ANTH 170B-1
Multispecies Ethnography: Anthropology Beyond the Human
Spring 2019

Tuesday and Thursday
5:00 – 6:20pm
Instructor: Patricia Alvarez Astacio
Email: palvarez@brandeis.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday 2:00 – 4:00pm
Office: Brown 203

Course Description

We live alongside and with other species and beings. We use other species, consume them as commodities, treat them like family, work to save and protect some while we destroy others. The Anthropocene, as we call our current geological era, is characterized as a time of environmental crises and mass extinctions caused by hundreds of years of human capitalist activity. Given this panorama, for many scholars and activists it has become imperative to understand the complex entanglements between human and nonhuman (or more-than-human) worlds and to explore new ways of understanding our relationship to the natural world. How can anthropology, a discipline that precisely focuses on the study of human worlds,
illuminate our engagement with beings that are not human? Can we do participant observation with a chimp, a dog, or even interview a plant or microbe? What happens when nonhuman life is our object of analysis -animals, plants, fungi, bacteria, viruses? In this course we will explore how humans and other species are made and re-made through our relationships with one another. Multispecies ethnographies re-frame human centrality in a bid to consider other ways to understand our interconnected world. While this might seem as a current turn in anthropology, we must remember that humans have always defined cross-culturally their relationships and roles within and as part of nature -for example, building close relations with animals (as worldly and spiritual companions) and developed extensive knowledge about ways of using and cultivating plants. By studying how nonhuman life forms interact with human life we will interrogate how distinctions between nature and culture, life and non-life, the biological and the cultural, the human and the nonhuman come into being.

Required Readings

-The Mushroom at the End of the World, Anna Tsing
-Decolonizing Extinction: The Work of Care in Orangutan Rehabilitation, Juno Salazar Parreñas
-Rest of the readings will be in LATTE

Course Requirements

Attendance/Participation/Discussion Questions – 15%
Essay #1 – 15%
Multispecies Paper #1 – The Biology – 15%
Multispecies Paper # 2 – Historic and Sociocultural Perspectives – 20%
Multispecies Paper Oral Presentation – 10%
Multispecies Paper Final Project – 25%

COURSE POLICIES:

Attendance

Regular, punctual attendance is non-negotiable. Attendance will be taken each class through a sign-in sheet. It is your responsibility to sign in. If you forget to sign in you will be marked as absent. Signing the name of a student who is not present will be considered a violation of academic integrity. Both students will be marked as absent.

You are allowed 2 unexcused absences. Three unexcused absences will result in a 1/3 grade markdown on the final course grade. More than 6 unexcused absences will result in a failing grade. Arriving to class more than 15 minutes late counts as ½ absence. Excused absences should be cleared with me before class, with the exception of extenuating last-minute emergencies. Reasons like “I have to study for another class,” or simply saying “I’m not feeling well” will not be considered as excused absences.
Participation

Class participation is essential. Discussion is a central part of this class, the learning process, and your final grade. You are expected to attend class having done the assigned readings for that day. Be prepared to participate in class discussion with questions and comments. Bring your readings to class as well as notes you took, questions you have, and material you would like to discuss.

Assignments

Late assignments will NOT be accepted. All due dates are stated in the course schedule. Assignments must be handed in hard-copy unless stated otherwise by the professor – electronic submissions will NOT be accepted.

In order to get full credit, students must fulfill the stated specified instructions for each prompt. Proofread all written assignments before handing them in. All written assignments must be double-spaced using font size 12, margins at 1”, include proper in-text citations, and works cited page.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is a serious offense and will NOT be tolerated. The work you turn in for this class has to be your own and come from your own critical and creative engagement with class material. If you use, incorporate or discuss ideas in your work found elsewhere, you must cite and provide the source following a citation style.

You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit work to TurnItIn.com to verify originality. Allegations of academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include a failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Citation and research assistance can be found at LTS-Library guides.

Rights and Responsibilities:
http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/srcs/rightsresponsibilities/index.html

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

Class Communication

All communications will occur through LATTE and your Brandeis email account.
Course Schedule

Introduction: Why Look at Animals?

