

Special Anthropology: Materialities: on relationships between things and people, between enchantments and dis(enchantments)

The course aims to present current anthropological discussions on things (and their relationships to persons) while talking about materialities, matter, objects, material culture, and highlighting works focused upon the study of things classified as “religious” and the tensions around the framings provided by such a qualification. Given the recent rise of publications on the topic, the original proposal was shortened: keeping in mind experiences of research on religious objects within Christianity in “complex societies”, we will deal with things drawing upon a discussion on processes of disenchantment and (re)enchantment since modernity. We will tackle the importance of such things in the constitution of anthropological knowledge, searching to identify some current anthropological debates problematizing the forms of classification and interpretation of things (and, so doing, problematizing modernity itself). Finally, we wonder to what extent ethnographies on religion do turn the anthropological discipline into a patrimony in which things appear difficult to fit in classificatory scales and, therefore, are always potentially irruptive to think through other logics, other forms of thought, other ontologies, other versions of the world. We are interested in understanding how “things”, such as flags, crowns, ex-votos, garlands and flowers, souvenirs, photographs and pictures, statues and saints, could be interpreted as “material” forms or as “materializing” relationships of devotion; or, from a wider point of view, as conceptions of the sacred, and should therefore be a privileged topic of anthropological analysis. Hence, we aim at establishing a bridge between the anthropology of religion and the anthropology of objects.