF FORMAT ON BLACKBOARD (they are listed in the course schedule individually under the day they have been scheduled for discussion).

Books

**READING REPORTS**
For each week of class, students will have to turn in on Blackboard a reading report (see reading report format on Blackboard) about all the required readings to be covered that week. The deadline to turn these reports in: by midnight on the Wednesday immediately preceding that specific Thursday class. When there are several readings (several authors) for one given day of class, students should refer to the texts read in one given essay of no more than 1,500 words. Obviously, with such a limited space, these essays should not apply the reading report format for each single text read for one given week. Instead, the reading report formats should serve as a source of inspiration, as a guide about how to structure the reports and to arrange the comments about the readings.

**TERM PAPER**
The term paper for this class will consist in an ethnography of about 15 to 20 double-spaced pages (without counting the title page or list of cited references). Each student will need to have his/her paper topic individually approved by the professor by January 31, 2015. The ethnography must be written using any of the ethnographic writing styles that will be discussed during the course *at the exception of* “ethnographic realism.” The term paper will be presented using a complex system that will be explained on the first day of class. All student papers will be presented, critically, by a peer. All students will have to read all term papers and produce a comment or reaction for each paper read. These comments and reactions will be presented verbally by each student right after the presentation of a given paper. The day the paper is presented, the author will have to remain silent unless he/she is asked to clarify factual information about the paper’s content. He/she will take notes about comments and reactions and will have a week to “digest” the feedback received. The papers’s authors may not respond to the comments/reactions until the following session of class. At the following session, the authors of the papers presented the week before will have the opportunity to engage with the comments and responses received the week before and explain what they will do about these comments and responses, how they will eventually integrate or not these comments within the next draft of the paper, and why, etc. Every student will have to resubmit his/her revised paper. The instructor will determine who will present what peer paper…

(More information about this system in class)

**TAKE HOME EXAMINATION**
A Take Home Examination consisting of a number of essay questions will be given to students before the Spring Break. They will have to be turned in onto Blackboard by the end of the Spring Break.
### FINAL GRADE

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<th>Points</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Reports</td>
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<td>Informed Participation in class</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take Home Examination</td>
<td>200</td>
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<td>Term Paper</td>
<td>400</td>
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<td>Film Report</td>
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<td>Assessment of &amp; Comments on Peers’ Papers</td>
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### SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

**01/15/2015**

Explanation of course’s objectives and other details, assignments, Blackboard, Reading Report format, term paper, etc.

**I Some Foundational Pieces to Better Approach the Ethnographer’s Magic in the History of Anthropology**

**Required Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**

**01/22/2015**

**II A Glimpse on the Beginning of Modern Anthropology and its Colonial Débris in Postmodern Times: The Racialist Foundation**

**Required Reading:**
01/29/2015
III The Beginning of Modern Anthropology: The Torres Straits Expedition
Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:

02/05/2015
IV Reflexivity and Ethnographic Writing
Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:

02/12/2015
No Class
Required Viewing:
-Watch the film “The Anthropologist” on Blackboard.
-Turn in a film report in no more than 1,500 words about the film using the non-fiction reading report format. Film report must be submitted by midnight on Sunday 02/15/2015 on Turnitin.com.

02/19/2015
V Cosmopolitanism and Contemporary Anthropology
Required Reading:
02/26/2015  
VI Ethnographic Autobiography
Required Reading:
- Okely, Judith and Helen Callaway (Eds.) (1992) *Anthropology and Autobiography*. London and New York: Routledge. **READ CHAPTERS 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12 (these are short chapters).**

03/05/2015  
VII Self- and Auto-Ethnography, and Ethnographic Memoir
Required Reading:

Recommended Reading:  

03/12/2015  
Spring Break  
Take Home Examination (the questions will be made available to all on March 1) must be submitted on Blackboard through the Turnitin.com link by midnight on March 15, 2015.

03/19/2015  
VIII Ethnographic Fiction  
Required Readings  

**Recommended Viewing (see Blackboard)**

*Lumumba, la mort du prophète* (“Lumumba, Death of a Prophet”), by Raoul Peck.

**Recommended Reading**


**03/26/2015**

**IX Discussion of Fatima Mernissi’s *Dreams of Trespass***

**Required Reading:**


**04/02/2015**

**X Discussion of Ruth Behar’s *Traveling Heavy: A Memoir in Between Journeys***.

**Required Reading:**


**04/09/2015**

**XI Ethnographic Poetry**

**Required Reading:**


**04/16/2015**

4 or 5 Student Presentations

**04/23/2015**

4 or 5 Student Presentations

**04/30/2015**

**Final Day of Class**

4 Student Presentations