

ANG 6930 Dissertation Writing

University of Florida

Spring 2017

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Class meets: Fridays 11:45 pm - 2:45 pm CBD 0216

Office hours: Tuesdays: 12 - 13:30 pm @ 3345 TUR
 Thursdays: 2 - 4 pm @ 3345 TUR
 (or by appointment via: stoilkov@ufl.edu)

If you are at this stage of your academic career... ☺, you might have been asked: “So, how is the writing going?” And you might have replied: “Oh, it should move along quite well, once I get through beating the life out of my material”. ☺

Does this sound familiar?

What happens to many PhD students in anthropology, who have completed their fieldwork and begin preparing to write up their material, is the striking difference between the “lively” experiences of fieldwork and the “deadening” process of putting things to paper.

Writing anything is challenging, let alone an article, a thesis, or a dissertation. It is also, nevertheless, highly rewarding when one is finished. Sustaining an argument and maintaining good writing over long piece of work can be overpowering. 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 physically and mentally for the intense emotions that writing tends to trigger? The writer is no stranger to anxiety, loss of self-confidence, and anger...

As a space for reflection, critical reading, writing and feedback this course will aim to provide you with a structure and practical advice how to smooth the process of writing. We will focus on several key components of successful writing, starting from behavioral changes that support productivity in writing and nurture good writing and life balance; to the structure of your material, to more content-oriented subjects, such as how to describe people, scenes, conversations and to various dissertation styles and genres of ethnographic expression. Select readings will aim at navigating your exploits in this direction and help u find your writing style, reflecting on the habits of productive scholars, ethnographers and writers.

In this class we discuss our work as well as different accounts on ethnographic writing and ‘good examples’ of current ethnographies/work in anthropology. Samples of exemplary

work are chosen by students as they relate to their particular topics. We will read these with an understanding of how anthropologists authorize and authenticate their textual accounts through 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, however, remains 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. We will use at least an hour to write in class. The instructor's role is to facilitate a creative space to write as well as share various instructions and notes on writing and the writing life. 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. Students are expected to set up their own independent goals for the semester, and start a logbook in which they take account of their progress, set up goals for the week etc. The class will plan time to read each other's work and share comments. Students will be expected to share periodically written material (up to three pages of work in progress, supplemented by an extended outline of their larger project) Each week the instructor will suggest essays on facets of the writing process, which serve as a foundation to approach students' own experience.

All the materials for this class are available in electronic format through E-learning or on the web. **The list of readings suggested in this syllabus is only tentative and to be used for students' own information.** We will only read pieces that are of particular interest to students in lieu of their own work, without compromising the time devoted to writing per ce.

Primary texts to be used:

Writing an Article in 12 weeks by Wendy Laura Belcher.

Alive in the Writing: Crafting Ethnography in the Company of Chekhov by Kirin Narayan

Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes by Emerson, Fretz, Shaw

Covering the basics

Step-by-Step to the Writer's Space: free from the clutter of duties, distractions, and difficulties getting started up by Alan Klima (on the web)

Ruth Behar. 2008 "Ethnography in a Time of Blurred Genres"

Dominique Boyer. 2015 "The necessity of being a Writer"

Michael Walzer. 2002 "The company of Critics" (Introduction, Foucault and concl.)

Bruce Kapferer 2005 "The Retreat of the Social"

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

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.

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 further readings ...

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.