

## **Ethnography of Performance**

IART 778: Performance Studies

Fall 2007

Tuesday 9:10-12

Lindley 110

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OH: W 4-6, Th. 1-2

“Ethnography of Performance” is an introduction to the basic components of ethnographic research methods, focusing on performance. With this lens, it covers research methods of fieldwork, participant observation, interviewing, and surveying; analyzing data; and writing. It considers concerns that are specific to performance as an ethnographic subject, ways in which ethnography can be part of a study of performance, and how the study of performance contributes to a general discussion of ethnography. At the same time, the ethnography of performance remains a question: What comes to the fore with performance as a lens into ethnographic research? Is there a difference in modes of thinking and of doing research? Is performance a different kind of subject than other social processes?

Performance is conceived of broadly, as both formal events and the performance of everyday life. Thus, an ethnography of performance might, on the one hand, focus on an artistic performance practice or event, or on the other, consider how any given case might be studied as performance and what the performative aspects of a case might be. Moreover, ethnography as research method and writing process is itself a performance, both in a general sense and in the context of studying performance. Some of the issues that will be addressed include the position of the researcher as both participant and observer; whether there is a special significance to the body and experience in the ethnography of performance; modes of translation, representation and reification; the relation between performance and social context; and the ways in which performance itself is defined through the framing of an ethnography of performance.

The course integrates theoretical and methodological questions through the design, implementation, and writing of an ethnography of performance.

### **Course requirements:**

Discussion. The course is a seminar and depends on the participation of all. In addition, each week 1-2 students will be responsible for leading the discussion on the texts. [40%]

Research. Each student will do a (mini) ethnography of performance during the course. Aspects of ethnographic research will be addressed each week, with the presentation and discussion of research experiences. [30%]

Final project. The final presentation of your project can be in the medium of your choice. If relevant, you may choose to submit a methods section of a dissertation proposal as your final project. Final projects will be presented the last day of class. Hard copies must be turned in November 16. [30%]

Week 1: September 4

**Introduction**

Week 2: September 11

**The ethnographic subject**

Methods: The field, the subject

Due: Research proposals

Dunham, Katherine. 1969. *Island Possessed*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Pp. 1-57)

Powdermaker, Hortense. 1966. Lesu. In *Stranger and Friend: The Way of an Anthropologist*. Pp. 49-128. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Rabinow, Paul. 1986. Representations are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology. In *Writing Culture*, edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus. Pp. 234-261. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 1991. Anthropology and the Savage Slot: the poetics and politics of otherness. In *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, edited by Richard G. Fox. Pp. 17-44. Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Press.

Week 3: September 18

**The field: Locating and inscribing**

Methods: Fieldnotes

Due: Fieldnotes 1

Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson (eds.). 1997. Discipline and Practice: The "Field" as Site, Method and Location in Anthropology. In *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*, edited by Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson. Pp. 1-46. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sanjek, Roger. 1991. *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Clifford: Notes on (Field)notes (47-70)

Sanjek: A Vocabulary for Fieldnotes (92-138)

Wulff, Helena. 1999. Access to a Closed World: Methods for a Multilocale Study on Ballet as a Career. In *Constructing the Field: Ethnographic Fieldwork in the Contemporary World*, edited by Vered Amit. Pp. 147-161. New York: Routledge.

Week 4: September 25

**Performing ethnography: Experience and embodiment**

Methods: Participant observation, annotation

Due: Fieldnotes 2

Dunham, Katherine. 1969. *Island Possessed*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Pp. 58-96)

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture. In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Pp. 3-30. New York: Basic Books.

Stoller, Paul. 1989. *The Taste of Ethnographic Things: The Senses in Anthropology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. (Chs. 1, 2, 6)

Week 5: October 2

### **Interviewing**

Methods: Writing interview questions, conducting the interview

Due: Annotated fieldnotes

DeVault, Marjorie L. 2002. Talking and Listening from Women's Standpoint: Feminist Strategies for Interviewing and Analysis. In *Qualitative Research Methods*, edited by Darin Weinberg. Pp. 88-111. Oxford: Blackwell.

