

INTD 358 Ethnographic Approaches to Development (3 Credits)
WINTER 2024

JANUARY 04, 2023 - APRIL 13, 2023

Tuesdays and Thursdays
from 04:05 PM – 05:25 PM

in **Stewart Biology Building S3-3**



Cropped image from *La hora de los hornos* – US Poster (The Hour of the Furnaces, directed by Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, Grupo Cine Liberación, 1968)

Course Instructor: Cynthia Kreichati

Email: cyntia.kraichati@mail.mcgill.ca

Office Hours: Tuesday from 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM in Room 16-4, 3610 McTavish Street.

On appointment ***ONLY***, sign up [here](#)

Teaching Assistant: Maryam Roosta

Email:

Office Hours:

McGill University is on land which long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

Course Overview and Objectives

A complex and elusive object of anthropological study, development has been linked to specific ideas concerning technological progress, infrastructures, growth, modernization, aid, market integrations, knowledge and power, and social inequalities.

In this course we will approach development (and necessarily underdevelopment) from an ethnographic perspective, as the “study of historically specific conjunctures, and the politics that emerge from them” (Li 2014, 236). The critical ethnographers whose works we will engage take on this analytic of conjuncture to reflect on the practices and discourses of programmatic development and their critiques. We will consider the fraught politics of capitalist development since the end of the second world war and will pay even closer attention to the way these uneven histories have shaped further development as well as post-development trajectories — particularly in countries of the former Third World and among racialized and indigenous communities of the Western World since the early 2000s.

More specifically, we will explore together three interrelated themes:

- 1— The ethnographic frameworks through which to grasp the tensions and contradictions of neoliberal development
- 2— The critical study of the “will to improve” (Li 2007) at the heart of the ethos of programmatic development
- 3— The challenges associated with development from environmental degradation to extraction, domination, political incapacitation, and the production of deepening socioeconomic inequalities

Each week will foreground specific methodologies, empirical case studies, and conceptual and analytical devices. At the end of the course, you will be able to critically reflect on development and to identify as well as analyze, from an anthropological perspective, the broader tenets around which *neoliberal capitalist development* is constructed including: specific ideas about humans’ relations to non-humans; a linear understanding of history as inevitable progress; and different conceptualizations of sociocultural difference that center behaviors in the marketplace.

—The content and evaluation of this course is subject to change in the case of unforeseeable events beyond the university’s control—

Requirements and Evaluation Methods

Lecture Attendance and Participation

The course will be given in-person. Please attend all lectures and actively participate. You are also expected to have carefully read or listened to assigned material *before* the lecture in which it is covered. You will be responsible for knowing both the assigned texts and the material

covered in lectures. **Lectures will not include any slide show presentations and will not be recorded.**

Grading

A. Participation and attendance (10% of grade)

This grade will be based on attendance, evidence of preparation, active listening and active participation in class as well as during office hours. Attendance will occasionally be taken in class.

B. One Critical Reflection Paper (20% of grade)

You will have to write a one-page critical reflection that connects one text of your choosing to two other texts we read. Your reflection should not simply summarize the main text you chose, but critically engage it and find a conceptual frame or question through which to bring it together with the other two texts. Detailed instructions will be posted on MyCourses 10 days before the assignment is due. You should submit your finished assignment on MyCourses as a Microsoft Word file.

Reflection Paper due on Sunday 4 February at 6PM

C. Annotated notes paper (15% of grade)

Active listening as well as handwritten notetaking will be two skills to develop throughout this course. You will have to choose two lectures and submit to the appropriate folder on MyCourses **a scanned copy of the handwritten notes** you have taken during class. These notes should be both explanatory (capture the content of the lecture) and reflective (include your thoughts, clarifications, and questions). These notes should be annotated. This means that **in addition** to your scanned notes, your submission should also include: a short analytical memo (250-300 words) that is your own interpretive comments and rough impressions about what you take from this lecture as well as a reflective sketch or a drawing for each lecture.