Week 1

Tuesday, January 15 – Discussion of Syllabus

- In class exercise/discussion:
Where do you encounter animals – zoos, home, on the street, at a farm?
What is your personal relationship with animals, if you have one? If you do not, why, and is it, at all important?

- Watch excerpts of Nenette

Thursday, January 17

- Why Look at Animals – John Berger
- From Trust to Domination: An Alternative History of Human-Animal Relations – Tim Ingold
- The Wild and the Domesticated - Phillippe Descola

What is Multispecies Ethnography?: Troubling the Nature/Culture Divide

Week 2

Tuesday, January 22

- The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography – Eben Kirksey and Stefan Helmreich
- Multispecies Studies: Cultivating Arts of Attentiveness – Thom Van Dooren, Eben Kirksey and Ursula Munster
- Ethnography of Life Forms – John Hartigan

Thursday, January 24

- Introduction: Unexpected Encounters with Deep Time - Franklin Ginn, Michelle Bastian, David Farrier, Jeremy Kidwell
- Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene – Donna Haraway
- **Watch Before Class:
Anthropocene Lecture: Bruno Latour

Taxonomic Histories and the Politics of Empire

Week 3:
Tuesday, January 29

-Why Mammals Are Called Mammals: Gender Politics in Eighteenth-Century Natural History – Londa Schiebinger
-Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936 – Donna Haraway

Thursday, January 31

-Postcolonial Critique in a Multispecies World – Neel Ahuja
-Type Specimens and Scientific Memory – Lorraine Datson

Week 4: Writing, thinking and doing research beyond the Human

Tuesday, February 5

***Essay #1 DUE

-In-Class Screening: Leviathan

Thursday, February 7

-Stories and Cosmogonies: Imagining Creativity Beyond “Nature” and “Culture” – Stuart McLean
-SF: Science Fiction, Speculative Fabulation, String Figures, So Far – Donna J. Haraway
-Among the Colony: Ethnographic Fieldwork, Urban bees and inter-species mindfulness - Moore, Lisa Jean and Mary Kosuk

Week 5

Tuesday, February 12

In-Class Workshop

-Writing the Implosion: One Thing at a Time – Joseph Dumit
-Fingereyes: Impressions of Cup Corals – Eva Hayward

Those we live with: Our Companions

Tuesday, February 14

-Chapter 1: Introductions (When Species Meet) – Donna Haraway
-“Becoming in Kind”: Race, Class, Gender, and Nation in Cultures of Dog Rescue and Dogfighting – Harlan Weaver
Week 6 - MIDTERM RECESS – NO CLASSES

Tuesday, February 19
Thursday, February 21

WEEK 7

Those we consume and exploit

Tuesday, February 26

**** DUE: Multispecies Paper #1 – The Biology

-In-Class Screening: Our Daily Bread

Thursday, February 28

-Herding Species: Biosecurity, Posthuman Labor, and the American Industrial Pig – Alex Blanchette
-Super Guinea Pigs? – María Elena García
-Ecologies of Empire: On the New Uses of the Honeybee – Jake Kosek

WEEK 8

Capitalism and More-Than-Human Temporalities

Tuesday, March 5

-In-Class Performance: Golden Snail Opera
-Part I: What’s Left?, The Mushroom at the End of the World – Anna Tsing

Thursday, March 7

-Part II: After Progress: Salvage Accumulation

WEEK 9: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins

Tuesday, March 12

-Part III: Disturbed Beginnings: Unintentional Design

Thursday, March 14
-Part IV: The Middle of Things

**WEEK 10**

**Zooming in: Humans, Plants and Microbes**

Tuesday March 19

-Ruderal Ecologies: Rethinking Nature, Migration, and the Urban Landscape in Berlin – Bettina Stoetzer
-From the Anthropocene to the Planthroposcene: Designing Gardens for Plant/People Involution – Natasha Myers

Thursday, March 21

-Anthropology of Microbes – Benzera, Amber et al.
-Post-Pauseterian Cultures: The microbiopolitics of raw-milk cheese in the US – Heather Paxson
-Viral Clouds: Becoming H5N1 in Indonesia – Celia Lowe

