

ANTHROPOLOGIES OF QUANTIFICATION AND DATA Fall 2020

Instructor: Prof. Cal Biruk
Email: birukc@mcmaster.ca
Lecture: Thursdays, 2:30p-5:30p

Office: Chester New Hall 510
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:00p-2:00p



“Secret device for remote locations,” arduino powered by solar panel playing a message in Morse code on a loop, in the desert where no one can find it [artist: Ingrid Burrington, 2011]

Course Description

What are the affordances of anthropological theory and method amid the datafication and quantification of health, human (and non-human) experience, and life itself? This course examines technologies, aesthetics, and practices of quantification and measurement, ethnographically tracing the social lives of metrics, numbers, and data, and illuminating the politics and social worlds they foreclose and enable. Readings comprise recent ethnographies and key theoretical texts, primary sources, and artistic and literary reflections on topics including global/public health, migration, infrastructures of knowledge production, carcerality and surveillance, genetic science, algorithms, development, and human rights, with focus throughout on how data projects variously shore up and destabilize norms and systems of oppression. Participants will complete a final project that brings themes and theories from the seminar into conversation with their own scholarly inquiries, plans, and/or empirical material.

As members of the McMaster community, we are grateful to work, learn, and study on lands that are the traditional territory shared between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Anishinabe Nations, acknowledged in the Dish with One Spoon Wampum belt.

Course Objectives

Students will:

- Gain knowledge of core methods and concepts utilized by anthropologists and science studies scholars to examine the social lives of data, practices of quantification, sociotechnical infrastructures of counting, and social/political/historical contexts in which data projects unfold
- Familiarize themselves with recent scholarship and research questions related to the course's topical matter
- Gain familiarity with contemporary anthropological theory and method
- Learn reading and writing practices that embody care and critique
- Finetune pedagogical skills and creativity
- Practice critical thinking and self-reflection in thinking about life cycles of knowledge and the politics of knowledge production, including in their own research, activism, or other projects
- Recognize the importance of placing the experiences of marginalized groups at the center of inquiries and discussions about knowledge and data production
- Link concepts, ideas, and theories from the course to their own projects
- Gain deeper familiarity with scholarly conversations in the area of their personal research interest(s), and link material from class to those interests

Required Materials and Texts/Readings

I would highly suggest purchasing the following books. They are available at the McMaster online campus store (see here: <https://campusstore.mcmaster.ca/cgi-mcm/ws/txhome.pl?wsgm=coursematerial>). If you prefer, they are all accessible for free at the McMaster library as e-books (direct links on A2L course page).

Cal Biruk. 2018. *Cooking Data: Culture and Politics in an African Research World*. Duke University Press.

Michelle Murphy. 2017. *The Economization of Life*. Duke University Press.

Kim TallBear. 2013. *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*. University of Minnesota Press.

Jacqueline Wernimont. 2018. *Numbered Lives: Life and Death in Quantum Media*. MIT Press.

All other readings are available for download as PDFs on A2L (“Course Readings” → “eReserves” OR “Course Readings” → “Other PDFs”)

In a given week, only readings denoted with + are required. The “further readings” are listed as a resource and for your interest.

Class Format

This seminar course will meet virtually and synchronously using Zoom as a platform. We will take breaks during the seminar, and it is likely our meetings will not take the entire three-hour session due to being online. Participants are expected to come to our meetings prepared to engage in discussion and conversation around the themes knitting together each week's assigned texts. Participants are expected to post short (150 words or so) responses to prompts, detailed in the course outline, each week to Avenue to Learn (A2L) discussion board. Participants will be assigned to act as the facilitator (prepare materials and a lesson plan to guide discussion and engagement) for a 30-minute portion of one seminar meeting in the term. Our work in the seminar is guided by an orientation to one another and the material that I describe as 'care-full critique' (to be explained).

It is my strong preference that during our seminars all participants are visible (video turned on), but please do what you need to. The class is primarily discussion/seminar format. Course meetings will not be recorded to ensure privacy of seminar members and the instructor. Occasionally, I may record short tidbit lectures on important or difficult concepts or readings and post them to A2L (I will notify you of this) to listen to on your own time.

I want to note that these are not normal times: we are amid a pandemic, and many of us are likely distributing our time and energy among many things, including taking care of our own health (broadly interpreted) and caring for others around us. We are also grappling with the toxic effects of ongoing environmental crisis, white supremacy, settler colonialism, and capitalism. These are scary, uncertain, and traumatic times. I hope this seminar can be a space for us to learn together and share space on a weekly basis, and to use the texts and conversations to imagine new and better futures without losing sight of the past. I will be generous about deadlines or other needs, but please do communicate. I promise to show up, to care, and to find creative ways for us to create opportunities for community, connection, and real learning in messy times. There will likely be glitches (technological and otherwise), but we will get through them. If I can make the online seminar space more welcoming or accessible to you, please let me know. I am typically timely at responding to emails, except on weekends when my responses may be slower.

