

Ethnographic sensibility as a tool for social change

UGRA_014159

Departments	Department of Society, Politics and Sustainability
Teaching Languages	English
ECTS	4
Teacher responsible	Ana Ayuso Nogueiras - ana.ayuso@esade.edu

Course Goals

The central driver around which the course is designed is participation and observation of different "fields of action". Thus, it implies "spending time" in the field, observing and taking field notes. At the end of the course, students should:

- Develop an ethnographic sensibility.
- Understand and properly use and mobilize concepts such as observation, culture, emic and etic perspectives, interviewing, and complex social problems, among others.
- Imagine possible research questions.
- Know how to write notes on a scene or a setting one observes.
- Make the effort of not being judgmental when observing people who are not members of my own group or take distance when they are "like me".
- Understand that every single situation has a certain order, and often we are not aware of it.
- Have a better understanding of the antecedents, processes, and (possible potential) outcomes of different forms of social processes, either individual or collective.
- Be familiar with different practices and theories used in the fields of anthropology, urban studies, sociology, management, social innovation, and social movements.

Previous knowledge

No previous knowledge is required to complete the course, but we expect commitment, willingness to question ourselves and our assumptions and to participate and share learnings and points of view.

Prerequisites

No previous requisites are required to complete the course.

Teaching methodology

The course will be equally divided among individual work, team work, and plenary work. The different sessions and resources aim to contribute to the development of ethnographic research in groups or individually.

In this course we will combine:

– Sessions in class encompassing:

- lectures to cover the basics of ethnography.
- practical exercises in which collectively work on ethnographic “material”.
- presentation of the works in progress and feedback from classmates: in which you can receive personalized feedback on your ongoing project.

– Autonomous work:

- time you will spend “in the field” (of your choice) to learn by doing (observing, listening, participating and engaging).

Description

Course contribution to program

One of the most important —and sometimes underestimated— skills for to-be-leaders and managers is the capacity to listen and observe attentively and in a non-judgmental manner. This is, in fact, what ethnographers try to do. To see what is going on, and try to make careful distinctions between what people say, what they say they do and what they actually do.

This is crucial for any effort to understand well established patterns in society — particularly exclusionary ones— and think about narratives and practices to disrupt and transform them. This course is, basically, about this: how to develop what we will name an ethnographic sensibility by means of learning to better observe and listen. In this course we will learn by doing, which means that based on some theoretical frameworks we will go out into the world and let ourselves be impressed by it in order to, ultimately, be able to share what we have learned.

Short description

In order to grasp what the course is all about, the story of Appenzell that George Perec recounts in *Life: A User's Manual* can be helpful.

In 1932, Marcel Appenzell, a young ethnographer trained in Malinowski's school, wanted to conduct an ethnographic research in Sumatra. There, he wanted to learn about the life of the Orang-Kubus, the only remaining people living in the centre of the island, one of the most inhospitable regions in the world. Appenzell spent 71 months away, after which he returned to Paris in order to lecture on what he had learned. He began to sort through his material, a pleasant task at first, but which became his worst nightmare. He decided to leave again for Sumatra and burnt all his notes; only a notebook and some of his correspondence survived the burning. From some of these field notes, we know that the Orang-Kubus were descendants of a developed civilization that had driven them from their land, and also that they used a very restricted vocabulary. For more than 5 years, Appenzell had tried to

live with the Kubus and although he knew that they were not nomadic, every time he managed to find them, the Kubus moved to a more uninhabitable place. However, finally the truth dawned. In a letter he wrote to his mother, Appenzzell reveals what he has discovered: if the Kubus left the villages in which they settled, it was for no other reason than to flee from him. They were willing to live in the most difficult conditions imaginable, but what they were not willing to face were men like Appenzzell.

Bibliography

Emerson, R., Writing ethnographic fieldnotes, Chicago University Press (Book)

Adams, T.E., Jones, S. H., Ellis, C, Autoethnography (Book)

Biehl, J., Vita: Live in a Zone of Social Abandonment in Brazil (Book)

Desmond, M., Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City (Book)

Goffman, A, On the run: Fugitive life in an American city (Book)

Ho, Karen, Liquidated: An ethnography of Wall Street (Book)

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00380253.2024.2363219>, Work Is Freedom: The Entrepreneurial Self Among Street Vendors, The Sociological Quarterly, 65:4, 584-604 (Article)

Activities

Online training activities

Students are expected to check the course Moodle regularly and post their assignments through the specified boxes.

In-class discussions and debates

Sessions in class: lectures to cover the basics of ethnography and to share with others in class and engage in meaningful dialogues on both the process and results of your research is expected from you during this course.

Fieldwork

Autonomous work: time you will spend "in the field" (of your choice) to learn by doing (observing, listening, participating and engaging).

Group presentations

Practical sessions: in which students will present their material and project and we will collectively work on it in order to give personalized feedback.

Content

#	Topic
1	Introduction to the course and to ethnography
2	Fieldwork and observations
3	Entering the field
4	On positioning
5	Observation
6	Interviewing

#	Topic
7	Autoethnography
8	Analyzing and coding
9	Writing and presenting an ethnographic project
10	Reflecting on Ethnography and beyond

Assessment

Tool	Assessment tool	Category	Weight %
Participation in program activities	Class participation - Active and Positive Contribution	Retake and ordinary round	25.00%
Individual or team exercises	Assignments - Work in progress	Retake and ordinary round	30.00%
Group project	Project presentation	Retake and ordinary round	20.00%
Final individual project	Final project submission	Retake and ordinary round	25.00%

PROGRAMS

B13-Exchange Program Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) (Undergraduates: Business)
B13 Year 1 (Optative)

B13S-Exchange Program Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) (Undergraduates: Business)
B13S Year 1 (Optative)

BBA20-Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) (Undergraduates: Business)
BBA20 Year 3 (Optative)
BBA20 Year 1 (Optative)
BBA20 Year 4 (Optative)
BBA20 Year 2 (Optative)

BBA23-Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) (Undergraduates: Business)
BBA23 Year 1 (Optative)
BBA23 Year 4 (Optative)
BBA23 Year 2 (Optative)
BBA23 Year 3 (Optative)

BBA25-Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) (Undergraduates: Business)
BBA25 Year 1 (Optative)
BBA25 Year 2 (Optative)
BBA25 Year 3 (Optative)

DBAI23-Double Degree in Business Administration and Artificial Intelligence for Business (Undergraduates: Business)

DBAI23 Year 3 (Optative)
DBAI23 Year 1 (Optative)
DBAI23 Year 4 (Optative)
DBAI23 Year 2 (Optative)

GBD20-Double Degree in Business Administration and Law (Undergraduates: Law)
GBD20 Year 5 (Optative)
GBD20 Year 4 (Optative)