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E t h n o g r a p h i c I m a g e
S p r i n g 2 0 2 5



Summary: This course examines the decisive place of pictures and picturing for any ethnographic practice that takes seriously the challenges of describing empirical worlds. In this class we will explore the strange, dual capacity images have to stimulate creativity in intellectual inquiry but also to render the texts we compose more vivid and discerning. Designed as a workshop, this course gives priority to honing skills of observation, to working with verbal and non-verbal pictures, and to drawing and crafting descriptions. We will familiarize ourselves with image theory and its profound implications for ethnography as representational response.

Images rise up from actual 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 images from fieldwork take hold. And if so, then we should study by experimenting—with the pictures 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.

ANG 6930 – 25412 / ANT 4930 – 25413

Tuesdays | Period 8 - 10 (3:00 PM – 6:00 PM) • TUR 2303

Instructor: **Richard Kernaghan**
Grinter 335 | kernaghan@ufl.edu

office hours:
Monday 1:00-3pm (or by appointment)

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Course Learning Goals: By the end of this class, students should be able to:

1. identify contemporary trends in ethnographic expression;
2. analyze key concepts and concerns of image theory;
3. craft ethnographic descriptions, which foreground an interplay of image, sound & text;
4. maintain a sketchbook within a larger archive of fieldwork materials;
5. develop a project portfolio of independent research; and
6. create a compelling and insightful visual essay

Overview of Seminar Requirements: (1) active engagement in all group discussions and related activities; (2) a sketch- or scrap- book kept throughout the semester that elaborates upon lived observations, 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.

Texts: Most assigned readings for this course can be downloaded from Canvas Course Page (under Files).

The following books are also recommended; however, their purchase is not required.

Barthes, R. *Camera Lucida* (Hill and Wang, 2010)
Benjamin, W. *Walter Benjamin's Archive* (Verso, 2015)
Ferry, E. & Ferry, S. *La Batea* (Red Hook Editions, 2017)
Foucault, M. *This is Not a Pipe* (University of California Press, 1983)
Kernaghan, *Crossing the Current* (Stanford University Press, 2022)
Lepselter, S. *Resonance of Unseen Things* (University of Michigan Press, 2016)
Stepanova, M. *In Memory of Memory* (New Directions Book, 2018)
Taussig, M. *I Swear I Saw This* (University of Chicago Press, 2011)

On the Canvas course page, you will also find an archive of supplementary materials: texts, still and moving images, as well as links to films, websites, and other online resources.

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Attendance: As a courtesy to all, please arrive punctually and remain until the end of class. If you must miss a session, please inform me ahead of time (or as soon as possible) and provide

appropriate documentation (*except for religious holidays*). In such cases you are responsible for contacting a classmate to obtain notes on materials and topics covered while away.

In accord with university attendance policies ([click here to read](#)), absences for reasons of illness, religious holiday, and official university business are excused.

If the absence is planned, please notify me ahead of time and as early as possible.

If the absence is unplanned, then as soon as it is feasible for you to do so.

Please note: Since participation as well as assimilation of class materials depend upon attendance, multiple absences (4 & above) will undermine academic performance and may even risk failing. Students, however, with perfect or near perfect attendance will receive bonus credit.

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Evaluations – Student progress will be weighed through a combination of **five** criteria:

1. 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 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.

participation grading scheme

5% / 5 points - **i.** regular, punctual attendance

5% / 5 points - **ii.** attentive listening, informed contributions during in-class conversations

5% / 5 points - **iii.** participation in two peer review activities

5% / 5 points - **iv.** effective communication with instructor (i.e. email, office hours, etc.)

2. Sketchbook/scrapbook (10%) 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, makeshift, 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. *Please bring your sketchbook to every class session.* Throughout the semester you may be asked to show that you have it with you and are working on it. Note: We will dedicate week 12 (April 8) to showing we have each done with our sketchbooks and to discussing as a group the generative potential of sketchbooks for ethnographic writing and representation.

3. 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 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, drawing, dream, etc.)
- iii. length of the written portion should be a hundred words (give or take a few)

4. Personal glossary of critical terms (20%): 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.

5. Visual essay (25%): 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 schedule		
<i>participation</i>	20%	Ongoing
<i>image-text compositions</i>	25%	
• 1 – photograph		1/28
• 2 - video/film clip or still		2/11
• 3 – portrait		2/25
• 4 – landscape		3/11
• 5 – dream		3/25
<i>personal glossary</i>	20%	4/1
<i>sketchbook/scrapbook</i>	10%	4/08
<i>final visual essay</i>	25%	4/22

Late policy: Apart from the final essay, I can accept any assignment handed-in for a grade up to one week (7 days) past their scheduled due date. Late assignments will, however, be docked 10 points (on a letter grade / 100-point scale). Extensions for the final project will be granted only for documented extenuating or emergency circumstances.