Course Evaluation – Overview

Participation: 15%

+Active participation in synchronous sessions

+Weekly data-stories posts, due 5pm each Wednesday before Thursday meeting

Facilitation + pedagogical reflection, due scattered dates: 15 %

Reading response, due October 22: 15%

Academic book review, due any time before December 3: 20%

Final project, due December 18: 35%

Course Evaluation – Details

Participation (15%)

+There are many genres of ‘active participation.’ It should be clear to me that you are engaged, reading, interested, absorbing information, and committed to sharing ideas with and learning from the community in our seminar. You should also ensure you are supportive and attentive during your colleagues’ facilitation sessions.

+*Data-stories posts*: Each week (except the first one), you will respond to the prompt enclosed in a text box for that date (via A2L discussion board: “Communication”→“Discussions”). The prompts are meant to help you reflect on the texts assigned for that day in a fun, easy, and open-ended way. They are invitations to experiment with genres beyond the classic ‘discussion board post’. These posts will also allow the facilitator for that class session to get a sense of what their colleagues are thinking prior to our meeting. You should post your response to the prompt by 5pm the day before a class meeting (**5pm on Wednesdays**).

+Most of your work this term involves **reading** books and articles. I have thought very carefully about the texts that are required reading. As is the case for graduate seminars, the reading load is quite heavy; in our seminar, the page count per week ranges between 75 pages to entire books. I realize all of us have limited time and multiple priorities, so part of our task is to learn how to read *efficiently and effectively*. I would recommend taking a look at Paul N. Edwards’ “How to read a book” (posted to A2L), and we will also discuss tactics for reading with a purpose early in the term. Each week, I also list a number of further reading suggestions—there are so many wonderful texts out there and if you find yourself interested in getting into any of our topics in greater depth, these suggestions are a good starting point.

Facilitation and pedagogical reflection (15%), due scattered

Each of you will be randomly assigned a topic/week; some of you will be presenting with a partner. On that date, you will be expected to implement a pre-conceived lesson plan for a 30-minutes (or so) time chunk. Your role as facilitator is to generate discussion and to ensure your colleagues meet learning goals set by you. I would not recommend just coming with ‘discussion questions’ (especially not “So...what did you think?”) Instead, you should think creatively about activities (games, free writing, polls, partnered discussions via zoom break outs, close readings of passages in the text, well-conceived discussion questions, etc) that will engage your colleagues and deepen their understandings of the topics on the menu that day. Think of your best professors, mentors, elders, or others you learn from and emulate what they do well. Your lesson plan should also be attentive to the trajectory and flow of the class (for example, no one wants to do the same exact thing every week, so be creative). Facilitators may wish to take a look at the week’s data-stories posts the evening prior to their presentation to get a sense of where folks are coming from, and/or are welcome to utilize these posts in seminar. Zoom/virtual space poses its own challenges, and we are all learning how to be on virtual platforms, so just do your best—we will learn together what works and doesn’t! Let’s be patient with each other. If relevant, feel free to come to virtual office hours the Tuesday prior to your presentation to discuss or get pre-feedback. I am also happy to post or disseminate any links, handouts, or otherwise you may wish to share with your colleagues before/during class.

One week after your presentation you will submit a 2-pages (double spaced) short pedagogical reflection. If you presented with a partner, you will each submit an individual reflection. This is due *via email to Cal* by 230p one week after you present. **Note: If you are presenting and/or have a pedagogical reflection due the same day as one of the other assignments below, please feel free to request an extension via email ahead of time.**

Reading response (15%), due October 22 @ 230pm

This is not a traditional “respond to the readings” paper. Instead, this exercise asks you to do some creative thinking in the genre of a scenario very common in academic institutions. The point of the response is to get you thinking more deeply about and across three texts we attend to in the seminar. The response asks you to do synthetic work by drawing links across different authors’ arguments or evidence.

You are involved with organizing an event for your department (faculty, grad students, undergrad students will be in attendance) on the broad topic of New Directions in the Critical Study of Data. Your task is to organize a panel and introduce it. Choose any three authors we have read so far for your panel (see list of possible authors on A2L; you *may* select authors already grouped together on the syllabus). Create a catchy title to capture the theme of the panel, introduce the theme and rationale behind the panel, and discuss why the questions it raises are important or interesting in the contemporary moment. You should cite scholarship (readings we have completed) by your chosen panelists (or other sources, if relevant) in your introduction, and delineate how these panelists’ work is in conversation with each other and sheds important light on your chosen theme. You should demonstrate to me your ability to synthesize across the readings. Write the introduction you plan to give for the panel at the event. [The audience has already heard the credentials and institutions etc of your panelists, so there is no need to cover that information again]. (1000 words)

Academic book review (20%), due ANYTIME before December 3 @ 230pm

Writing book reviews for publication in peer-reviewed journals (or elsewhere) is an important skill to learn as a graduate student. Writing a book review is also a form of care-work, where you take the time to sit with and deeply engage the ideas of another person by embodying ‘care-full critique.’ Book reviews are often submitted by scholars who are up for review for tenure or promotion, and, thus, can carry a lot of weight. They also are a kind of service to your broader discipline, serving as a handy resource for colleagues to get a quick sense of what a book is about, whether it might be relevant to their own work, etc... without having to read the whole thing. To practice this skill, you will choose a book, read it, and write a book review targeting a specific audience. (1200 words) You will submit to me via email the title of the book you will be reviewing (and a brief rationale) on November 5.

