

t h e
E t h n o g r a p h i c I m a g e
F a l l 2 0 1 9



ANG 6930 Section 4G23 / ANT 4930 Section 4G09

Tuesdays | Period 3 - 4 (9:35 AM – 11:30 AM) TUR 2322

Thursdays | Period 3 (9:35 AM – 10:25 AM) TUR 2322

Richard Kernaghan

Grinter 335 | kernaghan@ufl.edu

office hours: Tues 1-3pm / Thurs 1-3pm
(or by appointment)

This class examines the decisive place of images for ethnographic writing, tasked with describing empirical worlds. Over the semester we will explore the strange, dual capacity images have to stimulate creativity in intellectual inquiry and to render the texts we compose more vivid and discerning. The class is designed as a workshop. We give priority to honing our skills of observation, to working with verbal and non-verbal pictures, to drawing and crafting descriptions. We will also familiarize ourselves with image theory and its implications for ethnography. For if every image carries with it the question of its own relation to specific states of affairs (what some might call its truth value, reference or denotation), how different is that

question from the demands continually placed at the feet of ethnographic writing with regards to the precise points where it must ground itself in social situations?

Images rise up from lived encounters of fieldwork. They reveal their full force, however, less in the circumstances where they first surface than in their capacity to persist and later startle when they return. Such is the form and tenacity with which ethnographic images take hold. And yet their visitations—for all the power with which they surprise—do not simply separate presents from pasts. Obeying neither predetermined sequence nor linear chronology, they sketch out constellations of time: unique moments that pull the ethnographer again and again back towards the documentary materials that fieldwork continues to amass in order to discover there what was not apparent at first, or could not be registered, but which continually reemerges as fresh opportunities to reassess, tinker, and create something anew.

If we appreciate the degree to which photographs, video or film provide writing with incentives for drawing nearer to the textures, opacities and resonances of our own material surroundings, it is critical to underscore that *every image*—no matter whether interpreted as trace, window or screen—interposes distance (even as it promises to bring some other world closer). To weigh the place, and indeed vitality, of images for ethnographic writing then entails contemplating how different configurations of vicinity and remove offer ready means for tracking the myriad ways images manifest and move. In sum, with this workshop, we will study by experimenting—with the images we make or merely find striking—and by sharing the works we compose, so that by exchanging perspectives, impressions and advice we might gain greater insight into how images meet up with writing but also into why the problem of their relation becomes a privileged terrain for ethnography.

* * *

Requirements: (1) active engagement in all seminar discussions and related activities; (2) a sketch- or scrap- book kept throughout the semester that elaborates upon lived observations and field notes or diaries; (3) a series of short image-text compositions (five in all) based on scenes, experiences and encounters from fieldwork or ordinary life; (4) a personal glossary of critical terms from image theory that you find pertinent to ethnographic research; and (5) a final project that explores the visual essay as an expressive form.

Required Texts:

Barthes, R. *Camera Lucida* (Hill and Wang, 2010)
Benjamin, W. *Berlin Childhood around 1900* (Belknap Press, 2006)
Benjamin, W. *Walter Benjamin's Archive* (Verso, 2015)
Berlant, L. & Stewart, K. *The Hundreds* (Duke University Press, 2019)
Desjarlais, R. *The Blind Man* (Fordham University Press, 2019)
Foucault, M. *This is Not a Pipe* (University of California Press, 1983)
Lepselter, S. *Resonance of Unseen Things* (University of Michigan Press, 2016)
Taussig, M. *I Swear I Saw This* (University of Chicago Press, 2011)

The above titles (some as e-books) have been placed on reserve at Library West. All remaining readings may be downloaded from the Canvas course page.

* * *

Attendance: Please arrive punctually and remain until the end of class. An attendance sign-up sheet will be circulated each session. If you must miss class, please inform me ahead of time (or as soon as possible) and provide appropriate documentation. Don't forget to contact a classmate and obtain notes on materials covered while away.

Absences for reasons of religious holiday, illness, and official university business are excused; however, proper notification must still be provided. **Please note:** *More than one unexcused* absence will undermine performance in the course.

For official UF Policy on attendance and absences please consult:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Evaluations – Final course grades will be calculated according to a combination of four criteria:

Participation (20%): A grade will be assessed at the end of the semester based on the degree to which you have played an active, informed role in class discussions, and in so doing contributed to the course's overall success. Therefore, it is important to arrive at each session on time, with the assigned materials in hand, and prepared to share impressions, questions and interpretations. You are also highly encouraged to meet with me individually in office hours to talk about your writing and on-going work towards the final project.

