

## ANTH 6020 Seminar in Research Methods Spring 2026

**Tuesdays 6:30 – 9:15pm**

**Location: YIA\_511**

Instructor: **Leilah VEVAINA**, NAH 303, [leilah.vevaina@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:leilah.vevaina@cuhk.edu.hk), 3943 7716

Office Hours: by appointment

### Course Description

This seminar class provides an opportunity to explore the role methodological questions will play in your own research projects as well as in anthropology more broadly. Many treat methods as a means to an end: the final product of ethnography, and distinct from theorization. However, this course sees methods as the centre of conversations about ethics, theory, and power.<sup>1</sup> Each weekly meeting will have two parts: First, as a seminar, the course will require extensive readings on debates and innovations and practical issues in ethnographic research methods; classes will be discussions rather than lectures, and you are expected to complete readings, ask questions and respond and converse with your peers.

The second component of each meeting will be working toward a proposal in small steps. These will be read and workshopped with your classmates in small groups. The premise of the seminar is that the only way to learn to write a research proposal is to write one, and that writing one well requires feedback, reflection, and revision. To gain some field experience, students will engage in fieldwork exercises over the course of the semester. We will follow the prompt format of the Wenner-Gren dissertation research grant, which includes five questions, for our written exercises. Students will read, discuss, and critique each other's work in small groups.

### Learning Outcomes

- Knowledge of the key elements of research design and proposals in anthropology.
- Appreciation of the relationship between research questions, data, and methodology.
- Understanding of techniques of data collection and interpretation.
- Knowledge of recent innovations and debates in anthropological research.
- Appreciation of the ethical requirements of contemporary social science research.
- Understanding of the dilemmas of ethnographic representation.

### Required Readings

Readings will be posted on Blackboard. Please note, each week has many readings, only a few of which are required for all students.

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<sup>1</sup> Much inspiration has been drawn from Laura McTighe and Yana Stainova's "Collaborate Ethnography" course outline.

## Recommended Texts

Pandian, Anand. *A Possible Anthropology*. Duke University Press, 2019.

## Helpful Resources

- Spradley, James P. *Participant Observation*. Waveland Press, 2016.
- Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz and Linda L. Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- McGranahan, Carole, ed. 2020. *Writing Anthropology: Essays on Craft and Commitment*. Duke University Press.
- Society of Cultural Anthropology, Fieldsites Collection <https://culanth.org/fieldsights>
- Anthropology Magazine, Sapiens <https://www.sapiens.org/category/culture/>
- Kottmann, Nora, and Cornelia Reiher, eds. *Studying Japan: Handbook of Research Designs, Fieldwork and Methods*. 1st edition. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2020.
- Shankland, David, ed. *Archaeology and anthropology: past, present and future*. Vol. 48. Berg, 2012.

## Evaluation

Grade Item	Percentage
Attendance, Participation, Presentations	20%
Written Assignments (1-7 below)	35%
Full Proposal	45%

### Attendance, Participation, Presentations (20%)

Attendance and Participation is a huge part of this seminar-style course. This does not just mean showing up, but **doing the readings, actively asking questions, presenting on your progress, and giving comments to your classmates**. In your groups you must read each other's work generously and offer constructive critique. Your aim will be to focus on your project **and** to help your groupmates to their next step in putting their proposal together.

### Written Assignments (35%)

Writing a full research proposal can be a daunting task, therefore the assignments are designed to get there in many small steps. As a guide we have the Wenner-Gren dissertation research grant application which is broken down into five questions and an abstract, which we will work through over the term. These questions are very helpful to write any kind of grant proposal in the future.

(see for more details) <http://www.wennergren.org/programs/dissertation-fieldwork-grants/application-procedures/project-description-questions>

1. Question 1: Describe the purpose of your research [1000-1200 words]
2. Question 2: How does your research draw inspiration from existing scholarship in anthropology and other disciplines? [1000-1200 words]
3. Question 3A & 3B: Research methodology: Plan A. What evidence will you need to collect to answer your research question? [1000-1200 words]  
Research methodology: Plan B. If you are unable to travel or meet in person with research participants and collaborators, how will address your research questions? [1000-1200 words]
4. Question 4: Why are you the right person to carry out this project? [1000-1200 words]
5. Question 5: Research Ethics [500-600]
6. Question 6: What contribution will your project make to anthropology? [500-600 words]
7. Abstract, Title, Key words [150-200 words]

In addition, we will be working on other fieldwork associated assignments. All the above assignments **should be posted to your Blackboard discussion group two days before our class** meets. All groupmates are responsible to read and comment on each other's work. We will have time each class to comment and discuss on your groupmates' work.