More details forthcoming.

Final Project (35 %), due December 18 @ Noon

Final projects should be useful to your own trajectory and development as a scholar. In this spirit, you will choose one of two options, depending on your needs and interests, and which might be most useful or relevant to your current and/or future research and/or teaching. Project particulars will be available on A2L and will be discussed in seminar in greater detail. If you need inspiration for the final project, a good place to start might be identifying which week(s) of our seminar most piqued your interest and building out from there.

Note: You will submit to me via email on or before November 19 which option you will be choosing AND either: a) the general focus of your literature review or b) the general focus of the class you will be designing a syllabus for. This is ungraded but I will provide valuable feedback.

1. A literature review final paper: If you choose this option, you should write a coherent review of a literature of your choice. The literature review should be useful to your developing scholarly trajectory. You can think of it as: Reading some texts you would need to master a literature for a comprehensive exam or familiarizing yourself with a literature for a future course you might teach, or engaging a literature that will be useful for your thesis, exams, or grant proposal. I hope you can use some of the readings (or suggested readings) as a starting point; the topic should somehow intersect our inquiries this term, but the *priority is that the literature review be useful for your purposes*. The literature review should be around 2500-3000 words. You may use texts already examined in class (or in your book review), but these should be complemented by further reading. I would envision that reading about 10 article/book chapter length sources outside of those we read this term is a good target, give or take.
2. Design a full syllabus/course outline (including course title, course description and objectives, assignments, weekly topical titles with texts/readings, and 3-4 key discussion questions for each week, etc...) for an upper-level undergraduate course you would like to teach (and submit a rationale paper of around 1000 words explaining your course design, trajectory of the course, and pedagogical choices).

*More detail about expectations, including guidelines for these assignments, will be shared in good time.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 | September 10

Data-stories

+Moeller, Kathryn. 2019. “The ghost statistic that haunts women’s empowerment.” *The New Yorker*. Link: <https://www.newyorker.com/science/elements/the-ghost-statistic-that-haunts-womens-empowerment>

+Hartman, Saidiya. 2020. “The death toll.” In “The quarantine files: Thinkers in self-isolation.” *Los Angeles Review of Books*. Link: https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/quarantine-files-thinkers-self-isolation/#_ftn15

+Todd, Zoe. 2016. “From fish lives to fish law: Learning to see indigenous legal orders in Canada.” *Somatosphere*. Link: <http://somatosphere.net/2016/from-fish-lives-to-fish-law-learning-to-see-indigenous-legal-orders-in-canada.html/>

+Burrington, Ingrid. 2015. “How to see invisible infrastructure.” *The Atlantic*. Link: <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2015/08/how-to-see-invisible-infrastructure/401204/>

Optional/if you wish/as a resource:

+Skim Paul N. Edwards’ “How to read a book.” Link: <https://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtoread.pdf>. I will briefly provide an overview of some of my own pointers for reading effectively in a graduate seminar today.

Further reading:

Ingrid Burrington, *Networks of New York: An Illustrated Field Guide to Urban Internet Infrastructure* (2016)

Shannon Mattern, “Urban Auscultation; or, Perceiving the Action of the Heart” (2020):

<https://placesjournal.org/article/urban-auscultation-or-perceiving-the-action-of-the-heart/>

Nichole M. Garcia, Nancy López, and Verónica N. Vélez. 2017. “QuantCrit: rectifying quantitative methods through critical race theory.” *Race Ethnicity and Education* 21(2):149-157.

Joshua Whitehead. 2017. *Full-Metal Indigiqueer*.

Lochlann Jain. 2019. *Things that Art: A Graphic Menagerie of Enchanting Curiosity*.

Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart. 2019. *The Hundreds*.

Jan Chipchase and Lee John Phillips. 2018. *Sustainable Data*.

Boston Public Library. “Bending lines: maps and data from distortion to deception.” [online exhibit:

<https://www.leventhalmap.org/digital-exhibitions/bending-lines/>]

Week 2 | September 17

How to pay attention (to data and other things)

+Gitelman, Lisa and Virginia Jackson. 2013. "Introduction." In *Raw Data is an Oxymoron*. MIT Press (pp. 1-14). [eReserves, A2L]

+Mol, Annemarie. 2002. "Preface" + "Doing disease." In *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice*. Duke University Press. (pp. vii-xii, 1-27). [eReserves, A2L]

+Day, Sophie, Celia Lury, and Nina Wakeford. "Number ecologies: numbers and numbering practices." *Distinktion* 15(2):123-154. [Other PDFs, A2L]

+Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research (CLEAR). 2018. *Lab Book: A Living Manual of our Values, Guidelines, and Protocols*. [Please just leaf through and attend especially to pp. 1-34]. For background on the Lab: <https://civiclaboratory.nl/> [Other PDFs, A2L]

Data-stories post (due to A2L 9/16 @ 5pm): Create a graph, chart, map, or other visualization (can be hand drawn) that captures something or some dimension about some increment of your life this week. Write 150 words reflecting on the labor and process of production of this visualization. If inspiration is needed, please visit the *Dear Data* project at <http://www.dear-data.com/theproject>. The entire book is also available on A2L course site (eReserves).

