

**INTD 358**  
**Ethnographic Approaches to Development**  
**Winter 2022**

**Instructor:** Professor Diana Allan

**Email:** [diana.allan@mcgill.ca](mailto:diana.allan@mcgill.ca)

**Office hours:** Monday 2:30 – 4:00 pm, Zoom. **By appointment only.**

<https://mcgill.zoom.us/j/3544776556>

**TA:** Abeer Al-Mahdi – [abeer.almahdi@mcgill.ca](mailto:abeer.almahdi@mcgill.ca)

**Office hours:** TBC

**Class time:** Monday/ Wednesday, 10:05-11:25 am,

**Class format through January 24:** Zoom + podcasts

**Class format from January 24 (TBC):** In-person, Strathcona Anatomy & Dentistry 1/12

### **Course Description**

Development is often considered synonymous with progress and economic growth and a necessary good. This course sets out to complicate and challenge this conceptual framework dominant since the 1940s, and examines the complex struggles over power, history and culture that characterize the field. The course begins with an overview of the interdisciplinary relationship between anthropology and development, and of the former's critical and practical contribution to the latter. Students will consider how qualitative research strategies—including ethnographic fieldwork, participant observation, collaborative approaches, oral history, visual methods and decolonial methods—can be mobilized to evaluate and engage development in theory and practice. Using ethnographic case studies of “Big D” development, as well as small-scale grassroots initiatives, students will explore how qualitative methods have been used both to strengthen different elements of development practice from within and to deconstruct development ideology from without. Assigned readings engage a broad range of ethnographic contexts and themes including state-driven development; infrastructure and “technopolitics”, bureaucracy and neoliberal governance, NGOs and aid, gender and de-development. These case studies examine development practice not simply as a technical solution to poverty and “underdevelopment,” but as a potent tool of social, political and affective transformation. Lectures and class discussion will be complemented by individual and group assignments designed to help students identify research questions and develop rigorous, ethical methods through which to answer them.

**Course Objectives** — By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- identify key theoretical debates, methodological issues, and professional ethics associated with qualitative anthropological studies of development
- analyze development-related issues from an anthropological perspective, and develop culturally-informed theories and methods for exploring development issues in diverse local, regional and institutional contexts
- conceptualize an interdisciplinary group research project that engages qualitative approaches to development
- reflect on the ways ethnographic methods can contribute to strengthening development practice.

*\*\*The content and evaluation of this course is subject to change in the case of unforeseeable events\*\**

## Course Materials

All course materials are available electronically as e-books (with unlimited access); articles and additional readings are accessible through the MyCourses website. Please read all assigned material prior to class.

### Instructional method: Jan 5 to January 24

#### *Podcasts*

This course will be virtually for the first three weeks. To allow for wider accessibility and give some respite from Zoom, I will record some lectures as podcasts during the first month. The classes for which there will be a podcast recording are noted on the syllabus. With possible exceptions and changes, podcasts lectures will be posted on MyCourses at the assigned class time and will typically last between 30 – 45 minutes. Listening to the audio lectures is a class requirement.

#### *Zoom classes + conferences*

Lectures delivered via zoom will typically be shorter and will be followed by class conferences. This is intended to give students the opportunity to discuss texts with the instructor and TA and with their peers in smaller groups, using breakout rooms. Synchronic attendance of these Zoom sessions is not mandatory, but highly recommended.

### Instructional method: January 24 – April 11 (TBC)

- In-person lectures (this may change and is subject to Covid-19 regulations)
- Class discussion
- Audiovisual materials
- Student group presentations
- Guided reading and independent research

#### *Guest lectures — on Zoom*

There will be five guest lectures, which will be held on Zoom. These sessions will be recorded and posted online immediately after the lecture. These lectures will typically be 30-45 minutes, followed by a Q & A.

