WRITING ETHNOGRAPHY/
ETHNOGRAPHY THEORY AND RESEARCH METHODS
Winter 2023

Instructor: Basit Kareem Iqbal   **Lecture:** Thursday, 2:30-5:20 in CNH 307
Email: iqbalb3@mcmaster.ca   **Office Hours:** Thursday, 1:30-2:20 in CNH 530

Contents

Course Description

Although located within the Department of Anthropology, this course is explicitly designed to engage graduate students from a range of disciplines and with a diverse set of research objectives. The course will consider each moment in the ethnographic research process: from conceptualization and

design, to fieldwork practice, analysis, and writing up. Ideally suited for graduate students who plan to carry out ethnographic fieldwork as part of their MA or PhD thesis research, it will also be valuable for students who are considering such fieldwork or who want to develop familiarity with ethnographic research methods.

One focus of the course this term (Winter 2023) will be ethnographic writing. The first half of the seminar will frame the colonial project of anthropology, the purposes of fieldwork, the ethics and politics of ethnography, and the objectification of the field. The second half of the course will focus on the practice of ethnography: keeping field notes, conducting interviews, relating concepts and practices, and experimenting with voice and style. We will read excerpts of classic and contemporary ethnographies and reflections on fieldwork.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:
- Understand and put into practice the role of experimental ethnographic methods in theory-building;
- Develop and implement a research plan: research questions, methods, and outcomes;
- Produce an ethnography reflective of this course's invitation into speculative and experimental work.

Required Materials and Texts

All course readings will be available on Avenue. There are no books required for purchase. That said, we will be working our way through Kirin Narayan's *Alive in the Writing: Crafting Ethnography in the Company of Chekhov* (Chicago, 2012) and Anand Pandian's *A Possible Anthropology: Methods for Uneasy Times* (Duke, 2019), so you may want to pick up a copy of each.

Class Format

Weekly 3-hour seminar, held in person in CNH 307.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Participation and Presentation – 25%
2. Weekly Assignments (10) – 50%
3. Final Paper – 25%

Course Evaluation – Details

Participation and presentation (25%)

Every seminar session will begin with a few minutes of collective discussion (brainstorming, gathering questions, noting difficult passages) before opening up into broader discussion. The course material is conceptually and thematically complex; we will work through dense passages together in class each week. Read closely and attentively; be generous and courteous to others in the seminar. We will generally spend the first two hours of class on the readings assigned for the day, and the final hour reviewing the weekly assignments. NB: The presentation portion of this grade refers to the presentation of your project on the final class session.

Weekly Assignments (50%)

See the Assignments sheet for details on each of these ten assignments, due over the course of the semester. Please bring two printed copies of these assignments to class: one for me, and one to share with the group.

Ethnographic paper (25%), due April 17

The final paper is a version of the ethnography you have been developing throughout the semester. It should be 15-20 pages long.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (January 12)
Course Introductions
- Introductions
- Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), preface: ix-xii
- Pandian, *A Possible Anthropology*, introduction: "An Ethnographer among the Anthropologists," 1-14
- *Film*: Jean Rouch & Edgar Morin, *Chronique d'un été* (Argos Films, 1961)

Week 2 (January 19) – assignment 1 (story, theory) due

Ethnography as a Project
- Narayan, *Alive in the Writing*, chap. 1: "Story & Theory," 1-22
- Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Quinea* (London: Routledge, 2002 [1922]), "Introduction: The Subject, Method, and Scope of This Enquiry," 1-20
- Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Zed Books, 2021), chap. 3: "Colonizing Knowledges," 67-90
- Girish Daswani, "The (Im)Possibility of Decolonizing Anthropology," *Everyday Orientalism*, November 18, 2021, https://everydayorientalism.wordpress.com/2021/11/18/the-impossibility-of-decolonizing-anthropology
  - *Recommended*: Savannah Shange, *Progressive Dystopia: Abolition, Antiblackness, & Schooling in San Francisco* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 2-11 (selection from chapter 1)

Week 3 (January 26) – assignment 2 (field sites) due
Ethnography For What
- Pandian, *A Possible Anthropology*, chap. 1: "The World at Hand," 15-43
- E.E. Evans-Pritchard, "Some Reminiscences and Reflections on Fieldwork," in *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 240-254
- A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, "On the Concept of Function in Social Sciences," *American Anthropologist* 37, no. 3 (1935): 394-402
- Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description" in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3-30
  - *Recommended*: Yana Stainova, "Enchantment as Method," *Anthropology and Humanism* 44, no. 2 (December 2019): 214-230

Week 4 (February 2) – assignment 3 (interview questions) due
Ethics & Politics 1
- Stainova, MacREM presentation
- Pandian, *A Possible Anthropology*, chap. 2: "A Method of Experience," 44-76
- Philippe Bourgois, "Confronting Anthropological Ethics: Ethnographic Lessons from Central America," *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 1 (1990): 43-54
- Roy D'Andrade, "Moral Models in Anthropology" & Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology," *Current Anthropology* 36, no. 3 (June 1995): 399-420 (excluding Comments & Reply)
- Kevin Haggerty, "Ethics Creep: Governing Social Science Research in the Name of Ethics," *Qualitative Sociology* 27, no. 4 (2004): 391-414
  - *Recommended*: Comments & Reply to the D'Andrade & Scheper-Hughes debate above: *Current Anthropology* 36, no. 3 (June 1995): 420-440