#### **Full Proposal with Abstract (45%)**

This should be a complete proposal incorporating suggestions and revisions from the cumulative writing assignments. This should incorporate your revisions to Assignments 1-7, and be collated into one document with a reference list at the end. For students of other disciplines, this can be tailored to your department requirements.

**Full proposal Submission** is in a few steps.

1. The final proposal must be submitted to VeriGuide. Assignments without a signed declaration from VeriGuide will not be graded.
2. Sign your VeriGuide certificate
3. Then please upload the assignment with the signed VeriGuide certificate to Blackboard under the correct assignment tab.

**Late Papers** will be marked down by at least 1/3 of a grade. Example: A- goes to B+

## Week 1 (January 6)

### Introductions

We will all introduce ourselves, our preliminary research ideas, and goals for the course and concerns about fieldwork. I wish this course to be collaborative, therefore **we can shift and change readings in the outline to best suit our collective needs.**

## Week 2 (January 13)

### Aims of Field Research

#### Assignment: Brief oral presentation of project ideas

**Besteman**, Catherine. "On Ethnographic Love." In *Mutuality*, 259–84. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.

**Stainova**, Yana. "Enchantment as Method." *Anthropology and Humanism* 44, no. 2 (2019): 214–30.

Optional: **Malkki**, Lisa. "Tradition and Improvisation in Ethnographic Field Research" 162-189 in *Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork* (Cerwonka and Malkki) 2007.

## Week 3 (January 20)

### Ethnographic Forms of Knowledge

#### Assignment: W-G Question 1

**Fabian**, Johannes. "Cultural Anthropology and the Question of Knowledge." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 18, no. 2 (2012): 439–53.

**Pandian**, Anand. *A Possible Anthropology*. Duke University Press, 2019. Chapter 1.

**Xiang**, Biao. "Multi-scalar ethnography: An approach for critical engagement with migration and social change." *Ethnography* 14, no. 3 (2013): 282-299.

**Vogt**, Gabriele. "How to Ask: Research Questions." *Studying Japan: Handbook of Research Designs, Fieldwork and Methods*, 2020, 5

Optional: Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3: 575–99.

## Week 4 (January 27)

### Forms of Power

#### Assignment: First field visit fieldnotes with annotation

**Trouillot**, Michel-Rolph. 2003. "Anthropology and the Savage Slot: The Poetics and Politics of Otherness." In *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 7-28.

**Robbins**, Joel. "Beyond the Suffering Subject: Toward an Anthropology of the Good." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19, no. 3 (2013): 447–62.

**Shah**, Alpa. "Ethnography? Participant Observation, a Potentially Revolutionary Praxis." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7, no. 1 (2017): 45–59.

Optional: **Sanjek**, Roger. "A vocabulary for fieldnotes." In *Fieldnotes*, pp. 92-136. Cornell University Press, 2019.

**Lins Ribeiro**, Gustavo. "World Anthropologies: Anthropological Cosmopolitanisms and Cosmopolitics." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43 (2014): 483–98.

## Week 5 (February 3)

### Ethics

#### Assignment: Interview fieldnotes with annotation

**Bourgois**, Philippe (1991) "Confronting Anthropological Ethics: Lessons from Fieldwork in Central America." In Robben and Sluka (2006), *Ethnographic Fieldwork*, pp. 288-297.

**Scheper-Hughes**, Nancy. "Ire in Ireland." *ACGM Robben & J. A. Sluka (Eds.), Ethnographic Fieldwork*, 2012, 219–34.

**American Anthropological Association** (1998) "Code of Ethics." In Robben and Sluka (2006), *Ethnographic Fieldwork*, pp. 325-330.

