

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

**SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY
COURSE UNIT OUTLINE 2018/19**

SOAN 30610: Dissertation A (40 credits) – 12000 words
SOAN 30600: Dissertation B (20 credits) – 8000 words
**SOAN40000: Dissertation in Archaeology and Anthropology (40
credits) – 12000 words**

First Semester (Dissertation Seminars)
Both Semesters (Working with Dissertation Supervisor)

Course

Convener: Dr. Madeleine Reeves

Room: 2.054 Arthur Lewis Building

Telephone: Internal: 5-3488
External 0161 275 3488

Email: Madeleine.Reeves@manchester.ac.uk

Office Hours: Monday 15.00-16.00
Tuesday 12.00-13.00

Administrator: Kellie Jordan, G.001 Arthur Lewis Building
(0161) 275 4000
kellie.jordan@manchester.ac.uk

Lectures: Zochonis lecture theatre B

Assessment: 100% Dissertation

Submission Date: Thursday May 2nd, 2pm

Please read the following information sheet in the Assessment Section on Blackboard, in connection with Coursework and Examinations:

- INSTRUCTIONS FOR SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY UNDERGRADUATE ESSAYS AND COURSEWORK

Reading week: 29/10/2018-02/11/2018

Communication: Students must read their University e-mails regularly, as important information will be communicated in this way.

Please read this course outline through very carefully as it provides essential information needed by all students attending this course.

Student Support

All Dissertation students will be allocated a Dissertation Supervisor, with whom you must arrange and attend regular meetings. Your Dissertation Supervisor should be your first point of contact with any questions, thoughts, ideas for your Dissertation.

ANTHROPOLOGY DISSERTATION SEMINAR 2018

Dr. Madeleine Reeves

SEMINAR OVERVIEW

The fortnightly anthropology dissertation seminar provides an opportunity for final-year undergraduates to hone their skills of anthropological research and writing in a structured and supportive environment. The seminar is intended as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, regular meetings with a dissertation supervisor. Organised in a workshop format, the emphasis in each session is on interactive discussion, trouble-shooting and peer-learning. During the five 2-hour sessions we'll discuss what makes an 'anthropological' dissertation; we'll explore techniques for finding a research question that is specific, meaningful, and researchable within the confines of the academic year; we'll consider the kinds of empirical data that might be used to ground your analysis; and we'll address issues of academic style. By the end of the semester students who have been attending the seminar regularly will have a working dissertation proposal, which they can use as a guiding document as they develop the dissertation towards completion in semester 2.

The seminar is organised around five fortnightly meetings, each building upon a preparatory exercise, outlined below. The sessions deal respectively with: (1) finding an anthropological research question; (2) developing a literature review; (3) incorporating fieldwork and other primary data in the dissertation (including the practical and ethical issues that this may raise); (4) the role of theory in framing and analysis; and (5) crafting an anthropological argument, including questions of organisation and style. These topics, and the specific issues to be discussed in each of the sessions, are outlined in more detail below.

SEMINAR TOPICS AND PREPARATORY EXERCISES

Session 1 (02.10.18)

Getting Started: finding an anthropological research question

The first of the five dissertation seminars is intended to help you narrow down a research topic and research question. We will address the following issues:

- Finding your theme: sources of inspiration
- From 'topics' to researchable questions
- What makes a question *anthropological*?
- The 'so what?' question
- Creating a timeline: planning your research journey
- Getting the most from your supervisions
- Working with your peers

The seminar will be organized in a workshop format. Please prepare the following free-writing exercise and bring a paper copy to the first seminar to share and discuss.

Preparation 1: Free-writing exercise (target length: 500 words)

This session is intended to help you figure out what kind of theme or topic you intend to address in your dissertation, and to make the first steps towards developing a workable research question. It is also intended to get your writing juices flowing!

It might be that you already have a clear idea of what it is you would like to write your dissertation on. If so-then this free-writing exercise can be used to identify the aspects of that theme particularly engage you and how you would like to approach them in your dissertation. It might be that you are currently torn between two very different kinds of themes or topics - in which case this exercise can be used to help you figure out which of them grabs you more, and which might provide more possibilities for framing a researchable dissertation. It might be that you are drawn in multiple directions and still haven't nailed a 'topic', still less, a research question. In this case, the exercise can help you to articulate some of the issues or debates that you find most engaging from the courses that you have taken, or from the issues that particularly interest or concern you about world around us, and which you would like to research in a systematic and anthropologically informed way.