Week 5 (February 9) – assignment 4 (project proposal) due
Ethics & Politics 2
- Pandian, *A Possible Anthropology*, chap. 3: "For the Humanity Yet To Come," 77-109
- Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness," in *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, ed. Richard G. Fox (Santa Fe: SAR Press, 1991), 17-44
- Joel Robbins, "Beyond the Suffering Subject: Toward an Anthropology of the Good," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19 (2013): 447-462
- Sherry Ortner, "Dark Anthropology and Its Others: Theory Since the Eighties," *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6, no. 1 (2016): 47-73

Week 6 (February 16) – field visit 1 – assignment 5 (place) due
The "Field"
- Narayan, *Alive in the Writing*, chap 2: "Place," 23-44
- Arjun Appadurai, "The Production of Locality" in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 178-199
- Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Discipline and Practice: 'The Field' as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology," in *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1-46
- Maya Berry, Claudia Chávez Argüelles, Shanya Cordis, Sarah Ihmoud, and Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada, "Toward a Fugitive Anthropology: Gender, Race, and Violence in the Field," *Cultural Anthropology* 32 (2017): 537-565

Week 7 (February 23)
Reading Week

Week 8 (March 2) – field visit 2 – assignment 6 (person) due
Fieldnotes
- Narayan, *Alive in the Writing*, chap. 3: "Person," 45-66
- James Clifford, "Notes on (Field)notes," in *Fieldnotes: The Making of Anthropology*, ed. Roger Sanjek (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 47-70
- Allaine Cerwonka, "Nervous Conditions: The Stakes in Interdisciplinary Research," in *Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork*, by Cerwonka and Liisa H. Malkki (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1-40

- *Recommended*: Allaine Cerwonka and Liisa H. Malkki, "Fieldwork Correspondence" in *Improvising Theory,* 44-161 (skim!)
- *Recommended*: "Writing Fieldnotes 1" and "Writing Fieldnotes 2" in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, 2nd ed., 45-128 (skim!)

Week 9 (March 9) – field visit 3 – assignment 7 (voice) due

Interviews

- Narayan, *Alive in the Writing,* chap. 4: "Voice," 67-92
- Katherine P. Ewing, "Revealing and Concealing: Interpersonal Dynamics and the Negotiation of Identity in the Interview," *Ethos* 34, no. 1 (2006): 89-122
- Vincent Crapanzano, "The Life History in Anthropological Field Work," *Anthropology and Humanism Quarterly* 2, nos. 2-3 (1977): 3-7
- Audre Simpson, "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, 'Voice,' and Colonial Citizenship," *Junctures* 9 (2007): 67-80

Week 10 (March 16) – assignment 8 (terms & concepts) due

Concepts

- Talal Asad, "The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology" in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 141-164
- Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), chap. 3: "Translating Life Worlds into Labor and History," 72-96
- Kathleen Stewart, "Weak Theory in an Unfinished World," *Journal of Folklore Research* 45, no. 1 (2008): 71-82

Week 11 (March 23) – assignment 9 (self) due

Writing 1

- Narayan, *Alive in the Writing*, chap. 5: "Self," 93-110
- James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Authority," *Representations* 2 (Spring 1983): 118-146
- Denielle Elliott, "Writing" in *A Different Kind of Ethnography: Imaginative Practices and Creative Methodologies*, ed. Denielle Elliott and Dara Culhane (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 23-44

Week 12 (March 30) – assignment 10 (genres) due

Writing 2

- Anand Pandian, Stuart McLean, and Paper Boat Collective, "Prologue" and "Introduction: Archipelagos, A Voyage in Writing," in *Crumpled Paper Boat: Experiments in Ethnographic Writing* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 1-28
- Stefania Pandolfo, "Ta'bir: Ethnography of the Imaginal," in *Crumpled Paper Boat*, 94-115
- Lisa Stevenson, "A Proper Message," in *Crumpled Paper Boat*, 209-221

Week 13 (April 6) – Horizons

Conclusions

- Narayan, *Alive in the Writing*, postscript: "Writing to be Alive," 111-121
- Pandian, *A Possible Anthropology*, "Coda: The Anthropologist as Critic," 112-121
- Research project presentations

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments
Unless noted otherwise, all course assignments are to be uploaded on Avenue.

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 receive a 5% deduction per day late or part thereof—starting 24 hours after the assignment due date. Accommodations will be made for extenuating circumstances.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness
Please use an MSAF to cover missed work that is worth less than 25% of your grade. An MSAF exception can be requested through your faculty office for work worth greater than 25% (with appropriate documentation).

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 to Turnitin.com and in hard copy 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

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.

ADVISORY STATEMENTS

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

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 behaviour 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. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the *Academic Integrity Policy*, located at https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures- guidelines/

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:
- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

AUTHENTICITY / PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, 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 a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

ONLINE PROCTORING

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

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 <u>or</u> 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.