Due: Come with any questions or concerns about the course outline or expectations today or email me individually if you prefer.

Today, I will distribute the schedule for facilitation; presentations will begin 10/1.

Further reading:

Joseph Dumit. 2014. "Writing the implosion: Teaching the world one thing at a time." *Cultural Anthropology* 29(2):344-362.

Marianne de Laet and Annemarie Mol. 2000. "The Zimbabwe bush pump: Mechanics of a fluid technology." *Social Studies of Science* 30(2):225-263.

Helen Verran. 2010. "Number as inventive frontier in knowing and working Australia's water resources." *Anthropological Theory* 10(1-2):171-178.

Max Liboiron et al. 2017. "Equity in author order: A feminist laboratory's approach." *Catalyst* 3(2):1-17.

Alexander A. Bauer. 2019. "Itinerant objects." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 48:335-352.

Cal Biruk. 2019. "Soap: touching objects, feeling critique in critical global health studies." *Medicine Anthropology Theory* 6(2):151-164.

David Armstrong. 2019. "The social life of data points: Antecedents of digital technologies." *Social Studies of Science* 49(1):102-117.

Week 3 | September 24

Data in drag

+Ruckenstein, Minna and Schüll, Natasha Dow. "The datafication of health." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 46:261-278. [Other PDFs, A2L]

+Erikson, Susan L. 2012. "Global health business: The production and performativity of statistics in Sierra Leone and Germany." *Medical Anthropology* 31:367-384. [Other PDFs, A2L]

+Matzner, Tobias. 2016. "Beyond data as representation: The performativity of Big Data in surveillance." *Surveillance & Society* 14(2):197-210. [Other PDFs, A2L]

+Wernimont, Jacqueline. 2018. "Every step you take." *Numbered Lives: Life and Death in Quantum Media*. MIT Press. (pp. 89-120). [book or eReserves, A2L]

Data-stories post (due to A2L 9/23 @ 5pm: Reflect on how your consumption of data has changed since the onset of Covid-19. Respond to the following: How has your relationship to your body, to social life, to health, and to the public/private divide shifted due to your consumption of data (graphs, statistics, media coverage, studies)? Is Covid-19 furthering the datafication of health? (150 words) Note: If you prefer, you can depersonalize the prompt by reflecting/speculating on these same questions more generally, leaving yourself out of it.

Further reading:

Judith Butler. 1988. "Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory." *Theatre Journal* 40(4):519-531.

Deborah Lupton. 2016. *The Quantified Self: A Sociology of Self-Tracking*.

Anne Meneley. 2019. "Walk this way: Fitbit and other kinds of walking in Palestine." *Cultural Anthropology* 34(1):130-154.

Gina Neff and Dawn Nafus. 2016. *Self-Tracking*.

Josh Berson. 2015. *Computable Bodies: Instrumented Life and the Human Somatic Niche*.

Brian Silverstein. 2018. "Commensuration, performativity, and the reform of statistics in Turkey." *American Ethnologist* 45(3):330-340.

Jillian R. Cavanaugh. 2016. "Documenting subjects: Performativity and audit culture in food production in northern Italy." *American Ethnologist* 43(4):691-703.

Marlee Tichenor. 2017. "Data performativity, performing health work: Malaria and labor in Senegal." *Medical Anthropology* 36(5):436-448.

Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylińska. 2015. *Life After New Media: Mediation as Vital Process*.

Week 4 | October 1

Counting bodies/making collectives

- +Foucault, Michel. "Lecture 11, 17 March 1976." In *Society must be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*. (pp. 239-255). [eReserves, A2L]
- +Cruz, Taylor M. 2017. "The making of a population: Challenges, implications, and consequences of the quantification of social difference." *Social Science and Medicine* 174:79-85. [Other PDFs, A2L]
- +Appadurai, Arjun. 1993. "Number in the colonial imagination." In Breckenridge, Carol A. and Peter van der Veer, eds. *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*. University of Pennsylvania Press. (pp. 314-336). [Other PDFs, A2L]
- +Wernimont, Jacqueline. 2018. "We don't do body counts." In *Numbered Lives: Life and Death in Quantum Media*. MIT Press (pp. 51-76). [book or eReserves, A2L]
- + Watkins, Paul. 2014. "We can never tell the entire story of slavery: in conversation with M. Nourbese Philip." *The Toronto Review of Books*. Link: <https://www.torontoreviewofbooks.com/2014/04/in-conversation-with-m-nourbese-philip/>

Data-stories post (due to A2L 9/30 @ 5pm): Choose a song that in some way answers the question below. Write the name and artist of your song, and 150 words explaining your choice.