Annotated Notes Paper due on Sunday 24 March at 6PM

D. Group research presentation (25% of grade)

You will develop a collective research project that explores some aspect of development work (broadly conceived) using the conjunctural ethnographic approach addressed in class. This assignment requires you to work collaboratively in teams of 10 to: i) identify a development related issue or problematic to investigate, ii) select a suitable case study through which to explore this topic, and iii) formulate a set of research questions informed by course themes and readings around which to structure your presentation. Each group will submit a one-page single spaced outline of the research topic (not including bibliography) for review and feedback, and during the final two weeks of the semester students will present their research projects to the class. Presentations should incorporate different kinds of audiovisual materials (for e.g.: slide show), and will be followed by a Q & A.

***Research groups should be formed by Sunday 4 February the latest
Self-enroll on MyCourses – click [here](#) for more info and instructions***

Evaluation for this assignment will be based on:

10% — a one-page, collectively drafted proposal outlining the topic, and the course texts it will draw on (you should aim to cite a minimum of 4 texts from the syllabus). This should be submitted on MyCourses.

Group research proposal due on Sunday March 3, 2024

15% — a class presentation. Presentations should be 10 – 12 minutes (it is important to keep to this time frame); each team member must be involved and their roles and contributions made clear. Presentations will be followed by a 5-minute Q & A. All students are expected to attend all group presentations.

Presentations will be held on Tuesday 2 April and Thursday 4 April, 2024.

E. Take-home final paper (30% of grade)

The final paper will follow the same format as the reflection paper. However, it will be cumulative (meaning it will encompass all course material) and will be longer (3 pages). Detailed instructions will be posted on MyCourses 10 days before the assignment is due. You should submit your finished assignment on MyCourses as a Microsoft Word file.

Final Paper deadline TBC

Assignment Deadlines Summary

- Reflection Paper due on Sunday 4 February at 6PM (on MyCourses Folder)
- Research groups should be formed by Sunday 4 February the latest (by email to instructor and TA)
- Group research proposal due on Sunday March 3, 2024 (on MyCourses Folder)
- Annotated Notes due on Sunday 24 March at 6PM (on MyCourses Folder)
- Group Presentations Tuesday 2 and Thursday 4 April (in class)
- Final Paper deadline TBC (mid-April) (on MyCourses Folder)

Questions and follow up

Each student will be assigned to the TA or to myself. The person to whom each student is assigned will grade their work and will be their primary resource for assignment feedback throughout the course—students are encouraged to reach out and see them in office hours (listed above) with questions and concerns. Advising will not be made over email. Please see section below on academic guidance.

Submissions and lateness

Except for when specified otherwise, assignments are to be submitted on the MyCourses site in the appropriate folder. Specific deadlines are listed in the detailed course schedule below. Late assignments will lose a third of a grade per day late including weekend days (e.g., A becomes A-). Students who anticipate a problem that will prevent them from submitting work on time are expected to check in with the instructor or their TA *before the exam is due*. Please note that the TA is not able to give extensions or to make exceptions.

Grading Consideration

Every assignment will have a clear rubric for grading that will be posted on MyCourses and/or explained in class.

University Policies

Language of submission

“In accord with McGill University’s [Charter of Students’ Rights](#), students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives.” (Approved by Senate on 21 January 2009)

« Conformément à [la Charte des droits de l’étudiant](#) de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté, sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue. » (Énoncé approuvé par le Sénat le 21 janvier 2009)

Academic integrity

“McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the [Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures](#)” (Approved by Senate on 29 January 2003) (See [McGill’s guide to academic honesty](#) for more information).

« L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon [le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et procédures disciplinaires](#) » (Énoncé approuvé par le Sénat le 29 janvier 2003) (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le [guide pour l’honnêteté académique de McGill](#).)

General Class Policies

Absences and Lateness — If you have to miss class it is your responsibility to get materials, assignments, and class notes from other students (not from the professor or teaching assistants). As we will be meeting frequently and as class time is short, arriving late to class or leaving early will be disruptive.

