

# **PRACTICING ANTHROPOLOGY: ETHICS, THEORY, ENGAGEMENT**

## **Winter 2023**

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**Lecture:** Thursday, 8:30-11:20 in BSB 238A  
**Office Hours:** Thursday, 11:30-12:30 in CNH 530

## **Contents**

Course Description .....	1
Course Objectives .....	2
Required Materials and Texts.....	2
Class Format .....	2
Course Evaluation – Overview .....	2
Course Evaluation – Details .....	2
Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings.....	4
Course Policies.....	6
Submission of Assignments .....	6
Grades .....	6
Late Assignments.....	6
Absences, Missed Work, Illness.....	7
Avenue to Learn.....	7
Turnitin.com .....	7
University Policies .....	7
Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy.....	7
<b>Privacy Protection</b> .....	8
Course Modification .....	8
Approved Advisory Statements.....	9

## **Course Description**

The seminar begins by setting the scene of contemporary anthropology and the context of our community placement. It then turns to the institutional reason that organizes anthropological ethics and to a series of models proposed for anthropological praxis (applied, engaged, public, militant). The

second half of the course runs through a number of public fields—development, humanitarianism, health, security, law, history/imagination—where anthropological knowledge is applied or engaged. The course pursues unintended consequences, limits, and ambivalence: rather than confidently equipping students with the tools to instrumentalize anthropological knowledge, it traverses the difficult distinction between practice and critique in search of a disciplinary humility.

Note: This course includes a community placement option organized through the Office of Experiential Education. The details of this placement component vary every year, but generally it will entail a 1–3-hour weekly commitment. More details will be provided on the first day of class, but it requires attending an orientation session and completing a vulnerable sector police check, in addition to the weekly time commitment.

## **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Integrate experiential and academic knowledge in reflection, analysis, discernment, evaluation
- Persuasively and clearly communicate key arguments, both orally and in writing
- Consider contemporary ethical and methodological debates on the promise and pitfalls of applied research
- Mobilize anthropological knowledge toward critically analyzing schemes for improving the human condition

## **Required Materials and Texts**

All course readings will be available on Avenue. There are no books required for purchase.

## **Class Format**

Weekly 3-hour seminar, held in person in KTH 106.

## **Course Evaluation – Overview**

1. Attendance/Participation – 10%
2. Discussion posts – 30%
3. Short paper – 20%
4. Presentation – 10%
5. Placement reflections – 30%

## **Course Evaluation – Details**

### **Attendance/Participation (10%)**

Every seminar session will begin with a few minutes of collective discussion (brainstorming, gathering questions, noting difficult passages). I will give a short lecture on the main themes and context of the day's material, after which we will have the day's presentation and broader discussion. If we have a film listed for the day, we will watch it at the end (you may need to finish it at home). I will take attendance each session. 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.

**Six response papers (5% each), due weekly**

Please upload six short response papers (2 pages, double spaced) to the relevant week's discussion thread on Avenue). They are due by 8pm on the Wednesday night before our Thursday morning class. They will be available there for everyone in the seminar to read; we may read or refer to them in class. These short papers should identify 1-2 key passages of the assigned readings and comment on what you find important, significant, curious, or difficult. That is, you are to practice close reading rather than summary reading. You may choose which texts to write about, so long as at least 3 response papers are submitted before week 7.

**Short paper (20%), due on February 9**

In this short paper (5 pages long, double-spaced), please reflect on the promise and pitfalls of "practicing anthropology". The readings from weeks 3 and 4 propose models for what such an anthropological praxis might look like (applied, engaged, public, objective, militant). Choose two of the readings from these weeks and compare their arguments. Present and contrast the authors' cases. What are the stakes of their arguments? What criticisms do they face? What mandate does it give the discipline of anthropology? Please submit a printed version of this paper in class, and also upload it to the Avenue dropbox before class.

**Presentation (10%)**

In the first week of the semester, you will sign up to present on one of the course readings from weeks 2-13. This involves a 10-minute presentation of the readings, followed by brief discussion. Please prepare a 1-page class handout with key points of the reading you are presenting on, and also upload it to the Avenue dropbox.

**Placement reflections (30%), due April 6**

This assignment (8 pages, double spaced) provides an opportunity to reflect on your experience of the community placement. Write this assignment in two parts, at two stages in the semester. In the first section (3 pages, to be written in the first few weeks of the course), present how you are approaching the placement component. What experiential and academic background do you bring to this placement? What kinds of questions do you anticipate arising? In the second section (5 pages, to be written in the last few weeks of the course), reflect on the experience of the placement. What kinds of analytical & critical topics emerged? How do these relate to our course themes? Note that what is being graded here are not your perceptions of the placement, but rather your ability to demonstrate thoughtful reflection on these experiences. The goal of the assignment is not to provide solutions to perceived problems at the placement organization but to analyze some of the structural issues that underlie research challenges. Relate your experience of the community placement to the questions and problems that arose in our readings and discussion. Please submit a printed version of your reflections in class, and also upload it to the Avenue dropbox.

