

Anthropological Critique: Ethnography as textual practice

The course aims at thinking ethnography from a theoretical perspective, as intrinsically related to a type of writing, or better, as a textual practice, diverse and historically situated. Considering the impact of works such as *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) and *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Marcus and Fischer 1985), we follow Clifford's suggestion (2002, p. 21). In the 1980s these works put forward a series of challenges in the academic field, questioning the politics involving poetic ethnography. Furthermore, they challenged the limits of the territory of academic writing. Feminist collective works, such as *This Bridge Called My Back* and *Woman and Writings by Radical Woman of color*, edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, brought in the 1990s other issues on the power of writing, hence, stimulating women (who were often objects of ethnographic writing) to becoming authors of their own texts. These works set the main questions underlying our course: how does a hetero-normative matrix regulate ethnographic accounts? How do bodies appear or as silenced in these accounts? And further, how could ethnography construct a textuality that may put at bay the subject/object division so present in colonial epistemology?

Moving on from these questions, the course deals with the critique of theories of representation and language running across ethnographic writing, and points out that such theories end up producing (and at the same time, hiding in their logic) collective subjects, as well as strengthening the white male anthropologist ethnographical authority through the means of the "ego-author". Hence, in this course, we will deal with "writing" in the Derridian sense, as one of the fundamental characteristics of ethnography, that is, an ethnography as textual practice not solely referring to a voice/original native speech, but to other texts that may strengthen and/or resist against colonialism.

The course is divided in four sections. In the first one, "politics of ethnographic poetry", we deepen the analysis of the way in which language and writing were erased from ethnography, as though language had a spectacular relationship with reality and writing were a neutral technology. In the second section, "writing, performance and power", we approach writing from the notion of performance and *differance*, that is, ethnographic writing not a transition to reality possessing an original matrix, but as ideological technology re(citing) other texts and acting upon the world. In the third section, "feminism, writing and authorship", we focus upon feminist ethnographies produced by women challenging the colonial and hetero-normative matrix. Finally, in the fourth section, "ethnography and writing beyond Anthropology", we deal with disputes surrounding ethnography, taking into account literary texts and other works produced in different fields of knowledge (mostly, cultural studies, education and linguistics).