What is the relationship between numbers, power, and history?

Further Reading:

- Jasbir Puar. 2017. *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*. (especially Ch. 4)
- Alexander G. Weheliye. 2014. *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*.
- Ann Stoler. 1995. *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*.
- Vijayanka Nair. 2018. "An eye for an I: recording biometrics and reconsidering identity in postcolonial India." *Contemporary South Asia* 26(2):143-156.
- Achille Mbembe. 2003. "Necropolitics." *Public Culture* 15(1):11-40.
- Sylvia Wynter. 2003. "Unsettling the coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom: Towards the human, after man, its overrepresentation—an argument." *The New Centennial Review* 3(3):257-337.
- Cohn, Bernard S. 1998. "The census, social structure, and objectification in South Asia," in *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*.
- Jamie Lorimer. 2008. "Counting corncrakes: The affective science of the UK corncrake census." *Social Studies of Science* 38(3):377-405.
- Katherine Mason. 2018. "Quantitative care: Caring for the aggregate in US academic population health sciences." *American Ethnologist* 45(2):201-213.
- Rosa Medina-Doménach. 2009. "Scientific technologies of national identity as colonial legacies: Extracting the Spanish nation from Equatorial Guinea." *Social Studies of Science* 39(1):81-112.
- Guy Scotton. 2020. "Taming technologies: crowd control, animal control and the interspecies politics of mobility." *Parallax* 25(4):358-378.

Week 5 | October 8

The ghosts of population, economy, and development

+Murphy, Michelle. 2017. *The Economization of Life*. Duke University Press. [book or eReserves, A2L]

Data-stories post (due to A2L 10/7 @ 5pm): Choose an image, photograph, or film still that reflects or embodies imaginaries of the term “population.” Post the image, and write 150 words about how Murphy’s arguments resonate with the image.

Further reading:

Emilia Sanabria. 2016. *Plastic Bodies: Sex Hormones and Menstrual Suppression in Brazil*.

Michelle Murphy. 2012. *Seizing the Means of Reproduction*.

Basically all of Michelle Foucault, but especially *Security, Territory, Population, The Birth of Biopolitics*

Megan Vaughan. 1991. *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness*.

Caroline Bledsoe. 2002. *Contingent Lives: Fertility, Time, and Aging in West Africa*.

Cordell, et al, eds. 2010. *The Demographics of Empire: The Colonial Order and the Creation of Knowledge*.

Susan Greenhalgh. 1996. “The social construction of population science: An intellectual, institutional, and political history of twentieth-century demography.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38(1):26-66.

Walter Rodney. 1972. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.

Elizabeth Maddock Dillon. 2019. “Zombie biopolitics.” *American Quarterly* 71(3):625-652.

Jade Sasser. 2018. *On Infertile Ground: Population Control and Women’s Rights in the Era of Climate Change*.

Lisa Stevenson. 2014. *Life Beside Itself: Imagining Care in the Canadian Arctic*.

Jim Ferguson. 1990. *The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*.

Jemima Pierre. 2019. “The racial vernaculars of development: A view from West Africa.” *American Anthropologist* 122(1):86-98.

Laura Briggs. 2003. *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico*.

Morten Jerven. 2013. *Poor Numbers: How we are Misled by African Development Statistics and what to do about it*

Molly Farrell. 2019. “Witch hunts and census conflicts: becoming a population in colonial Massachusetts.”

American Quarterly 71(3):653-674.

Week 6 | October 22

Measuring and marking bodies

- +Beauchamp, Toby. 2019. "Flying under the radar." In *Going Stealth: Transgender Politics and U.S. Surveillance Practices*. Duke University Press. (pp. 50-78). [eReserves, A2L]
- +Samuels, Ellen. 2014. "Proving disability." In *Fantasies of Identification: Disability, Gender, Race*. NYU Press (pp. 121-140). [eReserves, A2L]
- +Lorway, Robert. 2020. "Experimental entanglements: Surveillance science, sex worker activism, and evidentiary politics in Kenya." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* [early view, pp. 1-22]. [Other PDFs, A2L]
- +Guthman, Julie. 2013. "Fatuus measures: the artifactual construction of the obesity epidemic." *Critical Public Health* 23(3):263-273. [Other PDFs, A2L]

Reading response due to A2L @2:30pm

Data-stories post (due to A2L 10/21 @ 5pm): Reflect briefly on how 'faking' or 'fakery' relates to today's readings. (150 words)

Further reading:

