

**Department of Sociology**

**Faculty of Social Sciences**

**South Asian University - New Delhi**

***Being in the World: A discussion of themes in anthropology***

(Optional Course for MA)

Total Credits: 4

**Objectives of the Course**

Tim Ingold writes 'Anthropology, in my view, is a sustained and disciplined inquiry into the conditions and potentials of human life.' This course seeks to engage with this approach to anthropology and sociology by locating the two disciplines as attempts to understand how humans inhabit this world. Being in the world is already an important aspect of philosophical knowledge and ontology, addressing all aspects of human life. For this course we shall look at the confluence of anthropology and philosophy by focusing on particular themes that address how humans inhabit the world, either by exploring particular fields or engaging with themes that reveal the limits of human existence.

The course will draw on academic readings alongside selected novels and films:

**Unit 1: Introduction-Being in the world**

This unit will introduce the course by taking students through a set of foundational readings from Anthropology, Sociology and Philosophy that address questions of being in the world and ontology.

Ingold, Tim. (2011). *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. London: Routledge, London

Heidegger, Martin. (1978). *Basic Writings*. London: Routledge

Stewart, Kathleen. (2007) *Ordinary Affect*. Durham: Duke University Press

Kohn, Eduardo. (2014) "What an Ontological Anthropology Might Mean." *Theorizing the Contemporary, Cultural Anthropology* website, January 13, <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/463-what-an-ontological-anthropology-might-mean>

Guru, Gopal, and Sundar Sarukkai. 2012. *The Cracked Mirror: an Indian debate on experience and Theory*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press

**Unit 2: Birth, Crafting Life and Death**

Two fundamental facts of life: birth and death. How do they shape our understandings of the emergence and end of life? What does it mean when the only thing we can take for granted according to Heidegger is our finitude? Are there cross-cultural differences when we address birth and death? Are they just biological events? And what happens in between when we craft life? How do we make life and how does this shape who we are?

Gottlieb, Alma (1998) Do Infants Have Religion? The Spiritual Lives of Beng Babies *American Anthropologist* 100 1 1998, p. 122-135

Fraklin, Sarah. (2013) 'Embryo Watching: How IVF Has Remade Biology' *Tecnoscienza: Italian Journal of Science and Technology Studies*, 4:1:23-43.

Hertz, Robert. (1960). *Death and the Right Hand*. Glencoe, Illinois : The Free Press,

Parry, Jonathan. (1994) *Death in Benares*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Harris, Olivia. 2007. What makes People work? In Jonathan Pari, Rita Astuti and Charles Stafford (eds) *Questions of Anthropology* London: Athlone Press

Sennet, Richard. (2008). *The Craftsman*, London: Allen Lane

Dow, Katie. (2016). 'What Gets Left Behind for Future Generations? Reproduction and the Environment in Spey Bay, Scotland', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 22(3): 653-669

### **Unit 3: Place and Movement**

In the Social Sciences, human beings are either seen as being rooted to place or to be caught in movement. Here we shall look at how these processes are intertwined and are critical to see how humans locate themselves in the world.

Casey, Edward. 1996. How to get from space to place in a fairly short stretch of time: Phenomenological Prolegomena. In Keith Basso and Steve Feld (eds) *Senses of Place*. Pp 13-52. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press

Santayana, George. 1968. *The Birth of reason and other essays*. New York: Columbia University Press

Malkki, Liisa. 1992. "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity Among Scholars and Refugees ." *Cultural Anthropology* 7(1) 24-44.

Spencer, Jonathan. 2014 'Anthropology, Politics, and Place in Sri Lanka: South Asian Reflections from an Island Adrift.' *Samaj: South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*. 10, Ideas of South Asia.

Ingold, T. (2010). 'Footprints through the weather-world: walking, breathing, knowing'. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol 16, no. Supplement s1, pp. S121-S139.

Bovensiepen, J. (2009). Spiritual Landscapes of Life and Death in the Central Highlands of East Timor. *Anthropological Forum* 19:323-338.

Turton, David. 2005. 'The Meaning of Place in a World of Movement: Lessons from Long-term Field Research in Southern Ethiopia', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 18(3): 258-280

#### **Unit 4: Sensing the World**

How do we sense the world? Do we take our sensory experience for granted? How does it shape our scholarship?

Feld, Steven. 1984 Sound structure as social structure. *Ethnomusicology* 28(3): 383-409

Stoller, Paul. 1997. *Sensuous Scholarship*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press,

Schwenkel, Christina. "Sense." *Theorizing the Contemporary*, *Cultural Anthropology* website, September 24, 2015. <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/721-sense>

#### **Unit 5: Feeling the World**

What does it mean to feel? How is affect understood as a point to understand an individual in relation to socio-cultural processes?

Stewart, Kathleen. (2007) *Ordinary Affect*. Durham: Duke University Press

Beatty, Andrew. 2010 '[How did it feel for you: Emotion, narrative, and the limits of ethnography](#)'. *American Anthropologist*, 112 (3): 430 – 443

Myers, Fred. 1988. 'The logic and meaning of anger among Pintupi Aborigines', *Man, New Series* 23(4): 589-610

Berlant, Lauren. 2011. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham, N.C. : Duke University Press

#### **Unit 5: Human Limits: Violence**

Violence is a ubiquitous part of human history. It defines our past and present. This unit will consider violence as an anthropological phenomenon and how it addresses or pushes our understanding of human existence and wellbeing.

Gandhi, M.K. 2009. *Hind Swaraj*. New Delhi: Vaibhav

Das, Veena. 2007. *Life and Words: Violence and the descent into the Ordinary*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Levi Primo. 1989. *The Drowned and the Saved*. London: Vintage

Vajpeyi, Ananya. 2007. *Prolegomena to the Study of People and Places in Violent India*. New Delhi: WISCOMP

Kleinman, Arthur. 2008. *What Really Matters*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

## **Unit 6: Humans, Other Humans and Others**

The other has been a critical component in anthropology, venerated by some and criticised by others. In this unit we will explore otherness as a process we deal with on an everyday basis, i.e. those not like us. Readings here will also try to see how we relate to the non-human-animals, spirits and technology and other modes of thought.

Sundar Sarukkai. 1997. The Other in Anthropology and Philosophy. *Economic and Political Weekly* 32(24): 1406-1409

Kohn, Eduardo. 2013. *How Forests Think: Towards an Anthropology Beyond the Human*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Khan, Naveeda. 2006. "Of Children and Jinns: An Inquiry into an Unexpected Friendship During Uncertain Times" *Cultural Anthropology* vol 21(6), May 2006, pp. 234-264.

Boelstorff, Tom. 2008. *Coming of Age in a second life*. Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press

Ramanujan, A.K. 1989, "Is There an Indian Way of Thinking? An Informal Essay," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 23/1. (1989), pp. 41-58

Salmond, A. (2012). Ontological Quarrels: Indigeneity, Exclusion and Citizenship in a Relational World. *Anthropological Theory*, 12 (2), 115-141