

ANG6930 Dissertation Writing

University of Florida

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Class meets: Tuesdays 4:05 pm - 7:05 pm TUR 234
Office hours: Thursdays: 1-4 pm @ 3345 TUR (or by appointment)

A question to a PhD student: “How is the writing going?” And her reply: “Oh, it should move along quite well, once I get through beating the life out of my material”. Does this sound familiar? The first think that strikes many PhD students who have completed their fieldwork and prepare to sit down and start writing up is the strong divergence between the “lively” experiences of fieldwork and the “deadening” process of writing them down afterwards. Writing a thesis, a dissertation, or even an article is challenging even if rewarding at the end. Sustaining an argument and maintaining good writing over long piece of work can be overwhelming. Analyzing and finding the right way to integrate diverse material (from various sources, ethnographic and archival material) take not a small effort. How can we prepare for the intense emotions that writing tends to trigger – such as anxiety, loss of self-confidence, and anger – to name a few?

As a space for reflection, critical reading, writing and feedback this course will aim to provide you with a structure to smooth the process of writing. We will focus on several key components of successful writing, starting from habits that support productivity in writing, writing and life balance; to the structure of your material, to more content-oriented subjects, such as various dissertation styles and genres of ethnographic expression. Guest speakers will introduce you to the particularities of writing for different anthropological subfields, while select readings will aim at introducing you to the writing styles and habits of productive scholars, ethnographers and writers.

We will use different accounts on ethnographic writing and ‘good examples’ of current ethnographies/work in anthropology, which you choose to use as your “model” writing. We will read these with an understanding of how anthropologists authorize and authenticate their textual accounts though style, structure, form, rhetorical strategies, narrative conventions and voice. We will think and explore the poetics and politics of cultural representation more generally, within anthropology as a discipline and beyond.

The main purpose of the class remains, however, writing, providing students with the opportunity to respond to other students work and present theirs, as a means to sharpening their writing and verbal skills. The instructor’s role is to merely facilitate a creative space to write. We will be setting up also a webpage to share our experience with other UF students.

We will determine what to do each week depending on our needs.

The course will be loosely using for the organization of our meetings and discussion “Writing an Article in 12 weeks” by Wendy Laura Belcher.

In the company of critics: ethnography and anthropology today

Issue 28.4, November 2013 *Cultural Anthropology's* November issue features a series of articles reflecting on the publics created, engaged, and imagined through ethnographic writing. The series includes pieces by João Biehl, Michal Osterweil, Didier Fassin, and Vincent Debaene.

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

Walzer, Michael. "Preface" and "Introduction." In *The Company of Critics: Social Criticism and Political Commitment in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Basic Books, 2002, pp.xix-xx, 3-28.

Ethnographic fieldwork and writing

Tsing, Anna. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Robben, Antonius & Jeffrey Szluka. *Ethnographic Fieldwork*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007, pp. 1-32.

Brettell, Caroline (ed.). *When They Read What We Write. The Politics of Ethnography*. Westport: Bergin & Garvey, 1993, pp. 1-24.

Jackson, Michael D. "An Anthropological Critique of the Project of Philosophy." *Anthropological Theory* 2009, 9(3):235-251.

Fischer, Michael M.J. "Culture and Cultural Analysis as Experimental Systems." In *Anthropological Futures*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009, pp.1-49.

Rabinow, Paul. *Marking Time: On the Anthropology of the Contemporary*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Biehl, João & Byron Good, Arthur Kleinman. "Introduction: Rethinking Subjectivity." In *Subjectivity: Ethnographic Investigations* edited by Biehl, Good, Kleinman. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007, pp.1-23.

Each week we read one chapter from:

"Writing your Journal Article in 12 weeks" by Laura Belcher

"Alive in the Writing" by Kirin Narayan

"Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes" by Robert Emerson

Depending on student interests, we also select readings from:

How do we write about violence?

Das, Veena. "The Event and the Everyday;" "Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain." In *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007, pp.11-17, 38-58.

Finnström, Sverker. *Bad surroundings: War, History, and Everyday Moments in Northern Uganda*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

Fassin, Didier, Frédéric le Marcis & Todd Lethata. "Life and Times of Magda A.: Telling a Story of Violence in South Africa." *Current Anthropology*, 2008, 49 (2): 225-246.
Suggested

Benjamin, Walter. "Critique of Violence." In *Reflections* edited by Peter Demetz. New York: Schocken Books, 1978, pp.277-300.

Nordstrom, Carolyn & Antonius Robben (eds.). *Fieldwork Under Fire*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995.

Appadurai, Arjun. *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Contemporary interventions

Fassin, Didier. "Heart of Humanness." In *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions* edited by Didier Fassin & Mariella Pandolfi. New York: Zone Books, 2010, pp.269-293.

Fassin, Didier & Mariella Pandolfi. "Introduction." In *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions* edited by Fassin, Didier & Mariella Pandolfi. New York: Zone Books, 2010, pp.9-25.

James, Erica. *Democratic Insecurities*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010.

What is life?

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998.

Agamben, Giorgio. "What is a Paradigm?" In *The Signature of All Things: On Method*. Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2009, pp. 9-32.

Fassin, Didier. *Ethics of Survival. A Democratic Approach to the Politics of Life, Humanity*. *International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism and Development*, 2010 1 (1): 82-95.

Kleinman, Arthur. *What Really Matters: Living a Moral Life amidst Uncertainty and Danger*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Wasted Lives*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2004.

A life of writing?

Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2003, pp.104-126.

Deleuze, Gilles. "Preface to the French Edition;" "Literature and Life;" "Whitman." In *Essays Critical and Clinical*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pp.lv-lvi, 1-6, 56-60.

Cixous, Hélène. "Coming to Writing." In *Coming to Writing and Other Essays* edited by Deborah Jenson. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991, pp. 1-58.

Rancière, Jacques. *The Emancipated Spectator*. London: Verso, 2009, pp.1-23.

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. "A talent for life: reflections on human vulnerability and resistance." *Ethnos*, 2008, 73(1): 25-56.

Tackling politics

Ferguson, James. "Global Shadows: Africa and the World." In *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006, pp.1-25.

Spencer, Jonathan. "Locating the Political." In *Anthropology, Politics and the State*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 19-47.

Writing economics

Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp.27-50, 291-325.

Ho, Karen. *Liquidated. An Ethnography of Wall Street*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009.

Roitman, Janet. "The Pluralization of Regulatory Authority." In *Fiscal Disobedience: An Anthropology of Economic Regulation in Central Africa*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005, pp.151-199.

Zelizer, Viviana. *The Social Meaning of Money: Pin Money, Paychecks, Poor Relief, and Other Currencies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 1997.

Greenhouse, Carol (ed.). *Ethnographies of Neoliberalism*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.

Thinking Justice

Kelly, Tobias. *Law, Violence and Sovereignty among West Bank Palestinians*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Terrio, Susan. "Rendering Justice in Chambers" and "Judging Delinquents in the Juvenile Courts." In *Judging Mohammed: Juvenile Delinquency, Immigration, and Exclusion at the Paris Palace of Justice*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009, pp. 168-255.

Greenhouse, Carol J. *Praying for Justice: Faith, Order, and Community in an American Town*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986.

Taussig, Michael. *Law in a Lawless Land: Diary of a Limpieza in Colombia*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Comaroff, Jean and John. "Introduction." *Law and Disorder in the Postcolony*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006, pp.1-56.