

THINKING ABOUT THE FIELD

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NOTE

JGU endeavors to make all its courses accessible to students. All students with a known disability needing academic accommodations are required to register with the Disability Support Committee dsc@jgu.edu.in. The Committee has so far identified the following conditions that could possibly hinder student's overall well-being. These include: physical and mobility related difficulties; visual impairment; hearing impairment; medical conditions; specific learning difficulties e.g. dyslexia; mental health.

The Disability Support Committee maintains strict confidentiality in its discussions. The students should preferably register with the Committee in the month of June/January as disability accommodation requires early planning. DSC will approve and coordinate all the disability related services such as appointment of academic mentors, specialized interventions and course related requirements such as accessible classrooms for lectures, tutorials and examinations.

All faculty members are required to refer students with any of the above-mentioned conditions to the Disability Support Committee for addressing disability-related accommodation requirements.

I. Course Rationale

What is fieldwork, as understood by researchers in social sciences and humanities? What is the 'field'? Where is the 'field'? How are the researcher and researched implicated in the production of the 'field'? These and related questions will come up in this course. This course will introduce students through texts, simulation exercises and reflections on the major problems and methods of doing **field-based** (ethnographic or participant observation or other associated methods) research. It will include designing a research project, practical methods (interviews, surveys, ethnography, participant observation, oral history and life-stories, and visual and textual analysis), the analysis of data generated, and issues in the ethics of research and publication. The course will focus on 6 themes: paper, people, numbers, things, images and media- to help you think through these questions.

II. Course Outcomes

1. Understanding of the roles played by the researcher and the researched.
2. Understanding of the processes of fieldwork (through ethnographic or related methods).
3. Understanding of ethical complexities of fieldwork.
4. Understanding a range of methods which may be deployed (visual, material, etc.)
5. Understanding the implications of public production of sociological/anthropological/historical knowledge.
6. Being able to practice sociological/anthropological/ historical methods.

III. Course Structure

1. PAPER:

In this module, we'll examine two crucial aspects about "paper" sources; paper *as* a source and different *types* of paper sources. But what about communities that do not have written records? Can we not write their histories or tell their stories? Can only Anthropologists study such communities and not historians? Is there a way in which Anthropology and History can combine their unique methods and overcome this limitation of paper sources? Since a lot of traditional paper based research has relied on official governmental records, we begin with the 'archives.'

Emma Tarlo (2003). *Unsettling Memories: narratives of India's emergency*

Kirsch, G.E and Rohan, L. (2008) 'Introduction: The role of serendipity, family connections, and cultural memory in historical research', in *Beyond the Archives*.

2. NUMBERS:

Conventionally, the idea of research conjures up an image of numbers and trends. From understanding demography to migration to poverty, numbers provide important insights for social scientists and policy makers. While numbers are helpful in showing patterns, they often cannot paint a complete picture and this is where stories, narratives and observations fill the gaps. Social class, for instance, is not only about objective parameters like income, occupation, consumption, or education but also about subjectivities, it is performed and lived in everyday life. The objective of this module is to introduce how we can approach and study important sociological themes such as changes in social structure or social class or trends in marriage and spouse selection over a period in each society by using both quantitative as well as qualitative analysis. The readings provide a sense of where to look for data, what constitutes data, and how to analyse, interpret and represent the data.

Cohn, Bernard, 'The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia'.

Deshpande, Satish. 'Mapping the Middle: Issues in the analysis of the 'non-poor' classes in India.

3. SOUND:

Kiela Diehl, "Echoes from Dharamsala: Music in Life of a Tibetan Refugee Community" (methodology excerpts)

Primary source: *Dreaming Lhasa* (film), dir: Ritu Sarin and Tenzin Sonam (2006)

Guest workshop: Vebhuti Duggal on sonic maps, radio-listening practices and publics through request postcards. Her article "Imagining Sound through the Pharmaish: Radios and Request-postcards in North India, c. 1955–1975" (2018).

4. IMAGES:

Much like things, images also tell stories that we unearth during our research. Images also push us to think about the issue of representation. Specific images conjure imaginations about people, about places.

<http://www.tasveergharindia.net/essay/muslim-other-visual-india>

Bourdieu, Pierre and Bourdieu, Marie-Claire, 'The peasant and photography', *Ethnography*, December 2004, Vol. 5, No. 4, pp. 600-616.

5. THINGS:

Material culture or 'things' have been an important tool for research. 'Things' tell stories, stories about journeys, about histories. 'Things' also represent the material culture of communities. What do these things signify? How can we use 'things' in our research? How do we map memories through objects and material? This section will introduce you to bringing material into your research and also to tell stories through things.

Daniel Miller (ed.) *Materiality*, Duke Univ. Press, 2005. Introduction.

Daniel Miller. *Stuff*. Cambridge Univ Press, 2010. Excerpt.

Aanchal Malhotra (2017), 'The Maang tika of Bhag Malhotra' in *Remnants of a Separation- a history of Partition through material memory*.

6. PEOPLE:

Most research involve people either directly or indirectly. As Anthropologists, Sociologists, Historians, we write about people primarily. But how do we choose who to write about? And how do we actually write about people? What are the challenges of working with and on people? These are some of the questions that this module will address.

Stoller, Paul (2002), 'Crossroads: tracing African paths on New York City Streets', *Ethnography*, Vol 3(1): 35-62

Behar, Ruth. *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks your Heart*. Beacon Press, 1997, Introduction.

7. ETHICS :