## Evaluation

The final grade for this course will be based on the following assignments:

**15 % Attendance and participation** Attendance and participation count towards the final grade. Students are expected to come to class having read the assigned texts and prepared to speak about them. The texts are the primary source of information, and success in this class depends on careful, critical reading. Active engagement also includes being an attentive listener. Given the ongoing uncertainties of pandemic life we may need to adapt or reimagine class format along the way. However, as with all learning environments, intellectual exchange remains critical: we all come with different experiences to share and we can learn from each other. The participation grade will be based on attendance, evidence of preparation, and participation in-person or virtually. Allowances will be made when attendance (in person or virtual) is not possible. Students can boost their participation grade by attending relevant talks organized through the ISID Speaker's Series and the McGill Refugee Research Group (details of these events will be shared in class and on MyCourses).

### **20 % Four response posts**

Students must post four responses to course materials on MyCourses. Posts should be between 200 – 350 words (max) and each will contribute 5% of final grade. Two should be completed before Winter Reading Break (February 28) and two after. These short, informal papers are an opportunity to respond to- and reflect on course themes. *Posts should not simply summarize an argument, but critically engage it. We will be looking for evidence of close, thoughtful reading of assigned texts.* Students will be evaluated on the **originality** of a response thread and/or engagement with previous posts; **engagement** with course materials; and **mechanics** (spelling, grammar). For weeks where multiple readings are assigned, students should discuss a minimum of two. *Posts must be completed by 9am on the day of class for which the readings are assigned; anything submitted after this time will not count towards this assignment.* Students should aim to review posts before class. These posts will not be individually graded; students will receive a cumulative grade for their posts at the end of the semester.

### **10% Short reflection paper**

Students must write a 2-3-page reflection paper that offers a critical analysis of at least 2 course texts selected from two sets of readings, and find a conceptual frame or question through which to bring them together. These texts should not be the same as those addressed in the response posts. *This paper must be uploaded to MyCourses before class on Monday, February 7.*

### **25% Group research project and presentation**

Students will develop a collective research project that explores some aspect of development work (broadly conceived) using qualitative, ethnographic approaches 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 2-page 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, and will be followed by a Q & A. *Research groups will be assigned on Wednesday, February 16.*

Evaluation for this assignment will be based on:

**10%** — a 2-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 sent as attachment to me and Abeer Al-Mahdi by *9am on March 7th.*

**15%** — a class presentation. This can be live, or prerecorded. Presentations should be 15 minutes (it is important to keep to this time frame); *each team member must be involved.* Presentations will be followed by a 10-minute Q & A.

*\*All students are expected to attend **all** group presentations \**

### **30% Final paper**

Each student will write a short independent research paper on a topic of their choice that explores an issue raised in the course but extends analysis beyond the syllabus. The paper should demonstrate independent research in related areas, have a clear thesis, and draw on a minimum of three assigned texts and three additional independently sourced peer-reviewed texts. (N.B. The selected course texts cannot be the same as those discussed in the short reflection paper). Students are advised to consult with the TA and course instructor about their proposed topic. Evaluation for this assignment will be based on the following:

**10%** — a 2-page paper proposal which should include 1) an outline of the paper topic and thesis; 2) a justification of how the topic relates to course themes; 3) a bibliography. It will be evaluated on the following components: statement of project topic; clarity and originality of thesis question; scope and content; relevance of bibliography; mechanics (spelling, grammar). Please send these to Abeer by noon, Wednesday, March 30.

**20%** — a final research paper developed from the proposal, which should be between 8 - 10 pages, double spaced, 12-point font. Final submissions should show evidence of incorporated feedback, and conceptual development.

Further guidelines will be given in class. Final papers should be uploaded to MyCourses by Friday, April 15, 5pm. Extensions will only be given in exceptional circumstances and with prior approval of the instructor

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### **Late submission**

All assignments will be docked 2% for every twenty-hours they are late. Accommodations are possible (see below) but they must be requested in-advance.

### **Covid-19 Contingencies**

It is required that students wear masks in class and conform to current distancing measures. While this is an in-person course, if and when necessary, the course may need to shift to virtual instruction. As the pandemic situation continues to evolve, the format may need to be changed to conform to university and public health directives. I will give as much notice as possible should this change be required. All students must follow McGill University's policies and protocols for Covid-19, as well as public health guidelines. You should not present yourself for in-person instruction if you are feeling unwell, and especially if you are experiencing any Covid-19 symptoms.

