

Paper Guide

Paper 4

Theory, Methods and Enquiry in Social Anthropology

2023-2024

MPhil in Social Anthropology

Paper Co-ordinator: Dr Joe Ellis (je325@cam.ac.uk)

Supervision and supervision arrangements:

This is a seminar taught paper and therefore no supervisions are required. However, students are encouraged to incorporate theoretical and ethnographic material from this paper into their reading for essays and supervisions on their core papers. Students can speak to their principal supervisor for advice on how to organise their independent work for this paper.

Aims and objectives:

The aim of this course is to (a) introduce students to the distinctive mode of enquiry that characterises social anthropology; (b) provide an overview of major theoretical paradigms that have been influential in social anthropology, both historically and in the present; (c) provide training in methodology in order to support potential field-based study students may carry out for their dissertation and (d) provide support for the process of developing dissertation ideas following data collection.

Mode of assessment:

This paper is compulsory but not assessed. While students will be expected to prepare for lectures and seminars, the course is designed to support the other assessed papers rather than being assessed in itself.

Intended for students reading: MPhil in Social Anthropology

Overview:

This paper is designed to introduce students to the theory and methods characteristic of social anthropology, supplement their understanding of the discipline as a whole and assist in the design of the projects they will undertake for their dissertation. It is not assessed, but attendance at lectures and seminars, along with relevant preparation, will be essential to excelling in the other papers. The lecture series '**Anthropological Modes of Enquiry**' introduces students to some of the ways that social anthropology has theorised society and outlines the distinctive analytical moves the discipline continues to make. It seeks to draw attention to what has unified anthropological thought, regardless of theoretical paradigm. It is therefore envisioned as a description of the 'stakes' of the discipline and designed to offer students a foundation from which to approach their other papers.

The SAN3 lectures '**Schools and Styles of Anthropological Theory**' give a comprehensive overview of the most influential theoretical approaches throughout social anthropology's history. Students are encouraged to incorporate material from this course into their essays, supervisions and dissertation.

The **Ethnography and Research Design Workshops, Tips and Tricks for Finding Scholarly Articles Efficiently and Effectively** and SAN7 lectures '**Ethnographic Methods**' are a series of sessions in which students will be instructed on the key methodologies employed by social anthropology. Topics may include interview technique, note taking, ethics, risk assessment and other essential skills. Students will be asked to employ these methods for short tasks in advance of the seminars.

The **MPhil Dissertation Workshop**, running in June 2024, is an opportunity for students to present their dissertation research to the department as a whole. It will be held early in the 'writing up' process, and so will provide an invaluable impetus to bringing research ideas into a more tangible form.

Definitions:

Paper: a set of subjects offered for examination.

Course: a series of lectures or seminars which contributes to the teaching for a paper. A paper may be taught through one or more courses.

Lecture and seminar courses for this paper are as follows:

Michaelmas Term

'Anthropological Modes of Enquiry': Dr J. Ellis & Dr N. Morningstar (4 lectures)

'Ethnography & Research Design Workshops': Mr J. Ruiz & Ms S. Qassim (4 seminars)

'Tips and Tricks for Finding Scholarly Articles Efficiently and Effectively':
Dr Meg Westbury (2 seminars)

SAN3 lectures: 'Schools and Styles of Anthropological Theory': Various (12 lectures)

SAN7 lectures: 'Ethnographic Methods': Various (8 lectures)

Lent Term

'Ethnography & Research Design Workshops': Mr J. Ruiz & Ms S. Qassim
(2 seminars)

SAN3 Lectures: 'Schools and Styles of Anthropological Theory': Various (15 lectures)

Easter Term

'MPhil Dissertation Workshop': Dr Joe Ellis and others (June 2024)

Please check the Social Anthropology website for updated information on dates, times and locations of all lectures and seminars

(<http://www.socanth.cam.ac.uk/current-students/timetables>)

Background reading

Engelke, M (2017). *Think Like an Anthropologist*. New Orleans: Pelican

Howell, S. (2018). Ethnography. *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Anthropology*.

Available here: <http://www.anthroencyclopedia.com/entry/ethnography> (an extremely useful online resource with numerous other entries)

Modes of Enquiry Readings

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. (1976) *Witchcraft, oracles, and magic among the Azande*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Comaroff, J. & Comaroff, J. L. (1998). Occult Economies and the Violence of Abstraction: Notes from the South African Postcolony. *American Ethnologist*. 26. (2). 279-303

Schools and Styles Readings

Candea, M. (ed) (2018). *School and Styles of Anthropological Theory*. London: Routledge

Kuper, A. (2014). *Anthropology and Anthropologists: The British School in the Twentieth Century*. London: Routledge

Research Design Readings

Cerwonka, A. & Malkki, L. H. (2007). *Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Malinowski, B. 'Introduction' in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Any edition)