- Hale Thompson and Lisa King. 2015. "Who counts as 'transgender'?": Epidemiological methods and a critical intervention." *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 2(1):148-159.
- Julian Gill-Peterson. 2014. "The technical capacities of the body: Assembling race, technology and transgender." *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1(3):402-418.
- Aimi Hamraie and Kelly Fritsch. 2019. "Crip technoscience manifesto." *Catalyst* 5(1):1-33.
- Alison Kafer. 2013. *Feminist Queer Crip*.
- Melanie Yergeau. 2017. *Authoring Autism: On Rhetoric and Neurological Queerness*.
- Elizabeth Berk. 2018. "A kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self: Agency and the insulin pump." *Journal of Material Culture* 23(4):448-458.
- Jasbir Puar. 2007. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*.
- Follow fat activist Caleb Luna on Instagram.
- Anthony Ryan Hatch. 2016. *Blood Sugar: Racial Pharmacology and Food Justice in Black America*.
- Angela Willey. 2016. *Undoing Monogamy: The Politics of Science and the Possibilities of Biology*.
- Harris Solomon. 2016. *Metabolic Living: Food, Fat, and the Absorption of Illness in India*.
- Mallory Kay Nelson, Ashley Shew, Bethany Stevens. 2019. "Transmobility: rethinking the possibilities in cyborg (Cripborg) bodies." *Catalyst* 5(1):1-20.
- Marquis Bey. 2017. "The trans*-ness of blackness, the Blackness of Trans*-ness." *TSQ* 4(2).

Week 7 | October 29

Audit cultures: measuring rights and wrongs

Today we will host Dr. Lyndsey Beutin, Assistant Professor of Communication Studies at McMaster University

+Merry, Sally Engle. 2016. "Measuring the unmeasurable: The US Trafficking in Persons Reports." In *The Seductions of Quantification: Measuring Human Rights, Gender Violence, and Sex Trafficking*. University of Chicago Press. (pp. 112-139). [eReserves, A2L]

+Beutin, Lyndsey. "Deceptive empiricism." *Trafficking in Anti-Blackness*. [chapter from a book manuscript in progress, 50 pages]. [Other PDFs, A2L]

Data-stories post (due to A2L 10/28 @ 5pm): Before reading today's readings, write down three words or images that come to mind when you hear the word 'trafficking.' After doing the readings: Post the three words you wrote down, and then 150 words of reflection on how the readings reinforce or trouble imaginaries of trafficking.

Note: Posts may be shared with today's guest speaker ahead of our meeting.

Further reading:

Harri Englund. 2006. *Prisoners of Freedom: Human Rights and the African Poor*.

Annelise Riles. 2000. *The Network Inside Out*.

Matthew S. Hull. 2012. "Documents and bureaucracy." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41:251-267.

Elizabeth Bernstein. 2018. *Brokered Subjects: Sex, Trafficking, and the Politics of Freedom*.

Elizabeth Bernstein. 2010. "Militarized humanitarianism meets carceral feminism: The politics of sex, rights, and freedom in contemporary antitrafficking campaigns." *Signs* 36(1):45-71.

Elena Shih. 2017. "Freedom markets: consumption and commerce across human-trafficking rescue in Thailand." *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 25(4):769-794.

Didier Fassin. 2011. *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*.

Adia Benton. 2016. "Risky business: Race, nonequivalence and the humanitarian politics of life." *Visual Anthropology* 29(2):187-203.

Sally Engle Merry. 2005. *Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice*.

Paul Gilroy. 2010. "Declaration of rights" in *Darker than Blue: On the Moral Economies of Black Atlantic Culture*

Week 8 | November 5

Counting, criminality, and racialization

+Muhammad, Khalil Gibran. 2010. "Writing crime into race: Racial criminalization and the dawn of Jim Crow." In *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America*. Harvard University Press (pp. 35-88). [eReserves, A2L]

+Munro, Silas. 2018. "Introduction to the plates." In Battle-Baptiste, Whitney and Britt Rusert, eds. *W.E.B. Du Bois's Data Portraits: Visualizing Black America*. (pp. 45-50). [eReserves, A2L]

+Please also look at and read the captions for: Plates 1, 4, 10, 11, 14, 25, 31, 50.
[eReserves, A2L]

+Scannell, R. Joshua. 2019. "This is not *Minority Report*: Predictive policing and population racism." In Benjamin, Ruha, ed. *Captivating Technology: Race, Carceral Technoscience, and Liberatory Imagination in Everyday Life*. Duke University Press. (pp. 107-124). [eReserves, A2L]

+Damien M. Sojoyner. 2013. "Black radicals make for bad citizens: Undoing the myth of the school to prison pipeline." *Berkeley Review of Education* 4(2):241-263. [Other PDFs, A2L]

Due via email to Cal @ 2:30pm: Please submit the name of the book you plan to read for your book review assignment, and 100 words about why the book piques your attention and how it relates to your interests and/or material from class. We may share our selections in seminar this week.

Data-stories post (due to A2L 11/4 @ 5pm): Choose one of the plates from among DuBois' data visualizations listed above and write 150 words reflecting on what we learn about the relationship between data and race, given the other readings.

Further reading:

Jackie Wang. 2018. *Carceral Capitalism*.

Shoshana Zuboff. 2018. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*.

Savannah Shange. 2019. *Progressive Dystopia: Abolition, Antiblackness, and Schooling in San Francisco*.