The sketchbook/scrapbook (15%) will be evaluated as a completion grade. This moveable workshop or study should be a physical book, rather than digital or electronic. Size, dimensions and type of construction are up to you. You might buy a book with blank pages or prefer to make one. Though I do recommend something small enough to carry wherever you go. Mini or micro sizes are also fine, just not so small you feel constrained or in any way discouraged. To accompany your sketchbook/scrapbook, you will need some minor but nevertheless essential equipment: Something to write, draw and/or paint with (pencils, pens, color markers, watercolors, etc.). Something to cut with (scissors or precision knife). Some kind of adhesive too (glue or tape). To repeat, what you use is your decision. *The spirit of the sketchbook is low tech, make-shift, minimalist, with a stress placed on portability.* No special equipment required, so nothing

to spend lavishly on. All the same, if you have access to a smart phone or point-and-shoot camera, to a scanner and a printer (monochrome, color), these could come in handy

image-text compositions (25%) are exercises in ethnographic description. The first two assignments ask that you respond in writing to a ready-made image, photograph, film, video or still through close attention to what they contain, stir up, point to or perhaps silence. The final three assignments ask that you combine drawing and written words to create compositions inspired by some scene, experience and lived encounter.

- *assignment 1*: describe a photograph (from fieldwork or connected to you in some other way)
- *assignment 2*: describe a film/video clip (30 sec max) or still
- *assignment 3*: render a portrait that combines drawing & writing
- *assignment 4*: draw a landscape, then write about it
- *assignment 5*: retell a dream with verbal & nonverbal pictures

Please note: special expertise with drawing, photography or other sorts of figuration is not in the least required for these image-text compositions. You will also not be evaluated on your skills as a visual artist! Nevertheless, *for this assignment all image-text composition should fulfill three basic rules:*

- i. each is connected in some way to your own everyday life or to fieldwork you have conducted.
- ii. each includes a nonverbal image (from photography, video, film or drawing)
- iii. length of the written portion should be a hundred words (give or take a few)

personal glossary of critical terms (10%): This glossary of eight to ten entries will feature concepts of image theory, drawn expressly from our course readings. Each entry should define the term in your own words, while explaining its relevance for your own ethnographic research.

visual essay (30%): The final project will weigh the possibilities and limits of the visual essay as a mode of ethnographic representation. The project should be an original composition, generated through—and in conversation with—your own research materials. Ideally it will directly contribute towards the development of a conference paper, journal article or dissertation chapter.

Note: With the exception of the sketchbook/scrapbook, all assignments should be submitted *via Canvas*.

| Assignment Deadlines | |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| <i>image-text compositions</i> | |
| • 1 - photograph | 8/29 |
| • 2 - video/film clip or still | 9/12 |
| • 3 - portrait | 9/26 |
| • 4 - landscape | 10/10 |
| • 5 - dream | 10/24 |
| | |
| <i>glossary</i> | 11/14 |
| | |
| <i>sketchbook & final paper</i> | 12/3 |
| | |

Late policy: Assignments are due at the beginning of class of the calendar deadline. Papers handed in late but still within one week of the original due date will be docked the equivalent of a full letter grade. After that they will no longer be accepted. No extensions will be granted for the final project.

Plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses. All work submitted for a grade must be free from unauthorized assistance or deliberate misrepresentations of one's own efforts. The penalty for plagiarism or cheating is a grade of zero points on the assignment in question. In such cases an incident form will also be sent to the Office of the Dean of Students.

If you have questions about what constitutes academic misconduct, please consult the UF Honor Code as well as the UF Policies on Academic Honesty, Student Rights and Responsibilities. See:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

also <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/quick-links/academic-integrity/>

ADA Statement: "Students with disabilities, who need reasonable modifications to complete assignments successfully and otherwise satisfy course criteria, are encouraged to meet with the instructor as early in the course as possible to identify and plan specific accommodations. Students will be asked to supply a letter from the [Disability Resource Center](#) to assist in planning accommodations."

Grading: The following scale will be used for grades on all assignments and exams: 94-100=A; 90-93=A-; 87-89=B+; 84-86=B; 80-83=B-; 77-79=C+; 74-76=C; 70-73=C-; 67-69=D+; 64-66=D; 60-63=D-; 59 and below=E (failing).

You may consult current UF policy on how grade point averages are calculated at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx#calculating>.

