



## Department of Anthropology

### **ANTH 9225A: SPECIAL TOPICS IN SOCIOCULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY: QUALITATIVE METHOD MUST BE DEFENDED (with apologies to Foucault)**

#### **COURSE OUTLINE**

**Fall 2016**

**INSTRUCTOR:** Regna Darnell  
**OFFICE:** Social Science Centre 3208  
**OFFICE HOURS:** Monday 1:30-2:30  
(whenever office door is open or by appointment)  
**PHONE:** 519-661-2111 x85087 or x85589 – UNRELIABLE, USE E-MAIL  
**E-MAIL:** [rdarnell@uwo.ca](mailto:rdarnell@uwo.ca)

**CLASS TIME/PLACE:** Monday 2:30-5:30, SSC 3327

**Credit Value:** .5

#### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

I have not ordered particular texts since the books are easily available from Amazon or on-line. Let me know if you have trouble finding them. Additional articles will be assigned for discussion in response to interests of students in the class and posted on Owl when possible.

#### **PLAN OF THE COURSE:**

I believe that graduate courses should be structured around one or two problematics that apply across a range of topical and ethnographic areas. Seminar discussion around a few seminal theoretical readings allows students from a variety of disciplines and sub-disciplines to fill in the evidence for a particular aspect of the questions discussed according to their own interests and backgrounds. Class presentations are critical because shared knowledge and diverse background experience facilitate creative critical thinking.

Over the last half century, Positivism has dominated the social sciences. This seminar is designed to challenge the hegemony of quantitative method as the only legitimate mode of doing rigorous science. Qualitative social scientists, moreover, have tended to pursue their own work and ignore the devaluation of their work relative to the so-called STEM disciplines, with immense negative consequences for acquiring research funding and public acknowledgment of multiple kinds of expertise. We will explore how to reclaim the stature of qualitative method as scientific, in the process redefining such concepts as validity, reliability and community, never mind sampling – in ways that allow space for meaning, intentionality, reflexivity and generalizability. The social sciences are inextricably entangled with larger societal forces influencing the way we do everything from hard science to fine arts and literature. There has been an overall movement from evolution to relativity to chaos/complexity as explanatory paradigms. Each of these has reoriented

anthropological theory and practice as well as public culture. This seminar postulates that we are on the cusp of a scientific revolution that will incorporate positivism within a larger paradigm of complexity (cf. Newton vis-à-vis Einstein). Ethnographic methods developed within Anthropology, including Participant-Observation and extended cross-cultural fieldwork, increasingly collaborative and community-based. This anthropological paradigm is arguably preadapted to the emergent new ways of thinking.

Each student will explore a different topic of personal interest within this framework of identifying and expanding non-linear, dialogic and qualitative perspectives. Some possibilities: cultural and linguistic relativity; the thought experiment in philosophy and high energy physics; geopolitics; the anthropocene; animal-human relations; bioethics; epigenetics; cross-cultural semantics and the (im-)possibility of translation; archaeology as symbolic culture; convergent evidence across disciplines and sub-disciplines; gender performativity; fractal patterns and rhizomes of scale; oral tradition and memory; storytelling as method (anthropological and for transmission of traditional culture); fiction, social construction and ethnographic authority; forms of ethnographic writing; etc.

I have chosen some sources that will orient us to this kind of range for discussion in class. You will be expected to do the reading and be prepared to evaluate it in terms our emerging paradigm. Students will alternate in leading the discussion of readings (sign up in advance). The last portion of the course will be devoted to presentations of research papers on individual topics.

#### **SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS:**

Mon. 12 September	Introduction READING: Regna Darnell typescript: No Fly Zones and Molotov Cocktails
19 September	Non-Linear Paradigms; Paradigms across Disciplines and Publics READING: Thomas Kuhn, <i>The Structure of Scientific Revolutions</i>
26 September	Chaos and Complexity READING: Roger Lewin, <i>Complexity</i> or James Gleick, <i>Chaos</i>  <b>3 page essay due in class</b> on changing paradigms in social science
3 October	Guest Lecture: Gerald McKinley, Public Health, Schulich Epigenetics, Plasticity and Limitations of Statistics READINGS: TBA
12 October	THANKSGIVING
17 October	Public Discourse and Changing Paradigms READING: Isabelle Stengers, <i>Cosmopolitics</i> (Selections)
24 October	Dialogic and Narrative Approaches READINGS: Dennis Tedlock (Selections) Neil MacLeod, <i>Cree Narrative Memory</i> Mikhail Bakhtin, <i>Dialogic Imagination</i> (sel.) Walter Benjamin, <i>Arcades</i> (sel.); The Storyteller

31 October	A Standpoint-based Paradigm for Human and Natural Environment READINGS: Donna Haraway (selections) Gregory Bateson, <i>Steps Toward an Ecology of Mind</i> Rosi Braidotti, <i>The Posthuman</i>
7 November	Rhizomes, Complexity and Disciplinarity READING: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, <i>On Nomadology</i> Introduction and one more chapter, <i>A Thousand Plateaus</i>
14 November	Society Must be Defended/Qual. Method Must be Defended READING: Foucault on biopower (selections)
21 November	Class Presentations
28 November	Class Presentations
5 December	Class Presentations

**FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS** (due date negotiable with permission)

#### **EVALUATION:**

Class Participation (including attendance)	10%
Short Essay (3-5 pages)	10%
Discussion Lead	10%
Class Presentation (on paper topic)	20%
Final Paper	50%

#### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. describe the characteristic methods of ethnographic fieldwork and theoretical reasoning;
2. identify anthropological threads in a range of related disciplines;
3. apply theoretical concepts to a critical interpretation of anthropological and other texts;
4. analyze the underlying assumptions of ethnographic and theoretical writing in the context of their production;
5. integrate materials from different disciplinary and sub-disciplinary sources;

6. demonstrate skills of critical thinking through collaborative teamwork within the class;
7. infer patterns of relationship between the particular and the general, with a healthy appreciation of complexity and tolerance for ambiguity;

**ADDITIONAL MATTERS:**

Late papers will be marked down by 2% each day or 10% per week for two weeks. Papers will not be accepted thereafter. All exceptions require documentation of medical or compassionate accommodation confirmed by the Dean's Office.

Extended absences (including failure to participate in team preparation and presentation) and late essays or assignments require documentation. Please consult the Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness: (<http://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>). Request for medical or non-medical accommodation should be directed to the appropriate Faculty Dean's office and not to the instructor.

No electronic devices will be permitted during the final exam. Laptop computers may be used in class for purposes of taking class notes or relevant information retrieval only. Cell phones should be turned off.

Academic offenses are taken seriously and students are responsible for reading and understanding the definition of scholastic offenses:  
[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between the University of Western Ontario and Turn-it-in.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Student support services and student development services can be found at <http://www4.registrar.uwo.ca>.