Ruha Benjamin, ed. 2019. *Captivating Technology: Race, Technoscience, and Liberatory Imagination in Everyday Life*.

Laurence Ralph. 2014. *Renegade Dreams: Living through Injury in Gangland Chicago*.

Ruha Benjamin. 2019. *Race After Technology*.

Simone Browne. 2015. *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*.

Shaka McGlotten. 2014. "Black data." [video and transcript of talk]: <https://sfoonline.barnard.edu/traversing-technologies/shaka-mcglotten-black-data/>

Week 9 | November 12

Algorithms, data science, and anthropology

Today we will host Dr. Anissa Tanweer, Research Scientist, eScience Institute at University of Washington

+Seaver, Nick. 2018. "What should an anthropology of algorithms do?" *Cultural Anthropology*
Link: <https://journal.culanth.org/index.php/ca/article/view/ca33.3.04/89>

+Neff, Gina, Anissa Tanweer, Brittany Fiore-Gartland, and Laura Osburn. 2017. "Critique and contribute: A practice-based framework for improving critical data studies and data science." *Big Data* 5(2). [Other PDFs, A2L]

+Tanweer, Anissa, Brittany Fiore-Gartland, and Cecilia Aragon. "Impediment to insight to innovation: understanding data assemblages through the breakdown-repair process." *Information, Communication, and Society* 19(6):736-752. [Other PDFs, A2L]

Data-stories post (due to A2L 11/11 @ 5pm): What can anthropology or anthropological methods bring to data science? Think about an app you commonly use; how would you go about crafting an interesting anthropological study about some aspect of it? How can anthropologists begin to study technologies and forms of data that might seem too big or too impenetrable to wrap our heads around (150 words)

Note: Posts may be shared with today's guest speaker ahead of our meeting.

Further reading:

Dawn Nafus. 2018. "Exploration or algorithm? The undone science before the algorithms." *Cultural Anthropology* 33(3):368-374.

Safiya Umoja Noble. 2018. *Algorithms of Oppression*.

Cathy O'Neil. 2016. *Weapons of Math Destruction*.

Peter Brown. 2016. *The Wild Robot* [one of my favorite YA fiction books!]

Minna Ruckenstein and M. Pantzar. 2017. "Beyond the quantified self: Thematic exploration of a dataistic paradigm." *New Media & Society* 19(3):401-418.

Jenny Sundén. 2015. "On trans-, glitch, and gender as machinery of failure." *First Monday*.

danah boyd and Kate Crawford. 2012. "Critical questions for big data." *Information, Communication, and Society* 15(5):662-679.

Moats, David and Nick Seaver. 2019. "You social scientists love mind games: Experimenting in the 'divide' between data science and critical algorithm studies." *Big Data & Society*: 1-11.

Natasha Dow Schüll. 2012. *Addiction by Design: Machine Gambling in Las Vegas*.

Yatun Sastramidjaja. 2019. "Keywords and key words in AE: The logic of recognition and the limits of algorithmic relevance." *American Ethnologist* 46(4):387-403.

Week 10 | November 19

DNA as ambivalent data

+TallBear, Kim. 2013. *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*. University of Minnesota Press. [book or eReserves, A2L]

Due via email to Cal by today or earlier: Inform me which option you will be choosing for the final project. Please also provide a brief synopsis of the topic your literature review or syllabus will address. Feel free to include any questions or specific feedback you are looking for.

Data-stories post (due to A2L 11/18 @ 5pm): TallBear explicitly terms her research feminist and decolonial. What makes an ethnographic (or other) project feminist and/or decolonial? What are the commitments you have (political, personal, social, economic) to your own unfolding research interests or project? (150 words)

Further Reading:

Alondra Nelson. 2016. *The Social Life of DNA: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation after the Genome*.

Jenny Reardon and Kim TallBear. 2012. "Your DNA is *Our* history: Genomics, anthropology, and the construction of whiteness as property." *Current Anthropology* 53(5):233-245.

Philip J. Deloria. 1999. *Playing Indian*.

Podcast episode: "I got Indian in my family." Only Human. Link:

<https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/onlyhuman/episodes/i-got-indian-my-family-another-round-takeover>

Audra Simpson. 2014. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*.

Qwo-Li Driskill, et al, eds. 2019. *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*.

Jada Benn Torres. 2019. "Anthropological perspectives on genomic data, genetic ancestry, and race." *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 171(70):74-86.

Week 11 | November 26

Provincializing global health

+Biruk, Cal. 2018. *Cooking Data: Culture and Politics in an African Research World*. Duke University Press. [book or eReserves, A2L]

Data-stories post (due to A2L 11/25 @ 5pm): Think of an institution you are part of (i.e., McMaster University, an academic discipline, a household/living situation, a job/workplace, or otherwise). Write 150 words about the kinds, categories, and nature of labor that help hold the institution together but are often overlooked. What contexts and value systems create and uphold the hierarchies that make certain people and processes invisible?