### **Grading guideline**

Students who fulfill the course requirements and do good work **will receive a B**, those who fulfill the requirements and do excellent work **will receive an A**, and those who fall short in any aspect of the course will receive lower grades.

### **Grade distribution**

Attendance and participation	15%
Four response posts	20%
Short paper	10%
Group research project	25%
Final paper	30%

### **Instructor email policy**

For general queries about the course, please contact the TA, Abeer Al-Mahdi; where necessary, she will forward them on to me. Please review this course syllabus carefully before contacting Abeer or me regarding administrative questions. For more involved queries and advising, including help on a paper, further discussion of readings and lectures, and so on, you should come and see me during office hours. **I will not do advising on email.** You should also be aware that I am not on email at all times. I will respond to any email as quickly as I can, but it may take a day or two (especially over weekends).

### **Important Dates**

Monday, February 7 — short paper due  
Wednesday, February 16 — research groups assigned  
Monday, March 7 — group research outlines due

Wednesday, March 30 — final paper outlines due  
Monday, April 11 — course ends  
Friday, April 15 — final paper due

## COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

### PART I THEORETICAL FRAMES: HISTORY, EPISTEMOLOGY, POLITICS

- January 5  
**Podcast** Listen to Anthropod Podcast: “The Familiar Strange: Designed Agency with Vijayendra Rao”  
<https://culanth.org/fieldsights/anthropod-presents-the-familiar-strange-designing-agency-with-vijayendra-rao>
- January 10  
**Podcast** **Introduction: Beginnings and Definitions**  
—Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1922. “Method and Scope of Anthropological Fieldwork.” In *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*, eds. Antonius Robben and Jeffrey Sluka, pp. 46-57.  
— Schneidermann, Nanna. 2018. “Distance/Relation: Doing Fieldwork with Social Media.” *Forum for Development Studies*, 45, no. 2, 287-303.
- January 12  
**Zoom** **Entering the Field: Subjectivity, Positionality, Ethics**  
— Bouregois, Philippe. (2003[1996]). “Violating Apartheid in the United States.” In *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El-Barrio*.  
— Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1986. “Guest and Daughter.” In *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in Bedouin Society*.  
Optional:  
— Geertz, Clifford. 1973. “Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight.” In *The Interpretation of Cultures*.  
  
In-class screening: *7 Queens* (2008) Verena Paravel 23 mins
- January 17  
**podcast** **Anthropology ‘of’ Development and ‘in’ Development**  
— Escobar, Arturo. 1991. “Anthropology and the Development Encounter: The Making and Marketing of Development Anthropology.” *American Ethnologist* 18 (4): 658-682.  
  
—Ferguson, Jim. 1997. “Anthropology and It’s Evil Twin: “Development” in the Constitution of a Discipline.” In *International Development and the Social Sciences*, eds. Frederick Cooper and Randall Packard, pp. 150 -175.
- January 19  
**zoom** **Imperial technics and the ‘rule of experts’**  
—Mitchell, Timothy. “The Character of Calculability”. In *The Rule of Experts: Egypt, Technopolitics, Modernity*.  
  
— Mains, Daniel. 2012. “Blackouts and Progress: Privatization, Infrastructure, and a Developmentalist State in Jimma, Ethiopia.” *Cultural Anthropology* 27(1): 3-27.
- January 24  
**podcast** **Culture and Development: Qualitative approaches**  
—Agee, Jane. 2009. “Developing qualitative research questions: a reflective process.” *Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 22:4, 431-447.

— Radcliffe, Sarah A., and Nina Laurie. 2006. "Culture and development: Taking culture seriously in development for Andean indigenous people." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24(2):231-248.

Optional

— Cattellino, Jessica. 2004. "Casino Roots: The Cultural Production of Twentieth-Century Seminole Economic Development." In *High Stakes: Florida Seminole Gaming and Sovereignty*.

— Hodgson, Dorothy. 1999. "Once Intrepid Warriors": Modernity and the Production of Maasai Masculinities." *Ethnology* Vol. 38 (2): 121-150.