## **Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings**

### **Week 1 (January 12)**

#### **Course Introductions**

- Film: Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch (dirs.), *Chronique d'un été* (Chronicle of a Summer) (1961) (watch in-class)
- Anand Pandian, *A Possible Anthropology: Methods for Uneasy Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), introduction

### **Week 2 (January 19)**

#### **Anthropological Ethics**

- Philippe Bourgois, "Confronting Anthropological Ethics: Ethnographic Lessons from Central America," *Journal of Peace Research* 27, no. 1 (February 1990): 43-54
- Kevin Haggerty, "Ethics Creep: Governing Social Science Research in the Name of Ethics," *Qualitative Sociology* 27, no. 4 (2004): 391-414
  - *Recommended*: 2018 Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, [https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique\\_tcps2-eptc2\\_2018.html](https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2018.html) (Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 5)

### **Week 3 (January 26)**

#### **Applied, Engaged, Public Anthropology**

- Barbara Rylko-Bauer, Merrill Singer, and John Van Willigen, "Reclaiming Applied Anthropology: Its Past, Present, and Future," *American Anthropologist* 108, no. 1 (2006): 178-190
- Setha M. Low and Sally Engle Merry, "Engaged Anthropology: Diversity and Dilemmas: An Introduction to Supplement 2," *Current Anthropology* 51, no. s2 (October 2010): S203-S226
- Robert Borofsky and Antonio De Lauri, "Public Anthropology in Changing Times," *Public Anthropologist* 1 (2019): 3-19

### **Week 4 (February 2)**

#### **Ambivalent Anthropology**

- Roy D'Andrade, "Moral Models in Anthropology," *Current Anthropology* 36, no. 3 (June 1995): 399-408
- Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology," *Current Anthropology* 36, no. 3 (June 1995): 409-440
- Agnieszka Pasieka, "'Tomorrow Belongs To Us': Pathways to Activism in Italian Far-Right Youth Communities," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 64, no. 1 (January 2022): 150-178

### **Week 5 (February 9)**

#### **An Anthropology of Limits**

- Yana Stainova, "Enchantment as Method," *Anthropology and Humanism* 44, no. 2 (December 2019): 214-230
- Vincent Crapanzano, "The Scene: Shadowing the Real," *Anthropological Theory* 6, no. 4 (2006): 387-405 (with my reading guide!)
- Film: Terrence Malick, *The Tree of Life* (2011) (\* watch first half before class)

### **Week 6 (February 16)**

#### **History of Violence**

- Film: Raoul Peck, *Exterminate All The Brutes*, ep. 1 (watch in-class)
- Kali Rubaii, "Frozen Baby Story," Flash Ethnography series, American Ethnological Society, October 26, 2020, <https://americanethnologist.org/online-content/collections/flash-ethnography/frozen-baby-story/>
- Kee Howe Yong, "Silences in History and Nation-state: Reluctant Accounts of the Cold War in Sarawak," *American Ethnologist* 33, no. 3 (2006): 462-473

## **Week 7 (February 23)**

### **Reading Week**

## **Week 8 (March 2)**

### **Development**

- Timothy Mitchell, "The Object of Development: America's Egypt," in *The Power of Development*, ed. Jonathan Crush (London: Routledge, 1995), 129-157
- James Ferguson, "The Anti-Politics Machine," in *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader*, ed. Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta (Blackwell, 2006), 270-286
- Film: Stephanie Black, dir., *Life and Debt* (2001, 1hr 26min) (watch in-class)

## **Week 9 (March 9)**

### **Humanitarianism**

- Miriam Ticktin, "Thinking Beyond Humanitarian Borders," *Social Research* 83, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 255-271
- Catherine Besteman, "Refuge and Security Panics," *Public Anthropologist* 1 (2019): 41-61.
- Film: Gianfranco Rosi (dir.), *Fuocoammare* (Fire at Sea) (2016) (watch in-class)

## **Week 10 (March 16)**

### **Health**

- Cal Biruk, "Seeing Like a Research Project: Producing 'High-Quality Data' in AIDS Research in Malawi," *Medical Anthropology* 31, no. 4 (2012): 347-366
- Ellen Badone, "From Cruddiness to Catastrophe: Covid-19 and Long-term Care in Ontario," *Medical Anthropology* 40, no. 5 (2021): 389-403.
- Film: Gregg Mitman (dir.), *In The Shadow of Ebola* (2015) (watch in-class)
  - *Recommended*: Paul Farmer, "An Anthropology of Structural Violence," *Current Anthropology* 45, no. 3 (June 2004): 305-325

## **Week 11 (March 23)**

### **Law**

- Lawrence Rosen, "The Anthropologist as Expert Witness," *American Anthropologist* 79, no. 3 (September 1977): 555-578
- Omer Stewart, "An Expert Witness Answers Rosen," *American Anthropologist* 81, no. 1 (March 1979): 108-111
- Charles Hale, "Activist Research v. Cultural Critique: Indigenous Land Rights and the Contradictions of Politically Engaged Anthropology," *Cultural Anthropology* 21, no. 1 (February 2006): 60-96
- Film: *Little Injustices: Laura Nader Looks at the Law* (1981, 1hr) (watch in-class)

## Week 12 (March 30)

### Security

- Orin Starn, "Engineering Internment: Anthropologists and the War Relocation Authority," *American Ethnologist* 13, no. 4 (November 1986): 700-720
- Montgomery McFate, "The Military Utility of Understanding Adversary Culture," *Joint Force Quarterly* 38 (2005): 42-48
- Film: David Udris, James Der Derian, & Michael Udris (dirs.), *Human Terrain: War Becomes Academic* (2010) (watch in-class)
  - *Recommended: The Network of Concerned Anthropologists, The Counter-Counterinsurgency Manual* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2009), selections

## Week 13 (April 6)

### Horizons

- Petra Rethmann, "Internationalism, Temporality, and Hope: A View from Eastern Europe and the Left," *Social Anthropology* 23, no. 4 (2015): 480-491
- W.E.B. duBois, "The Comet" & Saidiya Hartman, "An American Romance"
- Ursula K. LeGuin, "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas"
- Concluding discussion

## 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](http://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](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), 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](http://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](mailto: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.