Further reading:

- Vincanne Adams, ed. 2016. *Metrics: What Counts in Global Health*.
- Randall Packard. 2016. *A History of Global Health: Interventions into the Lives of Other Peoples*.
- Raphael Frankfurter. 2019. "Conjuring biosecurity in the post-Ebola Kissi Triangle: The magic of paperwork in a frontier clinic." *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 33(4):517-538.
- João Biehl and Adriana Petryna, eds. 2013. *When People Come First: Critical Studies in Global Health*.
- Thurka Sangaramoorthy and Adia Benton. 2012. "Enumeration, identity, health." *Medical Anthropology* 31(4):287-291.
- Ann H. Kelly and Javier Lezaun. 2017. "The wild indoors: Room-spaces of scientific inquiry." *Cultural Anthropology* 32(3).
- Patricia Kingori and René Gerrets. 2019. "The masking and making of fieldworkers and data in postcolonial global health research contexts." *Critical Public Health* 29(4):494-507.
- Ramah McKay. 2018. *Medicine in the Meantime: The Work of Care in Mozambique*.
- P.W. Geissler. 2013. "Public secrets in public health: Knowing not to know while making scientific knowledge." *American Ethnologist* 40(1):13-34.
- Charlotte Brives. 2013. "Identifying ontologies in a clinical trial." *Social Studies of Science* 43(3):397-414.
- Melinda Cooper and Catherine Waldby. 2014. *Clinical Labor: Tissue Donors and Research Subjects in the Global Bioeconomy*.
- Amy Moran-Thomas. 2019. *Traveling with Sugar: Chronicles of a Global Epidemic*.

Week 12 | December 3

Afterlives of data

We will spend today debriefing our term. Each of you will give a five-minute presentation on the book you read for the book review paper this term. The presentation should briefly summarize the book, explicitly tie the book to things you are thinking about in terms of your own research or other projects and give one example of how a concept, method, or insight you gleaned from the book will be concretely useful to your thinking or doing relative to your project(s).

Due to A2L @ 2:30pm: Last day to submit the academic book review

December 18 @ 12 noon
Final project due to A2L

Acknowledgments: Thanks to Professor Charmaine Chua for inspiration regarding the data-stories prompts. Thank you to Professor Megan Cook for the idea of a “theory mix-tape,” which has been adapted for week four’s data-story prompt. Thank you to all the authors listed here for their work.

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

Notes on formatting: Written work should be submitted as a Word document in 12-point Times New Roman font, with one-inch margins on all sides, double spaced (no extra spaces between paragraphs), and using APA citation, which is the style utilized in Anthropology. All work should be headed with your name and the date. (If you are coming from a different discipline and prefer to use a different style than APA this term, please inform me and we can discuss). A useful guide for APA can be found here:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/general_format.html

Submission of **weekly Data-stories posts** will be to A2L discussion board (Go to “Communication”→”Discussions”→[click on relevant week]→”Start a new thread” button→Write post and submit

Submission of **written assignments** (reflection paper, book review, final project) will be to A2L. (Go to “Assessments”→”Assignments”→[name of assignment]→upload file and submit)

Submission of **pedagogical reflection papers** and other miscellany noted on course outline will be to Cal via email (birukc@mcmaster.ca).

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

| MARK | GRADE |
|-------------|--------------|
| 90-100 | A+ |
| 85-90 | A |
| 80-84 | A- |
| 77-79 | B+ |
| 73-76 | B |
| 70-72 | B- |
| 67-69 | C+ |
| 63-66 | C |
| 60-62 | C- |
| 57-59 | D+ |
| 53-56 | D |
| 50-52 | D- |
| 0-49 | F |

Late Assignments

Late assignments will be subject to one full letter grade deduction for each calendar day the assignment is late. Please request necessary extensions in timely fashion.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

I do expect that you will attend our synchronous class meetings; being present is an important component of your scholarly, personal, and professional development in graduate school. Being present also demonstrates respect for your colleagues and me. Regardless of absence, late arrival, or early departure, seminar members are responsible for any announcements, changes to course outline, or material shared at the beginning or end of class. Let's be honest: We are living through an epidemic, and so we all need to extend a bit more care than usual toward each other. Please communicate with me about anticipated absences or extensions via email or during office hours.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically where noted so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please to go www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO)

The University recognizes that, on occasion, the timing of a student's religious, Indigenous, or spiritual observances and that of their academic obligations may conflict. In such cases, the University will provide reasonable academic accommodation for students that is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Please review the [RISO information for students in the Faculty of Social Sciences](#) about how to request accommodation.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Privacy Protection

In accordance with regulations set out by the Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act, the University will not allow return of graded materials by placing them in boxes in departmental offices or classrooms so that students may retrieve their papers themselves; tests and assignments must be returned directly to the student. Similarly, grades for assignments for courses may only be posted using the last 5 digits of the student number as the identifying data. The following possibilities exist for return of graded materials:

1. Direct return of materials to students in class;

2. Return of materials to students during office hours;
3. Students attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with assignments for return by mail;
4. Submit/grade/return papers electronically.

Arrangements for the return of assignments from the options above will be finalized during the first class.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC TERM WORK

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