This is a *free-writing exercise*: the aim is not to produce an 'academic' text full of references,, but to reconnect with the pleasure of using writing as a tool for thinking deeply about something. It might help to imagine that you are writing to a non-anthropologist friend or relative, setting out for them why you want to study a particular issue or question and why it matters to you; or why you found a particular topic from your previous courses compelling and fascinating. Remember that what matters here is the act of *writing-as-thinking* --- this exercise isn't assessed, and there are no inherently 'interesting' or 'uninteresting' topics; what matters is what you do with them! You might want to have multiple goes at this exercise in the early weeks of the semester as you hone down your research question and try to clarify for yourself those issues/ questions/ debates that particularly grab you and that you would like to develop in the dissertation.

Questions to help guide the free writing exercise

- What is, broadly, the topic that your research project will address?
- Why do you find this topic compelling or interesting?
- What might an anthropological perspective on this topic look like?
- If your planned project were to be included in a database for fellow anthropologists, which four-five 'subfields' of anthropology would you like it to appear under?

- In order to seek readings for a working bibliography, which four-five key words would you use to search anthropology catalogues and databases for literature to read in preparation?
- Why does your topic matter (to you? To anthropology? To the world beyond the University?) What is its significance?
- What kind of 'hooks' might you find so as to turn that general interest or issue of concern into a specific, meaningful, researchable question? What angles might you be able to address? What part of that bigger topic might you be able to carve off so as to write a 12,000 word (or 8,000 word if relevant) dissertation?

Session 2 (16.10.18)

Fleshing out the field: developing your literature review

This session will focus on techniques for identifying scholarly literature relevant to your topic and developing an annotated bibliography. We will also consider how to use that bibliography effectively to identify research gaps, 'hooks' for anthropological questions, or contradictions and tensions between different empirical or theoretical approaches. At 16.30 we will be joined by David Hirst from the University Library who will discuss some of the resources and databases available in the library for finding relevant literature. *Where possible, please bring a laptop or other electronic device to the seminar as we will use some of the time after David has visited us to search for literature in small groups.*

Topics that we will cover in this session:

Resources for literature reviews
 'There's nothing on my topic!' How to search with purpose
 Organising your literature
 Annotating your literature
 Identifying gaps, contradictions, and questions

Preparation 2: annotated bibliography

As you work on your dissertation, you should be developing an annotated bibliography that you can constantly add to, work with, and draw from throughout the process of research and writing. For this exercise, take a look at some annotated bibliographies online (here's a nice example to get you started - <https://progressivegeographies.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/bibliography-of-boko-haram-25-june-2014.pdf>) and try to envisage how broad or narrow you should go to develop an annotated bibliography in your own research area. Too broad, and you will be overwhelmed with literature, much of it irrelevant. Too narrow, and you will find that you can't find any bibliographic references for your topic. Think about how you might use search terms to

help you find specifically *anthropological* materials relating to your topic. Identify 10 articles, monographs or book chapters that would go into your bibliography, and have a go at reading and annotating 3 of them. An 'annotation' need only be a few sentences that act as a memory jog and allow you to recall what is most important or interesting or relevant in an article. This process will get easier and faster as you refine your topic and narrow down your searches. Remember that a bibliography is a living document to which you will add throughout the research process. Make sure that you keep tabs on your most recent version! You may want to add a section of 'notes to yourself' at the bottom, where you give yourself reminders of things to follow up on ('check out the bibliographic references in Smith 1999') or point to things that might serve as your organising research question (e.g. 'note in Jones 2014 the comment that "studies of urban inequality have not sufficiently addressed the use of public space" (p. 43). This might be an interesting hook for the dissertation question?') Please bring a print-out of your working annotated bibliography to the seminar. As ever, this is a learning tool and not for assessment.

Session 3 (13.11.18) – PLEASE NOTE THE DATE!

Digging deep: fieldwork and other sources of primary data

One of the key questions that students face in developing an anthropology dissertation project is whether or not to conduct ethnographic fieldwork. This seminar will focus on the practical and ethical considerations necessary if you plan to undertake fieldwork as part of your dissertation research. We will also think about the variety of other sources of primary data that you might want to draw upon to ground your analysis, from published ethnographies to archives to films, newspapers and museum collections. We will reflect on the ways that you might incorporate these into the dissertation to substantiate your arguments. Topics to be addressed include the following:

- On 'data', anthropologically speaking
- Should you undertake fieldwork for your dissertation?
- Fieldwork: practical considerations
- Fieldwork: ethical considerations
- Working with other kinds of primary material
- Data management: sorting stuff out (and finding it again)