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Academic Honesty: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [Click here to read the Honor Code](#). Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should contact the Disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Grading: The following scale will be used for grades on all assignments: 94-100=A; 90-93=A-; 87-89=B+; 83-86=B; 79-82=B-; 76-78=C+; 72-75=C; 69-71=C-; 66-68=D+; 62-65=D; 59-61=D-; 58 and below=E (failing). Click [this link to consult current UF policies for grades and grading](#).

Course feedback: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. [Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. [Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here](#).

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Additional UF Resources:

Health & Wellness

- *U Matter, We Care:* If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center:* [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center:* Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care

you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).

- *University Police Department*: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#)

Academic

- *E-learning technical support*: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- *Career Connections Center*: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- *Library Support*: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- *Teaching Center*: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- *Writing Studio*: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- *Student Complaints On-Campus*: [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information](#).
- *On-Line Students Complaints*: [Ombuds Complaint Portal](#).
- [Anthropology Library Guide](#)

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

Course Schedule

week 1 describing things empirical

1/14 Stepanova, *Memory of Memory*, Part I: 1 & 2

short film: [Milkman \(Cao Fei\)](#)

Walser, "The Kitten (I)," "The Look," "The Kitten (II)"

[*Art & Ethnographic forms in Dark Times \(Cultural Anthropology Fieldsights series\)*](#)

week 2 images & relations

1/21 Stepanova, *Memory of Memory*, Part I: 3 & 4.

Belting, "An Anthropology of Images: Picture, Medium, Body"

Umoja Noble, "Close-Up: Black Images Matter"

short film: [CGH-SDU \(Homenagem à Mínima Informação\) \(Giselle Beiguelman\)](#)

supplemental:

Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure & Narrative Cinema"

Mulvey, "Ten Frequently Asked Questions on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'"

week 3 visitations, denotations | listening

1/28 Hurston, "Zombies" (*Tell my Horse*: Chapter 12)

Barthes, "The Third Meaning"

Pierre, "Elements for a Theory of the Photogramme"

Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (excerpts)

Stewart, "Arresting Images"

film: [Wiñaypacha / Eternity \(Óscar Catacora\)](#)

week 4 **workshop 1: what are the archives of fieldwork?**

2/4 Barroca, "Into the Negative (Space)"
Kernaghan, *Crossing the Current*: Chapter 2

film: [Archivo Cordero \(Gabriela Zamorano\)](#)

week 5 **scrapbooks, memoires & other gatherings**

2/11 Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin's Archive*
Benjamin, *Berlin childhood around 1900* (selections)
Benjamin, "A Glimpse into the World of Children's Books"
Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This*: Chapter 14

supplemental:
Didi-Huberman, "Warburg's Haunted House"

[Mnemosyne: Meanderings through Aby Warburg's Atlas](#)

Warburg, "The absorption of the expressive values of the past"
Severi, "Warburg the Anthropologist, or the Decoding of a Utopia"

week 6 **between chromatic & synesthetic**

2/18 Benjamin, "A Child's View of Color"
Nussenzweig, "Theory of the Rainbow"
Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw & the Cooked* (excerpts on rainbows)
Levi-Strauss, *Look, Listen, Read*: Chapters 8, 9 & 19
Bryant & Jarmie, "The Glory"

Takemitsu, "Dream and Number"

film: [Kaili Blues \(Bi Gan\)](#)

week 7 **resemblances**

2/25 Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image"

Kracauer, "Photography"

Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*

film: [E no Naka no Shoyo / The Girl in the Picture \(Obayashi\)](#)

week 8 **workshop 2: what is a visual essay?**

3/4 Ferry & Ferry, *La Batea*

Sundgren, *Justice Pursued*

[Writing with Light collective \(selected essays from Cultural Anthropology\)](#)

week 9 **drawing moves**

3/11 Eisenstein, "How I learned to draw"

Kleiman, "Yo Autoritratto Nuevo Laredo"

Partridge, "Diagrams in Anthropology: Lines and Interactions"

film: [Qué viva México \(Sergei Eisenstein\)](#)

*******SPRING BREAK READING ROOM*******

Deleuze, *Cinema 2: Chapters 3 & 4*

week 10 **qualities opaque: haze, distance and the dense**

3/25 Blanchot, "Two versions of the imaginary"
Kincaid, "In the Night"
Canetti, "The Unseen" (*Voices of Marrakesh*)

film: [Limbo \(Alex Fattal\)](#)

week 11 **uncanny**

4/1 Lepselter, *The Resonance of Unseen Things*: Chapter 4
Stoichita, *A short history of the shadow*: Chapter 4

film: [Stalker \(Tarkovsky\)](#)

week 12 **workshop 3: where is the portfolio?**

4/8 on sharing sketchbooks - a roundtable discussion

week 13 **claims, counterfeits, simulacra**

4/15 Deleuze, "Plato, the Greeks"
Deleuze, "The Simulacrum & Ancient Philosophy"
Serres, *The Birth of Physics* (selected passages)

week 14 **final presentations**

4/22 visual essays