January 26  
zoom

**"Who owns poverty?" Anthropological perspectives on inequality**

— Mosse, David. 2010. A relational approach to durable poverty, inequality and power. *J. Dev. Stud.* 46:1156–78

— Escobar, Arturo. 1988. "Power and visibility: Development and the invention and management of the Third World." *Cultural Anthropology* 3 (4): 428-446.

— Gupta A. 2010. The construction of the global poor: an anthropological critique. In *The World Social Science Report: Knowledge Divides*, ed. F Caillods, pp. 13–16. Paris: UNESCO

Watch: *Enjoy Poverty* (2008), dir. Renzo Martens, 90 mins.

**PART II**

**ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDIES + METHODS**

January 31  
TBC

**Conservation politics in Kenya: In-person guest Lecture, Dr. Kariuki Kirigia**

Department of Anthropology, Concordia University  
Readings TBC

February 2  
TBC

**'To live with herds': Filming modernity, nationhood and pastoralism in Uganda**

— "Radically Empirical Documentary: An Interview with David and Judith MacDougall." (2000) *Film Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (2000): 2-14. w/ MacDougall, David, Judith MacDougall, Ilisa Barbash, and Lucien Taylor

In-class screening + discussion: *To Live With Herds* (1972) David and Judith MacDougall

February 7  
Zoom

**Staying together in rural Boyacá: the ways of *amañarse*.**

Guest lecture Dr. Monica Cuellar Gempeler.

<https://mcgill.zoom.us/j/3544776556>

— Monica Cuellar Gempeler, "Amañarse in San Miguel." In *A song for staying: Narrative, absence and mourning in rural Boyacá* (2020)

— Kathleen Millar, "The precarious present: Wageless labor and disrupted life in Rio di Janeiro, Brazil." *Cultural Anthropology* Vol. 29., No.1 (2014).

February 9  
TBC

**Ethnographies of Governance and Trusteeship in Indonesia**

— Li, Tania Murray. (2007). "Introduction." *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development and the Practice of Politics*.

— Welker, Marina. 2012. “The Green Revolution’s ghost: Unruly subjects of participatory development in rural Indonesia.” *American Ethnologist*, vol. 39, no. 2.

February 14  
TBC

### **Divided publics: Urban development as displacement in Congo and Delhi**

— De Boeck, Filip. 2011. “Inhabiting Ocular Ground: Kinshasa's Future in the Light of Congo's Spectral Urban Politics.” *Cultural Anthropology* 26, no. 2: 263–286.

— Asher Ghertner, “Nuisance Talk and the Propriety of Property: Middle Class Discourses of a Slum-Free Delhi.” *Antipode* 44(4) 2012, p.1161.

—Harvey, D. 2003. Right to the City. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* Vol. 27 (4) 939-941.

February 16  
TBC

### **Humanitarianism as Development: Protracted displacement in Lebanon and Syria**

— Gabiam, Nell. 2012. “When “Humanitarianism” Becomes “Development”: The Politics of International Aid in Syria’s Palestinian Refugee Camps.” *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 114 (1): 95-107.

— Allan, Diana. 2018. “This is Not a Politics: Solidarity and Subterfuge in Palestinian Refugee Communities in Lebanon.” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 116, no. 1: 91–110.

#### Optional:

—Feldman, Ilana. 2014. “What is a Camp?: Legitimate refugee lives in spaces of long-term displacement.” *Geoforum*, 66: 244-52.

February 21  
TBC

### **Interview + narrative**

— Mattingly, Cheryl and Mary Lawlor. 2000. “Learning from stories: Narrative Interviewing in Cross-cultural Research.” *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy* 7:1, 4 – 14.

— Allan, Diana. 2007. “The Politics of Witness: Remembering and Forgetting 1948 in Shatila Camp.” In *Nakba: 1948 and the Claims of Memory*, edited by Lila Abu Lughod & Ahmad Sa’di (New York: Columbia University Press).