Preparation 3: the data that grounds your analysis

This reflective exercise is intended to help you reflect on the kinds of data that you might use to substantiate your analysis and arguments. First of all, write down your research question(s), and, if there is more than one, organise these into a hierarchy of questions. Try to be as specific as possible about the question that you are asking in your research. Then think about the variety of ways that you might approach answering this question, and the kinds of data that you might draw upon to address it. Does addressing this question require

primary ethnographic fieldwork (e.g. because the question has never been asked before, or because the phenomenon that it addresses is empirically new?) If so, where do you plan to conduct fieldwork? Whom might you want to observe or interview? What ethical issues might be raised by the research, and what kinds of permissions and ethical approval will you need to be able to conduct it? If you do not plan to conduct ethnographic fieldwork, are there other sources of empirical material that you can draw upon, such as archives, museum collections, newspaper databases, online archives, historical documents, laws, grey material, policy documents, interview transcripts....? What sources might you use in your dissertation? How would you handle and organise this data? Try to write 500 words in response to the questions that are most relevant to your project, and come prepared to discuss your own research plans in small groups. As ever, please bring a copy of your response to facilitate group discussion.

Session 4 (20.11.18)

Framing your analysis: the role of theory and interpretation

In this session we will reflect on the role of theory in an anthropological dissertation. Using the 'article autopsy' exercise that you have prepared for this class, we will discuss how different authors approach theory in framing an argument, in debating with other scholars, and in interpreting their results. How are theory and ethnography woven together in different kinds of articles? How might you weave them together in your dissertation?

Article autopsy: exploring the role of theory

Discussing, analysing, interpreting your data

What's there? What's not there? The place of reflexivity, doxa and critique

Situating your data in a conversation: coming back to the gaps

Preparation 4: article autopsy

For this exercise, choose an article or book chapter that you have enjoyed or found particularly interesting, engaging, or well-argued. It may be related to the topic of your dissertation, but it does not need to be. On a piece of paper, make a note of the following things, using as much detail as possible:

What is the organisation of the paper?

How are 'theory' and 'ethnography' balanced? What proportion of the article is devoted to each of these, and what proportion to something else?

How does the author link between different sections?

What hooks or connectors are used to make the argument flow smoothly?

What is the tone of the author's voice?

Do they write in the first person or the third? How does the author establish his/her authority? How are claims substantiated?

How does the author reference other scholarship?

What proportion of the article is devoted to reviewing other literature?

How does the author demonstrate gaps or limitations in the existing literature?

How does s/he make a claim to empirical or theoretical innovation?

Now think about your own dissertation. It is likely to be considerably longer than most journal articles. How do you plan to balance the different sections of the dissertation?

Which theoretical resources do you plan to draw upon? What place will they have in the analysis? Is there a particular theoretical debate that you propose to engage in your dissertation, or a particular theoretical approach that you would like to advance? Where will you place that debate within the context of the dissertation as a whole?

Session 5 (04.12.18)

Pulling it all together: crafting an anthropological dissertation

By this stage in the course, you should be making steady progress in working towards a detailed (2000 word) dissertation proposal, which draws together several of the parts discussed in previous week. In this session we will use some of the previous years' dissertations as a basis for reflecting in small groups on the form, structure, organisation, tone and style of anthropology dissertations. In small groups you will be asked to discuss which dissertations you find particularly effective, and why. We will also have a general plenary discussion that will focus on the following issues:

Dissertation analysis and discussion

Crafting an anthropological argument: questions of structure

Pitfalls to avoid

Answering your 'so-what?' question

Finding your voice: the pragmatics and poetics of a good dissertation

Preparation 5: dissertation proposal draft

The preparation exercise for this week is longer than in previous weeks, and acts as a culmination for all of the work that you have been undertaking up to now. For this week's session you should bring a draft copy of your 2,000 word dissertation proposal, which you can then refine in conversation with your dissertation supervisor. Your proposal should include the following elements:

- Working title
- Main research question (which should end with a question mark!)
- Any subsidiary research questions, or questions that you may need to consider to address your main research question

- Background and context to the issue (why it matters to you, why it should matter for anthropology)
- Your approach: what will you do to answer your research question? What sources will you use? What empirical research, if any, will you conduct?
- Literature review: what is your framework in the literature? Which authors are you drawing upon, and why? How will you try to build upon what has already been said?
- Ethical considerations: what ethical considerations are raised by the project and how will you address these?
- Implications: what do you expect to find, albeit tentatively at this stage? What will you be on the look-out for in your data analysis?
- Time-line: how will you organise your time between the various tasks required over the following weeks and months? When do you plan to hand in a draft to your supervisor for their feedback?
- Working bibliography, consistently formatted

Please bring a copy of your research proposal to the seminar, as they will serve as the basis for small-group discussion.

