Introduction to Fieldwork

HPAN4006

Module convenor Dr Eloise Govier

e.govier@uwtsd.ac.uk

2019

Introduction

This module introduces you to some of the field methodologies and ethical issues which lie at the core of anthropology. By experiencing and 'doing' a brief spell of fieldwork, you will be able to devise your own mini research project and explore anthropological questions that interest you. Your responses to such questions will help you engage with relevant theoretical issues in anthropology. In preparation for doing fieldwork, we will examine some of the methodological approaches relating to anthropological research, and consider how anthropologists set their research questions. After we return from the field, we will reflect upon the nature of the data collected, the methodologies used, as well as examining some of the assumptions and limitations of such approaches. This module is intended as a fieldwork 'taster' which we will build on next year. Thus, in this module you will experience (and debate!) the 'field', other ways of life and what it means to be an anthropologist.

- As anthropologists you have the opportunity to participate in an overnight stay at Skanda Vale.

Aims

The aim of this module is to enable you to devise, conduct and communicate your own piece of ethnographic research. We will have some initial preparatory discussions to provide you with a methodological, ethical and theoretical background to help you prepare and conduct your research, but importantly the module is

designed to enable you to learn ‘by doing’, as you embark on fieldwork for the first time. Specifically the module aims are:

• To acquire an introduction to a reflexive understanding of field research
• To provide an introductory experience of some primary field methods
• To provide an introduction to concepts such as community, ritual, identity, place and space, gender.

Objectives
• To acquire an initial experience in the practice of field research
• To acquire first skills in the interpretation of research data
• To understand and apply data recording methodologies

Assignment Details: Assessment criteria will be posted on Moodle

<u>Class Schedule: 2-5 Mon, Tues,Thurs, Fri. Tucker 1</u>

Week 1	Skanda Vale details Entering the ‘Field’ Participant Observation/Keeping a diary Informants/Conducting interviews
Week 2	Ethnographic Methods/Practice Field trip Skanda Vale Debrief: thinking through our experiences Ethnographic Writing
Week 3	Anthropology at home Applying theoretical principles and concepts Interpreting your data Report Writing
Week 4	Sharing your research Assignment session Writing-up

Assignments

- Component 1 Reflexive Research Journal 2000 words 50%
  Deadline: 11:59pm 12.4.19
- Component 2 Research Field Report 2000 words 50%
  Deadline: 11:59 pm 12.4.19

Component 1: Reflexive Research Journal (50%, 2000 words).

A reflexive diary with daily entries and reflection that follows the course lectures and time in the field (equivalent to 2000 words).

A diary is a subjective enterprise and will be personally constructed in a style that suits you. Consequently, there are few guidelines to structure content. However, whilst you are free to establish your own method, and are encouraged to be as creative as feels fitting, you are also expected to include daily entries that together detail how you are feeling about your experiences, the lectures, the lecture content and the process you are going through during the module. These entries should consider the part you play in the process (reflexive) and in total should form a reflection of the process as a whole through your eyes. You should be thinking of yourself as an anthropologist and can draw on other anthropological journals for inspiration.

Component 2: Research Field Report 2000 words – 50%.

The findings of your research should be written up as a report, taking the form of a mini-ethnography. In other words, you will use this as an opportunity to write up what you have learnt in the way that mirrors that of professional anthropologists. A mini ethnography is a piece of writing that uses thick, detailed description to depict and analyse the experience you had in the field. You should structure it with an introduction, create a brief methods section and then construct a piece that informs the reader about the people you were studying but also offers some analysis about the cultural practices, customs, habits and social expectations you experienced.

Location of Field Activities

Skanda Vale (Community of the Many Names of God),
Llanpumpsaint, Carmarthen, Wales. SA33 6JT

Essential websites:

- www.skandavale.org (You must read the pilgrims' guide in advance of our visit, as well as other parts of the website)
- ASA Ethics Guidelines http://www.theasa.org/ethics/guidelines.shtml

Reading List

Amit, V. (ed.) 2000 Constructing the field: ethnographic fieldwork in the contemporary world. London: Routledge (ebook available through the LRC catalogue)

American Anthropological Association. [2007] 'Code of Ethics', in Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader: Antonius Robben & Jeffrey Sluka (eds), chapter 23, 325-330, Oxford: Blackwell Press. Or visit the AAA website Coffey, Amanda 1999 The ethnographic self: fieldwork and the representation of identity. London: Sage.

Davies, Charlotte Aull 1999. Reflexive ethnography: a guide to researching selves and others. London: Routledge.

Emerson, Robert M., Fretz, Rachel I. and Shaw, Linda L. 1995. Writing ethnographic fieldnotes. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Feuchtwang, Stephan 2007 'On religious ritual as deference and communicative excess', The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 13(1): 57-72. Available through JSTOR.

Geaves, R. 2007 Saivism in the diaspora: contemporary forms of Skanda worship. London and Oakville, CT: Equinox.

Geertz, Clifford 1972 'Deep play: notes on the Balinese cockfight', Daedalus 101(1): 1-37. Available through JSTOR.

Marcus, George E. 1999 'The uses of complicity in the changing mise-en-scène of anthropological fieldwork', in Sherry B. Ortner (ed.) The fate of 'culture': Geertz and beyond. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp 86-109.

Okely, Judith 2012 Anthropological practice: fieldwork and the ethnographic method. London and New York: Berg.
Malinowski, Bronislaw 2012 [1922] 'Method and scope of anthropological fieldwork', Argonauts of the Western Pacific (Chapters 1 & 18). Also in ethnographic fieldwork: an anthropological reader, Antonius Robben &
Jeffrey Sluka (eds), chapter 3, pp 69-81, Oxford: Blackwell Press.