Holstein, James A. and Jaber F. Gubrium. 2002. Active Interviewing. In *Qualitative Research Methods*, edited by Darin Weinberg. Pp. 112-126. Oxford: Blackwell.

Powdermaker, Hortense. 1966. Interviewing the Negroes. In *Stranger and Friend: The Way of an Anthropologist*. Pp. 155-170. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

Week 6: October 9

### **Visual anthropology and ethnographic film**

Methods: Film as ethnographic material

Due: Interview transcription

Goodwin, Charles. 2002. Professional Vision. In *Qualitative Research Methods*, edited by Darin Weinberg. Pp. 281-312. Oxford: Blackwell.

Hockings, Paul (ed.). 2003. *Principles of Visual Anthropology*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.  
"Some specialized uses of film and videotape," pp. 235-362

Roderick Coover, Cultures in Webs

<http://www.eastgate.com/catalog/CulturesInWebs.html>

Week 7: October 16

### **Data and context**

Methods: Material culture and the archive

Due: Video and analysis

Brettell, Carolyn. 1998. Fieldwork in the Archive: Methods and Sources in Historical Anthropology. In *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, edited by Russell Bernard. London, New Delhi. Alta Mira Press.

Hodder, Ian. 2002. The Interpretation of Documents and Material Culture. In *Qualitative Research Methods*, edited by Darin Weinberg. Pp. 266-280. Oxford: Blackwell.

Merewether, Charles (ed.). 2006. *The Archive*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Michel Foucault, *The Historical a priori and the Archive*, 1969, p. 26

Giorgio Agamben, *The Archive and Testimony*, 1989, p. 38

Paul Ricoeur, *Archives, Documents, Traces*, 1978, p. 66  
Allan Sekula, *The Body and the Archive*, 1986, p. 70  
Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 1995, p. 76

Week 8: October 23

### **Ethics/IRB**

Methods: Ethics and Human Subjects Research  
Due: Archival research (or identification of relevant archives)

Conquergood, D. 1985. Performing as a moral act: The ethical dimensions of the ethnography of performance. *Literature in Performance* 5(2):1-13.

### Ethics

American Anthropological Association ethics issues:  
<http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethics.htm>  
1997 Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association:  
<http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm>

American Sociological Association Code of Ethics  
<http://www.asanet.org/members/ecoderev.html>

### IRB

Human Subjects Review Board: IRB presentation (tbd)

Code of Federal Regulations Title 45, Part 46 Protection of Human Subjects  
Sections 46.111 Criteria for IRB approval of research  
46.116 General Requirements for Informed Consent  
<http://www.med.umich.edu/irbmed/FederalDocuments/hhs/HHS45CFR46.html>

Ohio University IRB material  
<http://www.research.ohiou.edu/compliance/index.php?section=12>

Week 9: October 30

### **Ethnographic text(s)**

Methods: Writing, performance, soundscapes, fiction, documentary, etc.  
Due: IRB application

Clifford, James. 1986. Introduction: Partial Truths. In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus. Pp. 1-26. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Crapanzano, Vincent. 1986. Hermes' Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description. In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus. Pp. 51-76. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Pollock, D. 1998. Performing Writing. In *The Ends of Performance*, edited by Peggy Phelan and Jill Lane. Pp. 73-103. New York: New York University Press.

Powdermaker, Hortense. 1966. Writing *Copper Town*. In *Stranger and Friend: The Way of an Anthropologist*. Pp. 280-284. New York: W. W. Norton & Co.

Turner, Victor with Edie Turner. 2004. Performing Ethnography. In *The Performance Studies Reader*, edited by Henry Bial. Pp. 265-278. New York: Routledge.

Week 10: November 6

**Final presentations**