GETTING THE MOST FROM THE SEMINAR

The seminar is one important way to keep on track with your dissertation research and writing. It cannot substitute for regular individual work on the dissertation, for peer-group support and mentoring, or for regular meetings with your supervisor. As with all courses, the way to benefit most from the course is by being pro-active: come with your preparatory exercises, your questions, your dead-end searches, your research frustrations. Come with your willingness to support your fellow students in their learning. Come with your curiosity and your ambition to produce a piece of work of which you are proud. The dissertation is not a 'zero-sum' game: when the atmosphere in the seminar is supportive and nurturing of one another's learning, every student benefits.

RECOMMENDED READING

There are a couple of useful 'keep-by-your-side' volumes that I recommend that you consult regularly throughout the course. These are:

Booth, Wayne, et al. 2016. *The Craft of Research*, 4th Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (or one of the earlier editions).

Konopinski, Natalie. 2014. *Doing Anthropological Research: A Practical Guide*. Abingdon: Routledge.

ADDITIONAL READINGS ON PARTICULAR ASPECTS OF THE RESEARCH AND WRITING PROCESS

On doing ethnography and qualitative research

Agar, Michael. 1996. *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography*. London: Academic Press.

Atkinson, Paul, Amanda Coffey, Sara Delamont, John Lofland and Lyn Lofland. 2001. *Handbook of Ethnography*. London: Sage.

Atkinson, Paul and Martyn Hammersley. 2007. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. 3rd edition. London: Routledge.

Barbour, Rosaline. 2008. *Doing Focus Groups*. London and New York: Sage.

Becker, Howard. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bernard, Russell H. (ed.) 2011. *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Fifth Edition. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.

Blommaert, Jan and Dong Jie. 2010. *Ethnographic Fieldwork: A Beginner's Guide*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Brettell, Caroline. 1998. 'Fieldwork in the Archives: Methods and Sources in Historical Anthropology'. In H. R. Bernard (ed.), *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, pp. 513– 546.

Denscombe, Martyn. 2010. *The Good Research Guide For Small Scale Social Research Projects*. 5th edition. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

DeWalt, Kathleen M. and Billie R. DeWalt. 2010. *Participant Observation: A Guide for field- workers*. 2nd edition. Maryland: Altamira Press.

Gay y Blasco, Paloma and Huon Wardle. 2007. *How to Read Ethnography*. London: Routledge.

Hammersley, Martyn. 1998. *Reading Ethnographic Research: A Critical Guide*. 2nd edition. Harlow, Essex: Longman Books.

Harper, Douglas. 2002. 'Talking About Pictures: A Case for Photo Elicitation', *Visual Studies*, 11 (1): 13–26.

Imel, Susan. 2011. 'Writing a Literature Review'. In T. S. Rocco and T. Hatcher (eds), *The Handbook of Scholarly Writing and Publishing*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 145–60.

Okely, Judith. 2011. *Anthropological Practice: Fieldwork and the Ethnographic Method*. London: Berg.

Pink, Sarah. 2007 (2001). *Doing Visual Ethnography*. London: Sage.

Ritchie, Jane and Jane Lewis (eds). 2003. *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: Sage.

Robben A.& Sluka J. (eds). 2006. *Ethnographic fieldwork: an anthropological reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Rose, Gillian. 2011. *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*. London: Sage.

VanderStoep, Scott W. and Deidre D. Johnston (eds). 2009. *Research Methods for Everyday Life: Blending Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

On writing as craft

Emerson, Robert., Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw. 1995. *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ghodsee, Kristin. 2016. *From Notes to Narrative: Writing Ethnographies that Everyone Can Read*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sanjek Roger. (ed) 1990. *Fieldnotes: the makings of anthropology*. Ithaca: Cornell UP. 47-70.

Van Maasen, John. 2011. *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography, Second Edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wolf Margery. 1992. *A thrice-told tale: feminism, post-modernism and ethnographic responsibility*. Stanford: Stanford UP. (Chpt 3 on Fieldnotes)

On ‘the field’ and fieldwork as objects of reflection and critique

Abram, Simone. 2003. ‘Anthropologies in Policies, Anthropologies in Places: Reflections on Fieldwork “in” Documents and Policies.’ In T. H. Eriksen (ed.), *Globalization: Studies in Anthropology*. London: Pluto Press, pp. 138– 157.

