

COURSE OUTLINE

Anthropology 9225A Reading and Writing Ethnography

Fall 2024

Lectures: Thursdays 9:30 am –12:30 pm

Classroom: SSC-3227

Instructor: Dr. Greg Beckett

Office: SSC-3409

Office hours: Please refer to the course site in Brightspace.

Email: gbeckett@uwo.ca

Credit value: 0.5 credit

Course Description: This course explores ethnography as a mode of knowledge and representation, as a theory and practice, and, above all, as a genre of writing. We will begin with classic debates about ethnographic writing and then turn to in-depth analyses of several contemporary ethnographies.

Prerequisites: Instructor permission by application.

Antirequisites: None.

Course Details: Cultural anthropologists use the term ethnography to describe both their method of research and the final product of that research, often a narratively driven article or book. In this course, we will explore ethnography as a mode of knowledge, a research method, and, above all, as a narrative form and mode of representation. We will begin by considering some classic debates about ethnographic writing and then turn to in-depth analyses of a series of contemporary ethnographies. Along the way, we will discuss the following issues: narrative form and technique; the relation between the form and content of arguments; the ethics of cultural representation; time, space, scale, and context; and voice, positionality, and subjectivity.

We will conduct this course as a seminar and regular participation in class discussion will form a key component of the final grade. Additional assignments will include short writing assignments in relation to the lectures/topics as well as a series of papers exploring questions of narrative form and representation in ethnography.

A full course schedule including a week-by-week breakdown of topics and assigned readings will be available on the course's Brightspace site before the first day of class.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Summarize and discuss key debates about ethnography as a method and a style of writing;
- Interpret how anthropological knowledge is produced through writing and describe the practical, ethical, and political issues involved in anthropological research and writing;
- Identify and explain key aspects of ethnographic texts, including their form and structure, narrative technique, and issues of voice, positionality, and authorship;
- Work collaboratively with a group of peers to develop a shared understanding of the course readings and to prepare regular presentations on those themes.

Course Materials:

The following are required readings. Additional readings will be available as PDFs or through course reserves.

Beckett, Greg. 2019. *There Is No More Haiti: Between Life and Death in Port-au-Prince*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Bessire, Lucas. 2021. *Running Out: In Search of Water on the High Plains*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Miyarrka Media. 2019. *Phone & Spear: A Yuta Anthropology*. London: Goldsmiths Press.

Narayan, Karen. 2012. *Alive in the Writing: Crafting Ethnography in the Company of Chekhov*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Price, Richard. 2006. *The Convict and the Colonel: A Story of Colonialism and Resistance in the Caribbean*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Stevenson, Lisa. 2014. *Life Beside Itself: Imagining Care in the Canadian Arctic*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Evaluation:

Grades will be based on the following:

- Discussion Leading and participation – 20%
- Collaborative Paper 1– 10%
- Collaborative Paper 2 – 25%
- Thesis Paper – 35%
- Writing Journal – 10%

Assignments

Active discussion and participation will be a key part of this course. Please come to class having done the reading and ready to discuss the texts.

You will write three papers in this course. We will write the first paper collaboratively as a class. You will work in small groups to co-write the second paper. Students will write their own final paper.

Throughout the course, we will sometimes use class time for writing. Please bring some sort of writing material to class—this could be the notes app on your phone, your laptop, or a notebook and pen. You will also keep a writing journal in which you will respond to writing prompts.

Detailed information about the assignments will be discussed in class and posted on the course site in OWL Brightspace.

Course Policies:

Please read through the policies below.

Due Dates and Late Work:

If you know you will miss class, please let me know by email when possible, and make arrangements with another classmate for them to share notes. Due dates are meant to keep everyone on the same “page” as we move through the course. If you need a bit more time for an assignment, contact me before the due date and we can arrange some flexibility.

Statements on Plagiarism and AI:

All written work in this course should be your own writing. Some assignments will have you working in groups, which will include collaborative writing. But use of generative AI tools for your own coursework is prohibited. This includes using AI based summary tools (e.g., in Adobe Reader). A key part of this course is exploring texts through the act of reading, talking, and writing. Do not use summary tools. Trust me – you can come up with much better analyses of the texts than an AI tool can!

The use of AI tools to complete an assessment is considered a form of academic dishonesty.

Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence:

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at [this website](#).

Statement on Mental Health:

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [Mental Health@Western](#) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.