Course feedback: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

Additional UF Resources:

Health & Wellness

- U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352 392- 1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student
- University Counseling & Wellness Center, 3190 Radio Road (392-1575)
<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/>
- University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies
- Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161
- Student Health Care Center (392-1161) <http://shcc.ufl.edu/>

Academic

- Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
<http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>
- The Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall (864-1138)
<http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/for-students/>
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union (392-1601) <http://www.crc.ufl.edu/>
- Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

* * *

Please note: I may make minor adjustments to class readings during the course of the semester. Any and all modifications will be announced ahead of time.

Course Schedule

week 1 describing things empirical

8/22,24

Benjamin, "Marseilles"

Canetti, "The Woman at the Grille" (*Voices of Marrakesh*)

Romero, "Image as Method Conversations on Anthropology through the Image"

Images (Cultural Anthropology Fieldsights series)

<https://culanth.org/fieldsights/series/images>

- Seale-Feldman, "Images"
- Stevenson, "Images"
- Spray, "Record"
- Pandian, "Becoming Here"
- Meyers, "Trespass"
- Elhaik, "Cogitation"

film: How little we know of our neighbors (Rebecca Baron)

week 2 images & relations

8/27,29

Barthes, "The Photographic Message"

Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image"

Berlant & Stewart, *The Hundreds* (select passages)

supplemental: Benjamin, "Little History of Photography"

film: Wiñaypacha / Eternity (Óscar Catacora)

week 3 visitations, denotations

9/3,5

Barthes, "The Third Meaning"

Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (excerpts)

Berlant & Stewart, *The Hundreds* (select passages)

film: Battleship Potemkin; Ivan the Terrible (Sergei Eisenstein)

week 4 drawing moves

9/10,12 Eisenstein, "How I learned to draw"
Kleiman, "Yo Autoritratto Nuevo Laredo"

Berger, *Berger on Drawing* (excerpts)

Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This*: Chapters 3, 4 & 10.

Scheinberger, *Dare to Sketch* (excerpts)

film: Qué viva México (Sergei Eisenstein)

week 5 scrapbooks, memoires & other gatherings

9/17,19 Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin's Archive*

Benjamin, *Berlin childhood around 1900*

Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This*: Chapter 14

film: Perfumed Nightmare (Kidlat Tahimik)

week 6 resemblances

9/24,26 Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image"

Kracauer, "Photography"

Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*

supplemental: Foucault, "The Prose of the World" (*The Order of Things*)

film: Three Times (Hou Hsiao Hsien)

week 7 workshop 1

10/1,3 **photo series**: Ríos (Eniac Martinez)

Calvo, "The First Man Was Not a Man" (*The Three Halves of Ino Moxo*)

Canetti, "The Discovery of Evil, Fortress Vienna" (*The Tongue Set Free*)

week 8 **cloud to clod**

10/8,10 Blanchot, "Sleep, Night"
Cortazar, "The Night Face Up"

Canetti, "Invisible Crowds" & "Crowd Symbols" (*Crowds & Power*)
Canetti, "The Unseen" (*Voices of Marrakesh*)

Koselleck, "Terror & Dream"

Calvo, "The Best Method of Shrinking Heads" (*The Three Halves of Ino Moxo*)

fieldwork fragments (photos, videos): Semblance in Terrain project (Kernaghan)

week 9 **colors**

10/15,17 Goethe, Theory of Color (excerpt)

Benjamin, "A Child's View of Color"
Benjamin, "A Glimpse into the World of Children's Books"

Scheinberger, *Urban Watercolor Sketching* (excerpts)

film & companion essay: Golden Snail Opera (Tsai, Carbonell, Chevrier, Tsing)

week 10 **the uncanny**

10/22,24 Lepselter, *The Resonance of Unseen Things* (excerpts)

supplemental: Freud, "The Uncanny"

film: Stalker (Tarkovsky)

week 11 **things empirical: singular, obtuse, filmic**

10/29,31 Barthes, "The Third Meaning" (again)

Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (excerpts)

Lepselter, *The Resonance of Unseen Things* (excerpts)

film: Kaili Blues (Bi Gan)

week 12 claims & counterfeits

11/5,7 Deleuze, "Plato, the Greeks"
Deleuze, "The Simulacrum & Ancient Philosophy"

Desjarlais, *The Blind Man* (select chapters)

film: News from Home (Chantal Akerman)

week 13 insomnia, the night...

11/12,14 Blanchot, "Two Versions of the Imaginary"

Desjarlais, *The Blind Man* (select chapters)

film: No Home Movie (Chantal Akerman)

week 14 workshop 2

11/19,22 what is a visual essay?

film: Okay Bye-Bye (Rebecca Baron)

week 15 final presentations

11/26 visual essays group 1

week 16 final presentations

12/3 visual essays group 2