Argyrou, Vassos. 2002. *Anthropology and the Will to Meaning: A Postcolonial Critique*. London: Pluto Press

Bourdieu, Pierre. 2003. Participant objectivation, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. (N.S.) 9: 281-294.

Coleman, Simon and Peter Collins (Eds). 2006. *Locating the field: space, place and context in anthropology*. Oxford: Berg.

Eriksen Thomas Hylland. 2001. 'Chapter 3: Fieldwork and its interpretation' In: Eriksen T.H. *Small places, large issues: an introduction to social and cultural anthropology* (3rd edition). London: Pluto.

Fabian Johan. 1999. 'Ethnographic misunderstanding and the perils of context' In: Dilley Roy (ed) *The problem of context*. Oxford: Berghahn. 85-104.

Grasseni Cristina. 2004. 'Skilled vision: an apprenticeship in breeding aesthetics' *Social Anthropology* 12:1, 41-55.

Kalir, Barak. 2006. The field of work and the work of the field: conceptualizing an anthropological research engagement, *Social Anthropology*. 14/2: 253-246.

Marcus George. 2008. 'The end(s) of ethnography: social/cultural anthropology's signature form of producing knowledge in transition' *Cultural anthropology* 23:1, 1-14.

McLean Athena. & Liebing Annette. (eds). 2007. *The shadow side of fieldwork: exploring the blurred borders between ethnography and life*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Mills, David. 2003. Like a horse in blinkers? A political history of anthropology's research ethics. In P. Caplan (Ed.) *The ethics of anthropology: debates and dilemmas*. New York: Routledge. Pp. 37-54.

Piña-Cabral, Joao. 1992. Against translation: the role of the researcher in the production of ethnographic knowledge. In Joao Piña-Cabral and John Campbell (Eds) *Europe observed*. Oxford University Press. Pp. 1-23.

Skinner, Jonathan. 2010. Leading questions and body memories: a case of phenomenology and physical ethnography in the dance interview. In Peter Collins and Anselma Gallinat (eds) *The self as ethnographic resource: writing memory and experience into ethnography*. Oxford: Berghahn. Pp. 111-128.

Smith, Katherine. 2012. *Fairness, class and belonging in contemporary England*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. (Chapter 2)

Stocking George. (ed) 1983. *Observers observed: essays on ethnographic fieldwork*. Madison: Wisconsin UP.

Wacquant, Loïc. 2002. 'Scrutinizing the Street: Poverty, Morality, and the Pitfalls of Urban Ethnography', *American Journal of Sociology*, 107(6): 1468–1532.

Strathern Marilyn. 1987. 'The limits of auto-anthropology' In: Jackson A. (ed) *Anthropology at home*. London: Tavistock. 16-37.

Wellman David. 1994. 'Constructing ethnographic authority: the work process of field research. An ethnographic account' *Cultural Studies* 8:3, 569-83.

On research ethics

American Anthropological Association. 2012. Statement on Ethics: Principles of Professional Responsibility, <http://www.aaanet.org/profdev/ethics/upload/Statement-on-Ethics-Principles-of-Professional-Responsibility.pdf>

Borofsky, Robert. 2005. *Yanomami: The Fierce Controversy and What We Can Learn from It*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Boulton, Mary and Michael Parker. 2007. 'Introduction: Informed Consent in a Changing Environment', *Social Science and Medicine*, 65 (11): 2187– 2198.

Harper, Ian. 2007. 'Translating Ethics: Researching Public Health and Medical Practices in Nepal', *Social Science and Medicine*, 65 (11): 2235– 2247.

Harper, Ian and Jiminez, Alberto Corsin. 2005. 'Towards an Interactive Professional Ethics', *Anthropology Today*, 21 (6): 10– 12.

Mills, David. 2003. "'Like a Horse in Blinkers': A Political History of Anthropology's Research Ethics", In P. Caplan (ed.), *The Ethics of Anthropology: Debates and Dilemmas*. New York and London: Routledge, pp. 37– 54.

Mosse, David. 2006. 'Anti-social Anthropology? Objectivity, Objection, and the Ethnography of Public Policy and Professional Communities', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 12 (4): 935– 956.

Pettigrew, Judith, Shneiderman, Sara and Harper, Ian. 2004. 'Relationships, Complicity and Representation: Conducting Research in Nepal during the Maoist Insurgency', *Anthropology Today*, 20 (1): 20– 26.

Strathern, Marilyn (ed.) 2000. *Audit Cultures: Accountability, Ethics and Anthropological Studies in the Academy* (EASA series in Social Anthropology). London Routledge.