Skanda Vale n.d. The pilgrim's guide, http://www.skandavale.org/thepilgrims-
guide/

Sluka, Jeffrey and Antonius Robben. 2012 'Fieldwork in cultural anthropology: an introduction' in Ethnographic fieldwork: an anthropological reader, Antonius Robben & Jeffrey Sluka (eds), pp 1-35, Oxford: Blackwell Press.

Warrier, M. 2010 'The temple bull controversy at Skanda Vale and the construction of Hindu identity in Britain', International Journal of Hindu Studies 13(3): 261-78. Available through library catalogue.

Other Readings

The following books are just a small selection of those that address anthropological research methodologies and ethics. In addition, you are also expected to read around, and research, the subject of your mini-research project.

Atkinson, P. 2001 Handbook of ethnography, London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Aunger, R. 1995 On ethnography: storytelling or science? Current

Anthropology 36(1): 97-130.

Bell, D. Caplan, P. and Karim, W. (eds.) 1993 Gendered fields: women, men and ethnography. London: Routledge.

Bernard, H.R. 1994 Research methods in anthropology: qualitative and quantitative approaches. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Bickman, L., & Rog, D.J. 1998 Handbook of applied social research methods, Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage.

Bryman, A. 2004 Social research methods. Oxford: OUP.

Caplan, P. 2003 The ethics of anthropology: debates and dilemmas. London: Routledge.

Creswell, J.W. 2003 Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Davies, C.A. 1999 Reflexive ethnography: a Guide to Researching Selves and Others. London: Routledge.

Denscombe, M. 1998, The good research guide: for small-scale social research projects, Buckingham: Open University Press.
Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. 2005 The SAGE handbook of qualitative research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ellen, R.F., 1984 Ethnographic research: a guide to general conduct. London: Academic Press.

Faubion, J.D., & Marcus, G.E. 2009 Fieldwork is not what it used to be: learning anthropology's method in a time of transition. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Fetterman, D.M. 1989, Ethnography: step by step. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Gash, S., 1989, Effective literature searching for students. Aldershot, Hants, England and Brookfield, VT: Gower Pub. Co.

Jackson, A. (ed.) 1987. Anthropology at Home. London: Tavistock. See, especially, chapters by Hastrup and by Strathern.

Rose, D. 1990 Living the ethnographic life. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Ryang, S. 2000 'Ethnography or self-cultural anthropology? Reflections on writing about ourselves', Dialectical Anthropology, 25 (3-4): 297-320.

Shaffir, W. & Stebbins, R.A., 1991 Experiencing fieldwork: an inside view of qualitative research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Silverman, D. 2006 Interpreting qualitative data: methods for analysing talk, text, and interaction. London: Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Silverman, D. 2000 Doing qualitative research: a practical handbook. London and Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Strathern, M. 1985 'Not a field diary "Anthropology at home" – with the Association of Social Anthropologists', Anthropology Today 1(3): 25- 26.

Taussig, M.T. 2011, I swear I saw this: drawings in fieldwork notebooks, namely my own. London: The University of Chicago Press.

Warren, C.A.B. 1988 Gender issues in field research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Wolcott, H.F. 1995 The art of fieldwork. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press.

Useful Web Resources

- Association of Social Anthropologists. These are the ethical guidelines issued at an Extraordinary AGM held in Lampeter http://www.theasa.org/ethics.shtml
- National Association for the Practice of Anthropology (part of American Anthropological Association) http://www.practicinganthropology.org
- Handbook on Ethical Issues in Anthropology http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/toc.htm
- The Society for Applied Anthropology http://www.sfaa.net

Field trip Preparations

Clothing:
Please ensure that you wear appropriate clothing and footwear for the trip to Skanda Vale. Appropriate footwear and clothing means warm, modest, safe and weather-proof. The community at Skanda Vale has certain expectations and, as guests, our aim is to fit in and be respectful: we need to dress the part. There are also safety considerations too; for example, wearing high heels or shoes without adequate grip can be dangerous around livestock and on uneven ground. It is essential that you do not take leather jackets, belts or handbags into the temples.

Accommodation:
You will be spending the night in very basic pilgrim's accommodation, consisting of either wooden chalets or caravans. Skanda Vale will kindly provide beds, mattresses and heating; you are expected to bring all your required bedding (sleeping bags, pillows, sheets and/or duvet). You will also find an alarm clock and a torch useful. Skanda Vale accommodates sexes separately, but you will be expected to share with each other. The number of beds per room is between 2 and 6. You will not share accommodation with any other pilgrims.

Food:
Skanda Vale are kindly providing us with breakfast, lunch and dinner. The food will be simple and consist of rice, lentil dahl and curried vegetables. You must inform Eloise in advance if you have any

dietary requirements; this is your responsibility. Skanda Vale ask that you do ‘not consume any meat, poultry, fish, alcohol or illegal drugs for at least three days before’ you arrive. You are expected to respect this request. Remember that we are anthropological ‘pilgrims’ and it is important that we both respect and reflect upon the wishes and practices of our host community. Students who do not respect this request will not be able to fully participate in all the activities. You must not bring any of these prohibited items to the site.

Behaviour at Skanda Vale:

- Mobile phones and tablets are not allowed anywhere in the ashram
- No cameras are allowed anywhere in Skanda Vale
- Smoking is not permitted anywhere in Skanda Vale
- Men and women sit separately
- Please respect other pilgrims and members of the community
- The grounds are sacred. Do not pick any flowers or drop any rubbish.

REMEMBER: These are our host’s rules, and whilst we do not have to like these rules, we may want to consider (from an anthropological perspective) why they are in place, as well as their consequences within the community. You may also want to reflect on your own response to these rules and your experience of ‘living’ them, in addition to thinking about how they can be used analytically to enhance our understanding of the community and ourselves.