

**Anthropology 4495F-001 - Special Topics in Anthropology**

**Topic: Reading and Writing Ethnography**

**PROVISIONAL COURSE OUTLINE**

**Fall 2024**

**Instructor and course information:**

Dr. Greg Beckett

Email: [gbeckett@uwo.ca](mailto:gbeckett@uwo.ca)

Thursdays 9:30 am – 12:30 pm

Credit value: 0.5

Prerequisites: Instructor permission by application.

Antirequisites: None.

**This course is cross-listed with graduate course Anthropology 9225A and requires an application for registration. See Department website.**

**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.

**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 and representation, as a theory and practice, and, above all, as a genre of writing. We will begin by considering some classic debates about ethnographic writing and then turn to in-depth analyses of several 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 seminar as a seminar and student participation in the seminar, with 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 an in-depth analysis of an ethnography. Students will write a final paper that explores a key theme from the course across several of the course texts.

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:**

Readings are still TBD, but books MAY include the following:

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.

Schuster, Caroline, Enrique Bernardou, and David Bueno, David. 2023. *Forecasts: A Story of Weather and Finance at the Edge of Disaster*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Zani, Leah. 2019. *Bomb Children: Life in the Former Battlefields of Laos*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

\*\* Additional readings will be available as PDFs or through course reserves.

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