

Syllabus

BA/MA-Seminar 1415-V3 »Global Political Ethnography« (Fall Trimester 2018)

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What to expect

Among the most significant transformations of statehood throughout the 20th century is its growing internationalization. Whereas the classical theories conceive the state as a sovereign entity, we see a growing influence of global politics in state affairs. In some cases, states deliberately relinquish parts of their sovereignty to international bodies such as the European Union, in other cases international actors intervene in state affairs in response to perceived weaknesses or threats, as in the government debt-crisis in Greece or in the humanitarian intervention in Afghanistan.

In this seminar we look at these developments in a particular methodological perspective: through the lens of ethnography. In our discussions, we will combine classical theories of statehood with a growing body of literature which under the heading Global Political Ethnography studies the globalisation of politics and statehood in a micro-sociological/-political perspective.

Requirements:

Regular attendance, active participation as well as doing the mandatory readings are basic conditions for a successful completion of the course. For the four sessions based on mandatory readings, reading questions have to be answered in the assignment section of the course platform. In addition to this, MA students have to write summaries for sessions 2 to 5 and submit them in the assignment section of the course platform.

You will have to do a presentation on a case study in one of the two double sessions at the end of the course. The presentation has to be accompanied by a handout.

Finally, you will have to write a term paper, analysing the social and political dynamics of a specific pandemic as well as discussing alternative public policy responses to it.

Points:

6 ECTS

02.10.2018 1 Introduction

The first session introduces the research problem which is in the focus of this seminar and recapitulates knowledge about ethnography, politics and the state. In the second part, we will take a look at the formalities and organisation of the seminar, such as the course schedule and requirements.

Literature recommended for students without prior knowledge about ethnography

Anderson, Elijah. 2007. Jelly's Place: An Ethnographic Memoir, in: International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society 19(1-2), 35-52.

Dellwig, Michael/Prus, Robert. 2012. Einführung in die interaktionistische Ethnografie. Soziologie im Außendienst. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 17-50

Part I "Global Political Ethnography" as a Research Field

In the first part of the seminar, we will look at how "Global Political Ethnography" came to be constructed as a field of research at the intersection of political ethnography on the one hand and global ethnography on the other.

09.10.2018 2 Political Ethnography

In this session, we will look at Political Ethnography as a first element which contributed to the formation of "Global Political Ethnography". Traditionally, ethnography had been employed as a

research method to study marginal people, such as migrant communities, deviant groups or native populations at the fringes of Modernity. In the 1960s, however, some anthropologists started to argue for a change of perspective: anthropologists should not contend themselves with "giving voice" to marginal people, but should use their methodological toolkit and experiences to study the power centers of modern societies. In this session, we will read a Laura Nader's foundational article as well as a more recent contribution.

Mandatory reading

Nader, Laura. 1969. "Up the Anthropologist: Perspectives Gained from 'studying up'". In D. Hymes (ed) *Reinventing Anthropology*. New York: Random House, pp. 284–311

Shore, Chris and Susan Wright. 1997. "Policy. A new field of anthropology". In Shore and Wright (eds), *Anthropology of Policy. Critical Perspectives on Governance and Power*. London, New York: Routledge, pp. 3-37

16.10.2018 3 Global Ethnography

In this session, we will look at Global Ethnography as a second element which contributed to the formation of "Global Political Ethnography". Traditionally, ethnography had been a research method focused on one place. The density of information which comes from the long-term engagement of an ethnographer in a particular localised context was its most distinguishing mark. Yet, the growing importance of globalised social dynamics put the relevance of this research method into question. Ethnographers, hence, started to discuss how ethnographies could be undertaken under the condition of globalisation. And they started to explore what this particular research method can contribute to the study of the global social relations. In this session, we will read George E. Marcus' foundational article as well as a more recent contribution.

Mandatory reading

Marcus, George E. 1995. "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 24, 1995, pp. 95–117

Burawoy, Michael. 2001. "Manufacturing the Global", *Ethnography* 2(2), pp. 147 - 159

30.10.2018 4 *Global Political Ethnography*

In this session, we will look at Global Political Ethnography as an emergent field of research. Its formation takes place against the background of the growing trans- and internationalisation of political processes, which takes place not only in international politics, but on all levels of policy making around the globe. But the emergence of Global Political Ethnography as a field is not only driven by these empirical developments. It also responds to the tendency within social sciences, to discuss and reconstruct these processes in abstract concepts and macro-level studies. Global Political Ethnography wants to introduce micro-perspectives into the study of these phenomena. For this session, we will read the programmatic working paper by Stepputat and Larsen which founded the field.