Questions and Guidance — Teaching Assistants' office hours and locations are indicated above and in the Announcement section of MyCourses. You are expected to consult the TAs first with questions regarding course content—lectures, readings, conferences, and assignments—and your grades on assignments. If you have additional questions or concerns, please see the instructor during office hours.

Electronic Devices — Students are encouraged to write class notes by hand on pen and paper. Students who prefer laptops or tablets are expected to use them responsibly. The use of cell phones during class is highly discouraged. **The lectures for this course *may not* be recorded.**

Inclusive Learning Environment — As the instructor of this course, I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. If you experience barriers to learning, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and/or [Student Accessibility and Achievement](#). If you have an ongoing mental health condition or one that arises during the semester and that interferes with coursework, please contact me the soonest. Another helpful resource is [The Student Wellness Hub](#).

Content warning —Some of the content in this course may contain language or images that may be difficult for some students. It is included in this course because it directly relates to the consequences of development projects in different parts of the world.

Pronouns — Please email or come by during office hours if you would like me to refer to you by a different name than the name indicated in your student record or to inform me of your preferred pronouns.

Course Schedule (All readings are available on the class MyCourses website)

PART I: ETHNOGRAPHIC FRAMEWORKS AND METHODS

WEEK 1 — *Introduction to the Course Syllabus*

Thursday, 4 January 2024

No Reading

WEEK 2 — *Teleological Imperatives and the “Will to Improve”*

Tuesday, 9 January 2024

Le Guin, Ursula, K. “The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction” In *Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places* (1989).

Li, Tania Murray. "Social reproduction, situated politics, and The Will to Improve." *Focaal* 2008, no. 52 (2008): 111-118.

Thursday, 11 January 2024

Graeber, David, and D. Wengrow. *The Dawn of Everything : A New History of Humanity*. First American Edition. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021. Introduction

Recommended Reading: Graeber and Wengrow. Conclusion.

WEEK 3 — *Ethnography of a conjuncture*

Tuesday, 16 January 2024

Li, Tania. *Land's End : Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier*. Durham, N.C. : Duke University Press, 2014. Introduction

Thursday, 18 January 2024

Hart, Gillian. “D/Developments After the Meltdown.” *Antipode* 41, no. 1 (2010): 117–41.

WEEK 4 — *Reflexivity and fieldwork*

Tuesday, 23 January 2024

Mosse, David. “Anti-Social Anthropology? Objectivity, Objection, and the Ethnography of Public Policy and Professional Communities.” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12, no. 4 (2006): 935–56.

Thursday, 25 January 2024

Taussig, Michael. *Fieldwork Notebooks - Documenta's 100 Notes — 100 Thoughts*. Kassel, Germany: Documenta Books. 2011. P.1-10.

Didion, Joan. "On Keeping a notebook". In *Slouching towards Bethlehem*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 1968

WEEK 5 — Knowledge economies

Tuesday, 30 January 2024

Amilcar, Cabral. National Liberation and Culture. In *Return to the Source: Selected Speeches by Amilcar Cabral*. New York: Africa Information Service Monthly Review Press. 1973. P.39-56.

In class screening: *Conakry* (2012), Filipa César, 10mins

Thursday, 1 February 2024

Sukarieh, Maysoun, and Stuart Tannock. "Subcontracting academia: alienation, exploitation and disillusionment in the UK overseas Syrian refugee research industry." *Antipode* 51, no. 2 (2019): 664-680.

PART II: ETHNOGRAPHIES OF THE CONJUNCTURE

WEEK 6 — Development as Deficit

Tuesday, 6 February 2024

Abu-Lughod, Lila, Fida J. Adely, and Frances S. Hasso. "Overview: Engaging the Arab Human Development Report 2005 on Women." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no. 1 (2009): 59.

Abu-Lughod, Lila. Dialects of Women's empowerment: The international circuitry of the Arab Human Development Report 2005. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no. 1 (2009): 83-103.

Sukarieh, Maysoun. "The rise of the Arab youth paradigm: A critical analysis of the Arab Human Development Report 2016." *Middle East-Topics & Arguments* 9 (2017): 70-83.