— Q&A: Ira Glass on Structuring Stories, Asking Hard Questions. Columbia Journalism Review. June 22, 2017. (Or listen to the podcast interview: The Turnaround with Jesse Thorn; <https://www.cjr.org/turnaround>)

#### Optional:

— Ewing, Katherine. “Revealing and Concealing: Interpersonal Dynamics and the Negotiation of Identity in the Interview.” *Ethos* 34 (1) 2006.

In-class screening: *Still Life* (2007) Diana Allan

February 23  
TBC

### **Guest lecture Abeer Al-Mahdi**

Readings TBC

**\*\* February 28 and March 2 — Reading Break \*\***

March 7  
Zoom

### **Guest Lecture: Dr. Deniz Duruiz**

<https://mcgill.zoom.us/j/3544776556>

- March 9`  
TBC
- Development in settler-colonial contexts: The biopolitics of care in Canada**
- Stevenson, Lisa. 2012. “The psychic life of biopolitics: Survival, cooperation, and Inuit Community.” *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 39. No.3, pp.592-613.
- Watch in class: *Into Unknown Parts* (2015) Lisa Stevenson and Eduardo Kohn (26 mins).
- March 14  
TBC
- \* [Workshop group presentations](#) \*
- March 16  
TBC
- Fieldwork in the ruins of development**
- Fortun, Kim. 2012. “Ethnography in Late Industrialism.” *Cultural Anthropology* Vol. 27, No. 3: 446-464.
- Weiss, J. 2021. “Not built to last: Military occupation and ruination under settler colonialism.” *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol.36. No.3.
- Optional:
- Gordillo, Gastón. 2013. “Bringing a place in ruins back to life.” In *Reclaiming Archaeology: Beyond the tropes of Modernity*, edited by Alfredo Gonzalez Ruibal.
- Stoler, Anne. 2008. “Imperial Debris: Reflections on Ruins and Ruination.” *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 23, Issue 2, pp. 191-219.
- March 21  
zoom
- Planned de-development in Gaza: Guest lecture, Dr. Salem el-Qudwa**  
<https://mcgill.zoom.us/j/3544776556>
- Al-Qudwa, Salem. 2021. “Architecture of the Everyday in Gaza, Palestine.” *Open Gaza: Architectures of Hope*, ed. Terreform.
- Salamanca, Omar. 2011. “Unplug and Play: Manufacturing collapse in Gaza.” *Middle East + North Africa Research Group*, Vol. 4, No.1.
- Optional:
- Tannira, Ahmed. 2021. “Introduction.” In *Foreign Aid to the Gaza Strip: Between Trusteeship and De-Development*.
- March 23  
TBC
- Rerooting the Palestinian commons: Visit to Souq Exhibition + workshop with curators**
- Tawil Sourì, Helga. 2012. “Digital Occupation: Gaza’s High-Tech Enclosure.” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. XLI, No. 2: 27-43.
- Optional:
- Abourahme, Nasser. 2011. “Spatial collision and discordant temporalities: Everyday life between the camp and the checkpoint.” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol. 35, No. 2: 453-61
- March 28 –April 6  
TBC
- Group Presentations**
- April 11
- CONCLUSIONS**

TBC

## Academic Policies

### Academic integrity

The work you submit for this course must be written by you; all sources must be appropriately acknowledged. Please review McGill's Academic Integrity Code: [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information. The consequences of plagiarism are to be found under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures: [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest).

*L' Université McGill attach 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. Pour plus renseignements veuillez consulter le site: [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest).*

### Accommodation for special Needs

Requests for academic accommodations for students with disabilities must be made during the first two weeks of the semester, so that arrangements can be made. If you wish to request an accommodation due to a suspected or documented disability, please inform your instructor and contact McGill Office of Students with Disabilities (OSD) as soon as possible at 398-6009. If you anticipate requiring academic accommodations for other reasons — eg. religious obligations, pregnancy or childrearing, or other student activities — please submit your requests during the first two weeks of class.

### Language of submission

Per university policy, written assignments may be submitted in French or English.

### Indigenous Land Statement

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

Additional policies governing academic issues which affect students can be found in the McGill Charter of Students' Rights. Visit [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr) for more information.