**Week 11**

**Decolonizing the Anthropocene**

Tuesday, March 26

***DUE: Multispecies Paper # 2 – The Sociocultural Perspectives

-Animal Performances: An Exploration of Intersections Between Feminist Science Studies and Studies of Human/Animal Relationships - Lunda Nirke, Mette Bryld and Nina Lykke
-How Scientists Think; About ‘Natives,’ For Example. A Problem of Taxonomy Among Biologists of Alien Species in Hawaii” - Stefan Helmreich

Thursday, March 28

-On the Importance of a Date, or, Decolonizing the Anthropocene – Heather Davis and Zoe Todd
-Indigenous Place-Thought and Agency amongst Human and non-humans - Vanessa Watts
-Uncommoning Nature – Marisol de la Cadena

**Week 12**

**Cosmopolitics**
Tuesday, April 2

- The Relative Native – Eduardo Viveiros de Castro
- Exchanging Perspectives: The Transformation of Objects into Subjects in Amerindian Ontologies – Eduardo Viveiros de Castro

Thursday, April 4

- Is Another Cosmopolitics Possible? – Mario Blaser
- Pluriverse: Proposals for a World of Many Worlds – Marisol de la Cadena and Mario Blaser

WEEK 13

On Extinction and Care

Tuesday, April 9

- Introduction and Part I – Decolonizing Extinction

Thursday, April 11

- Part II and Part III – Decolonizing Extinction

WEEK 14

The Life and Politics of Inorganic Matter

Tuesday, April 16

- Do Rock’s Listen?: The Cultural Poetics of Apprehending Australian Aboriginal Labor – Elizabeth Povinelli
- About a Stone: Some Notes on Geologic Conviviality – Hugo Reinert
- Notes on Mineral Evolution: Life, Sentience, and the Anthropocene - Paul Gillen

Thursday, April 18

- Toxic Animacies, Inanimate Affections – Mel Y Chen
- TransMaterialities: Trans*/Matter/Realities and Queer Political Imaginings – Karen Barad

WEEK 15 – PASSOVER AND SPRING RECESS – NO CLASSES

WEEK 16 – ORAL PRESENTATIONS
Tuesday, April 30

Thursday, May 2 – LAST DAY OF CLASSES

**Finals Week – Final Paper Due**

**Note on Assignments:**

**Daily Discussion Questions:**

Before each class you will email me a discussion question. These discussion questions will be used to guide class conversation. Questions can be about ideas and concepts you wish to expand upon, material you considered to be interesting, concepts and arguments that need clarification. Questions need to be emailed to be by Tuesday at 2pm.

**Essay #1**

You will receive a prompt that you will use to develop a 3-page essay.

**Multispecies Papers**

You will select an animal, plant, fungi, bacteria, microbe, virus or inorganic matter. This multispecies object of analysis will stay the same for the whole semester. Readings discussed throughout the semester will provide analytical frameworks for you to explore and do a multispecies ethnography on your selected object of analysis. They will provide you with a series of lenses through which to analyze the multispecies object/subject. The week dedicated to thinking, writing and doing research beyond the human will further provide methodological ways that will be central to this assignment.

**Multispecies Paper #1 – The Biology**

In this short 3-page essay you will expand upon either the biological and/or material reality of your selected multispecies object of analysis. You will engage with class material to provide ways through which to analyze and unpack the biological and material dimensions of your object of analysis.

**Multispecies Paper #2 – Historic and Sociocultural Perspectives**

In this short 3-page essay you will expand upon the historic and sociocultural perspectives surrounding your selected multispecies object. You will engage with class material to provide ways through which to analyze the various networks, webs, entanglements across human-cultural, social, political, historic, and interpretative-worlds your object is part of.

**Multispecies Paper Final Project – 25%**
I will provide comments and feedback on each of your previous essay. For your final 6-7 page research paper you will develop a thesis/argument about your multispecies ethnography. You will use the previous two essays to craft this final essay. This means that you will revise them, merge them, and use all that research and preliminary analysis of various webs and networks of relationality to craft your final paper.

Multispecies Paper Oral Presentation – 10%

During the last week of class you will present on your Multispecies Ethnography. I will provide more detailed instructions for this and all other parts of the assignments.