Anthropology and Literature

ANT 3122
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Unit Calendar

Monday 09.00-10.00

25th September - Introducing the Course

2nd October - Anthropology and Literature: fiction and realism.

9th October - Between Literature and Anthropology: archives of the memory and autobiographies.

16th, 23rd and 30th October – Anthropologists as writers.

6th and 13th November - Writers as anthropologists.

20th and 27th November – Literary Anthropology.

4th December - The text as fieldwork: analysis of The Vegetarian (Han Kang, 2017).


18th December - Participatory debate.

8th January – An overview.
General information

Lecturer
Dr Virginia Monteforte (Anthropological Sciences)

Assessment
Students will be assessed by means of a written assignment of 2,500 words whose specific topic will be communicated at the end of the course.

Attendance
Attendance to the course is obligatory and failure to attend 3 or more lectures will result in an automatic Fail from the study-unit.

Introduction
The course will focus on the relationship between Anthropology and Literature, taking into account various convergences (as well as differences) between the two subjects and their methods. It will also focus on writers with anthropological interests and attitudes, while also looking at anthropologists as writers in order to delve into key topics, such as the concept of fiction and the question of the author in Ethnography. A key component of the course will be the consideration and analysis of literary and anthropological texts (and a film) through comparative and interdisciplinary perspectives, with the aim of delving into their shared practices and poetics.

Class Materials:
There will be a number of readings made available either in the UOM Library, via VLE or in print at Copyclub.
Kindly note that other readings (also in French and Italian, for those who read these languages) are likely to be added as further readings during the course.

Learning Outcomes:
On successful completion of this unit, students will be able to:

1) Knowledge and understanding
Focus on the literary aspects of anthropology and on the anthropological aspects of certain literary texts and writers. Students will be provided with the critical instruments to conduct multidisciplinary and comparative analyses in the field of Social Anthropology and Literature. As a result of this, they will be expected, by the end of the study-unit, to interpret and compare in a written assignment the convergences between the two subjects by choosing their own texts and by providing a consistent analysis of them, in line with the theoretical instruments provided.

2) Skills (including transferable [generic] skills):
Read and analyse critically texts belonging to different, though very much related, fields. Students will be made more alert to the linguistic and formal elements of anthropological study after being exposed to literary explorations of the discipline, and therefore become better accustomed to the framing and rhetorical mechanics of anthropology.
Unit outline

Week 1
25th September
Topic: Introducing the Course

Lecture: The first lecture will go through the contents of the course and will explore the requirements for this unit of study. Students will be introduced to the main aspects of an Anthropology of Literature and a Literary Anthropology and to the main differences among them. The lecturer will also be explaining how the course will be assessed.

Essential Reading:

Week 2
2nd October
Topic: Anthropology and Literature: fiction and realism.

Lecture: This lecture introduces students to the relations between Anthropology and Literature by shedding light on some of the main aspects of post-modern anthropology. It will also explore the concept of fiction in anthropological writing.

Essential readings:

Week 3
9th October
Topic: Between literature and anthropology: memory archives and the autobiography.

Lecture: Having focused on fiction and realism in anthropology in the previous lecture, this lecture will delve into the importance of journals and memory archives in the sense of “ordinary and non-literary writings” and of “anthropology from below” by discussing certain key examples of memory archives in Europe.

Essential Readings
Week 4/5/6
16th, 23rd and 30th October
Topic: Writing anthropology and anthropologists as writers

Lecture: These lectures will discuss the importance of writing in Anthropology and the figure of the anthropologist as an author. They will also analyse the concept of “authority” in ethnography, its development from the origin and how this authority was put into question during the last decades of XX century.

Essential readings:

Week 7/8
6th and 13th November
Topic: Writers as anthropologists.

Lecture: Through a series of literary examples, the lectures will illuminate the anthropological attitude of some writers as well as the presence of anthropological issues in their writings.

Essential readings:

Week 9/10
20th and 27th November
Topic: Literary Anthropology

Lecture: These two lectures will delve into the development of Literary Anthropology as a specific subject by introducing some among its main exponents and the main issues of the topic.

Essential Readings
Week 11
4th December: The text as fieldwork.
Topic: The lecture will show how to read a novel through an anthropological perspective, by means of a participatory analysis of “The Vegetarian” by Han Kang.

Essential readings

Week 12
15th December
Topic: Ethnographic attitude and poetry: screening and analysis of *Paterson* (Jim Jarmusch, 2016)

Lecture: These lectures will consist of a screening of excerpts from the 2016 Jim Jarmusch film *Paterson* followed by a discussion about the ethnographic attitude of the protagonist and the relevance of poetry in his daily life.

18th December
Topic: Participatory debate

Lecture: Students are requested to bring samples (movies, short stories, novels) that pertain to the subjects covered during the course. The exercise will also be beneficial towards the planning of the assignment that students will need to deliver at the end of the course.

Week 14
8th January
Topic: An overview

Lecture: This lecture will summarise all the topics discussed during the course.