Thursday, 8 February 2024 Guest Lecture by Mostafa Henaway

Henaway, Mostafa. *Essential Work, Disposable Workers: Migration, Capitalism and Class*. Fernwood Publishing, 2023. Introduction, Chp1 and Chp2.

WEEK 7 — Financial In/Exclusion

Tuesday, 13 February 2024

Martin, Randy. "The New Divisions: A Geography Reconfigured." In *Financialization of daily life*. Temple University Press, 2002. Chapter 4: 149-197

Thursday, 15 February 2024

Selections from Maurer, Bill, Smoki Musaraj, and Ivan V. Small, eds. *Money at the margins: Global perspectives on technology, financial inclusion, and design*. Vol. 6. Berghahn Books, 2018

- Smoki Musarak and Ivan Small. "Introduction: Money and Finance at the Margins". P.1-14
- Ananya Roy. "Part I: In/Exclusion, The Question of Inclusion". P.19-21
- Erin Taylor and Heather Horst. "A Living Fence Financial Inclusion and Exclusion: on the Haiti–Dominican Republic Border." P.23-38.

WEEK 8 — *Climate Politics*

Tuesday, 20 February 2024

Lohmann, Larry. "Carbon trading, climate justice and the production of ignorance: ten examples." *Development* 51, no. 3 (2008): 359-365.

Watch: The Story of Cap & Trade https://youtu.be/RsLqDY8Yk_U

Recommended:

Dalsgaard, Steffen. The commensurability of carbon: Making value and money of climate change. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* (2013) 3:1, p.80-98.

Thursday, 22 February 2024

No readings assigned.

Group Research Workshop —How to write a research proposal

WEEK 9 — *Bureaucrats and Activists*

Tuesday, 27 February 2024

Hetherington, Kregg. *The Government of Beans: Regulating Life in the Age of Monocrops*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2020. Introduction and Selections from Part III.

Thursday, 29 February 2024

Postero, Nancy Grey. *Now we are citizens: Indigenous politics in postmulticultural Bolivia*. Stanford University Press, 2007. Chapter 5

WEEK 10 — *Reading Week*

Tuesday, 5 March 2024 No Classes

Thursday, 7 March 2024 No Classes

PART III: ECOLOGIES OF ATTRITION

WEEK 11 — *Postcolonial development and war*

Tuesday, 12 March 2024

Bou Akar, Hiba. *For the war yet to come: planning beirut's frontiers*. Stanford University Press, 2020. Prologue and Chapter 5.

Thursday, 14 March 2024

Dewachi, Omar. *Ungovernable Life : Mandatory Medicine and Statecraft in Iraq*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020. Introduction and Chapter 5.

WEEK 12 — *Petro-cultures: transitions and hidden absences*

Tuesday, 19 March 2024

Nixon, Rob. "Chapter 2: Fast-forward Fossil Petro-despotism and the Resource Curse". In *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011.

Thursday, 21 March 2024

Al Naqib, Farah. " 'No words around to describe' between seeing and comprehending Kuwait's oil fires". In *Life Worlds of Middle Eastern Oil : Histories and Ethnographies of Black Gold*. Edited by Nelida Fuccaro and Mandana E Limbert. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023.

In class screening: excerpts from *Lessons of Darkness* (1992), Werner Herzog, 54 mins.

WEEK 13 — *Debt and the public good*

Tuesday, 26 March 2024

Bear, Laura. *Navigating Austerity : Currents of Debt along a South Asian River*. Anthropology of Policy. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020. Selections from Section II: The New Public Good.

Bear, Laura, and Daniel M Knight. "Alternatives to Austerity." *Anthropology Today* 33, no. 5 (2017): 1–2.

Thursday, 28 March 2024

Han, Clara. "Chapter 2: Social Debt, Silent Gift". In *Life in Debt : Times of Care and Violence in Neoliberal Chile*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.

WEEK 14 — *Group Presentations*

Tuesday, 2 April 2024 Students Presentations

Thursday, 4 April 2024 Students Presentations

FINAL WEEK — *Wrap Up*

Tuesday, 9 April 2024 Wrap Up