**McGranahan**, Carole "The Truths of Anonymity: Ethnographic Credibility and the Problem with Pseudonyms." <https://americanethnologist.org/features/collections/rethinking-pseudonyms-in-ethnography/the-truths-of-anonymity-ethnographic-credibility-and-the-problem-with-pseudonyms>

**Nordling**, Linda. 2020. "Who Gets to Study Whom?" *Sapiens*.

<https://www.sapiens.org/culture/anthropology-colonial-history/>

See also: CUHK Survey and Behavioural Research Ethics Training Videos

**Zachmann**, Urs Matthias. "How to identify relevant scholarly debates: Reviewing the literature." *Studying Japan: Handbook of Research Designs, Fieldwork and Methods* (2020).

## Week 6 (February 10)

### Positionality

#### Assignment: W-G Question 2 Literature

**Narayan**, K. "How Native is a "Native Anthropologist," *American Anthropologist*, 95 (3), pp. 671-686. 1993.

**Behar**, Ruth. *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*. Boston: Beacon Press. 1996. Chapter 1.

**Gagné**, Nana Okura. "The cosmology of fieldwork: Relationship building, theoretical engagement and knowledge production in Japan Anthropology." In *Studying Japan*, pp. 169-172.

**Lin**, Ping-hsiu Alice. "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Ethics of fieldwork in Northwest Pakistan", *IQAS* Vol. 53. 2022

**Wang**, Yue. "20 Restaurants and renqing: ethical challenges of interviewing business people over dinner." *Fieldwork in the Global South: Ethical Challenges and Dilemmas* (2014): 228.

Optional:

**Herzfeld**, Michael. "Whose Rights to Which Past? Archaeologists, Anthropologists, and the Ethics and Aesthetics of Heritage in the Global Hierarchy of Value." In *Archaeology and Anthropology*, pp. 41-64. Routledge, 2020.

**Wang**, Yue. "20 Restaurants and renqing: ethical challenges of interviewing business people over dinner." *Fieldwork in the Global South: Ethical Challenges and Dilemmas* (2014): 228.

**Simpson**, Audra. "Consent's Revenge." *Cultural Anthropology* 31, no. 3 (2016): 326–33.

**Berry**, Maya J., et.al. "Toward a Fugitive Anthropology: Gender, Race, and Violence in the Field." *Cultural Anthropology* 32, (2017) (4): 537–65.

## LUNAR NEW YEAR Break

### Week 7 (February 24)

#### Fieldsites

##### Assignment: W-G Question 3 – Methods Plan A&B

**Pink**, Sarah. "An urban tour: The sensory sociality of ethnographic place-making" *Ethnography* 9, no. 2 (2008): 175-196.

**Günel**, Gökçe, Saiba **Varma**, and Chika **Watanabe**. 2020. "A Manifesto for Patchwork Ethnography." Member Voices, *Fieldsights*, June 9.

<https://culanth.org/fieldsights/a-manifesto-for-patchwork-ethnography>

Optional:

**Marcus**, George. 1995. "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 95–117.

**Gupta**, Akhil, and James **Ferguson**. 1997. "Discipline and Practice: 'The Field' as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology." In *Locations, Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*, edited by Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, 1–46.

### (March 2-7) Week 8 Reading Week – Post Monograph Citation and attend office hours

### Week 9 (March 10)

#### Materiality

##### Assignment: W-G Question 4 Prep

**Bourdieu**, Pierre. "The berber house." In *The Anthropology of Space and Place*, ed. Low and Lawrence-Zuniga. 1973.

**Appadurai**, Arjun. "Introduction: commodities and the politics of value," In *The Social Life of Things: Commodities In Cultural Perspective*. Ed. Arjun Appadurai. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

**Ingold**, Tim. *Making: Anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture*. Routledge, 2013. Chapters 1 & 4.

### Week 10 (March 17)

## **Sensory Ethnography**

### **Assignment: W-G Question 5 Ethics**

**Hirschkind**, Charles. "The Ethics of Listening: Cassette-Sermon Audition in Contemporary Egypt." *American Ethnologist* 28, no. 3 (2001): 623–49.