Mandatory reading

Stepputat, Finn and Jessica Larsen. 2015. *Global political ethnography: A methodological approach to studying global policy regimes*, Danish Institute for International Studies Working Paper

06.11.2018 5 *Thinking the Global: Theoretical Frameworks*

In this session, we will ask how ethnographies of global political processes can be framed theoretically. Meaningful ethnographic research is impossible without a theoretical foundation or framework. In this session, we will look at sociological theories which are particularly compatible with ethnographic approaches towards researching global politics.

Mandatory readings

Werron, Tobias. 2012. "Schlüsselprobleme der Globalisierungs- und Weltgesellschaftstheorie" *Soziologische Revue*, 35.2, pp. 99-118

Nicolini, Davide. 2017. "Is small the only beautiful? Making sense of 'large phenomena' from a practice-based perspective", In: Hui, A., Schatzki, T., Shove, E. (eds). *The Nexus of Practices*. London: Routledge. pp. 98-113

Part II Researching Global Politics

In the second part of the seminar, we will look at a series of case studies to explore a variety of approaches to and perspectives on studying global political dynamics ethnographically.

20.11.2018 6 Research on the move (double session!)

The studies, which we will discuss in the first double session, are deliberately designed as mobile ethnography. True to George E. Marcus' principle of "Follow the ...!", they span multi-sited fields by ethnographically following actors, objects or policies. More specifically we will look at:

International Organisations

Brumann, Christoph. 2018. Slag heaps and time lags: undermining Southern solidarity in the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. *Ethnos*.

Brumann, Christoph. 2014. Heritage agnosticism: a third path for the study of cultural heritage. *Social Anthropology: the Journal of the European Association of Social Anthropologists* 22(2): 173–188.

Brumann, Christoph. 2014. Shifting tides of world-making in the UNESCO World Heritage Convention: cosmopolitanisms colliding. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 37(12): 2176–2192.

Brumann, Christoph. 2011. Unser aller Kulturgut. Eine ethnologische Annäherung an das UNESCO-Welterbe. *Sociologus* 61(1): 19–44.

Armed conflict

Nordstrom, Carolyn. 2004. *Shadows of War: Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the Twenty-First Century*. Berkeley: California University Press

Development aid

de Laet, Marianne and Annemarie Mol. 2000. "The Zimbabwe Bush Pump: Mechanics of a Fluid Technology", *Social Studies of Science* 30(2), pp. 225-63

For contextualisation: Beck, Stefan, Jörg Niewöhner and Estrid Sörensen. 2012. *Science and Technology Studies. Eine sozialanthropologische Einführung*. Bielefeld: transcript

Global health

Richards, Paul. 2016. *Ebola. How a people's science helped end an epidemic*. London: Zed

27.11.2018 7 Research in "glocal" contexts

The studies, which we will discuss in the second double session, explore the global social and political dynamics in particular places. Like in the classic paradigm of ethnography, they focus on a place and, starting from there, try to reconstruct the impact of globalised structures and dynamics. More precisely we will look at:

Environmental conflicts

Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. 2005. *Friction. An ethnography of global connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Universal Science

Verran, Helen. 2010. *Science and an African Logic*. Chicago **et al.**: Chicago University Press

International Organisations

Shore, Cris. 2000. *Building Europe. The Cultural Politics of European Integration*. London, New York: Routledge

International Law

Merry, Sally Engle. 2006. Human rights and gender violence. Translating international law into local justice. Chicago: Chicago University Press

Requirements

Presentation

The objective of the presentation is to introduce one particular case study and discuss how it contributes to the understanding of global political and social processes. Most importantly, you should

- elaborate on the research problem and question, which form the starting point of the work
- sketch the theoretical framework of the study
- explain what constitutes the "field" in this particular research
- explain the research methods employed
- present the main insights of the study
- discuss how this contributes to the understanding of global politics.

Your presentation should be no longer than 15 minutes. And it should be accompanied by a handout.

Term Paper

The objective of the term paper is to construct a field for a research project within the paradigm of Global Political Ethnography. This should include four crucial steps:

- constructing a research problem
- defining a research question
- sketching a theoretical framework
- constructing the ethnographic field which shall be explored to answer the question

The term paper should be around 5.000 words long. It is due 15 January 2018.