**Harkness**, Nicholas. *Songs of Seoul: An Ethnography of Voice and Voicing in Christian South Korea*. Songs of Seoul. University of California Press, 2013. Selections

**Pink**, Sarah. *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. SAGE, 2015. Selections.

**Gerard Forsey**, Martin. "Ethnography as Participant Listening." *Ethnography* 11, no. 4 (December 1, 2010): 558–72.

## **Week 11 (March 24)**

### **An Anthropology among the Historians**

#### **Assignment: W-G Ques 6 Research Contribution**

**Cohn**, Bernard S. "History and Anthropology: The State of Play." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 2 (1980): 198–221.

**Stoler**, Ann Laura. *Along the Archival Grain*. Princeton University Press, 2010. Selections

**DuBois**, Thomas David, and Jan **Kiely**. *Fieldwork in Modern Chinese History: A Research Guide*. Routledge, 2019. Select chapter of interest.

## **Week 12 (March 31)**

### **Methodology in Print: Choose your own adventure**

#### **Assignment: Oral Critique of a Text's Methodology**

Ethnographic Monograph – any of your choice, choice of text posted by March 5

## **Week 13 (April 7)**

### **Assignment: Q1 Revision**

Reflections on Methods and Project Presentations

## **Week 14 (April 14)**

### **Assignment: W-G Abstract**

Reflections on Methods and Project Presentations

**Final Proposal and Resubmission Statement due April 26**  
w. Veriguide

### **Recommended Reading on Writing/Prepping for Field**

**Narayan**, Kirin. *Alive in the writing: Crafting ethnography in the company of Chekhov*. University of Chicago Press, 2012. Selections.

**Lahiri**, Smita, Lilith Mahmud, and James Herron. 2007. "Moves Anthropologists Make." From *A Student's Guide to Reading and Writing in Social Anthropology*. Harvard College. Pp. 13-19.

"Fieldnotes to First Drafts" from AnthroWrites website

<https://www.anthrowrites.com/fieldnotefirstdraft>

**Besky**, Sarah. 2015. "Can't Get There from Here? Writing Place and Moving Narratives." *Savage Minds / anthro{dendum}*. March 23. <https://savageminds.org/2015/03/23/cant-getthere-from-here-writing-place-and-moving-narratives/>

**Lamott**, Anne. 2005. "Shitty First Drafts." From *Language Awareness: Readings for College Writers*. Ed. by Paul Eschholz, Alfred Rosa, and Virginia Clark. 9th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's. Pp. 93-96.

**AnthroWrites**, Preparation for the Field <https://www.anthrowrites.com/research-preparation>



Grade	Criteria for 1) the course and 2) for coursework
A	1) Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes which include seminar participation, thoughtful and consistent peer commentary, and original and sophisticated completion of each proposal section. .
A-	1) Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.  2) The work synthesizes course materials and key ideas in an original way, but there are areas for improvement.
B-range	1) Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.  2) The work demonstrates a solid grasp of course materials and key ideas. There are areas for improvement with respect to building a cohesive argument, organizing the discussion, communicating clearly, and/or identifying relevant evidence. There is some confusion over what position the author has taken versus the position(s) the author wishes to challenge.
C-range	1) Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.  2) The work shows some effort, but course materials have not been sufficiently engaged or the paper fails to directly address the prompt. The argument and the writing is not clear.  3) AI Use
D-range	1) Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.  2) The work shows little effort to engage course materials. There are major problems with clarity of argument and writing.  3) Evidence of AI Use
F	1) Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.  2) The work has failed respond to the assignment prompt.  3) Evidence of AI Use

## **More Suggestions**

### Participation

Participating in class is extremely important. Asking questions and making comments not only contributes to generating a class discussion, it is also a way of trying out ideas and working through the material for your own sake.

### Late Submissions

Papers submitted after the due date will suffer a fraction of a grade deduction for every day it is late. For example, an A- will become a B+, a B will become a B-, et cetera.

### Academic Honesty

The use of predictive AI (ChatGPT and others) is strictly prohibited for the assignments in this course and will be considered plagiarism.

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on academic honesty, and adopts a policy of zero tolerance on cheating in examinations and plagiarism. Any such offence will lead to disciplinary action including possibly termination of studies at the University. Students should know how to properly use source material and how to avoid plagiarism. Students should read the detailed guidelines and examples for the acknowledgement of sources in the University's website at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty>. Students are required to submit all papers through VeriGuide, which is also explained at the above website.