

1. Details

Code: M-DEA/01 **Credits (ECTS):** 9
Subject: Antropologia Culturale c.a. (corso avanzato) - Cultural Anthropology (advanced)
Main language of instruction: Italian
Other language of instruction: English

2. Teaching Staff

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3. Overview

This year's subject is entitled *Applied Anthropology: from Thought to Action*. It aims to provide Master's students with tools, useful reflections, and epistemological awareness, which could lead them towards the completion of a research in the field of anthropology. For this reason, each module will involve different clues, whose emergent framework will foster the acquisition of specialised knowledge in some aspects of the subject. In particular,

- Each module will deal with a specific topic that was object of investigations on behalf of anthropologists. Among the topics dealt with in the current academic years: debates about the foundations of social sciences; humanitarian crises; violence (both *qua* object of study, and *qua* hazard for the anthropologist); human trafficking; alcohol consumption; *body modification* (tattoos, in particular); memes (Internet); anthropology beyond the fascination for the exotic; homelessness; post-colonialism.
- Moreover, each module will adopt specific approaches, which make up the professional scope of the anthropologists: epistemology of social sciences; anthropology of emergence; activism; research ethics; local ethnography; subcultures; netnography; rural anthropology; urban anthropology.
- Finally, each module will try to start from case studies and infer answers for more general questions, such as: is anthropology a science? How is it possible to provide outcomes when emergency strikes? How is it possible to deal with the inherent work-related risks? How is it possible to safeguard those subjects who participate to the research? How is it possible to construct an idiographic framework, starting from factors that have emerged at the time of the observation? How does anthropological interpretation change according to the changing of its core concepts? How is it possible to collect and analyse digital sources? How is it possible to undertake anthropological research in an urban environment?

4. Expected outcomes

4.1 Objectives

1. Understand and re-interpret the epistemological constitution of anthropology.
Question: How does anthropology "produce" knowledge?
2. Appropriate tools and instruments with which anthropological investigations could be carried out.
Question: How do anthropology's methods lead to knowledge?
3. Raise awareness about the problems inherent to fieldwork.

Question: How is it possible to safeguard the investigator and her research subjects?

4. Know some key social issues and understand how culture affects the interpretation thereof.

Question: How do different cultures deal with difference, diversity, and otherness?

4.2 Goals

1. Develop a foundationalist attitude based on identifiable principles belonging to a relevant subject.
2. Undertake qualitative social research with appropriate inquiry tools
3. Learn the basics of research ethics
4. Know social issues and how they vary according to different cultures
5. Act effectively in an international or global context

5. Table of contents (syllabus)

Module 1: Ethnoanthropology Today

Conundrum: Is anthropology a science?

Topic: Anthropological debates

Approach: Epistemology of Human Sciences

The first module is an introduction to the entire subject, and will begin by presenting an epistemological debate regarding the status of anthropology within the interdisciplinary network of human knowledge. Is anthropology a science? If yes, what are the conditions of its inclusion? Else: how does our conception of science vary according to how we classify anthropology? In this introductory session, we will review a specific debate that took place at international conferences and on anthropology blogs, and which pivots around a declaration issued by the American Anthropological Association (AAA) in 2011, when they expunged the term "science" from their Long-Range Plan. Such debate will be an opportunity to introduce Bruno Latour's notion of Greater Humanities, as well as other reflection on the epistemological status of anthropology.

Module 2: Humanitarian Crises

Conundrum: How can anthropology contribute to the solution of emergencies?

Topic: Violence *qua* object of study

Approach: Anthropology of Emergency, and Activism

This module takes inspiration from some excerpts of Fabio Dei's edited book, entitled Anthropology of Violence (2005). Moreover, further details will be provided by Antropologia, which an yearly publication edited by Ugo Fabietti: issue 9 and 10 (2008) are, in fact, dedicated to the theme of violence. After such an introduction, we will examine cases taken from handbooks available from the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2005), and which are aimed to provide useful training advice for social science investigators. Other materials will deal with the issues of Papua New Guinea, as addressed by Doctors Without Borders (DWB, 2010 and 2016). Some epistemological questions are answered ("what is anthropology of emergency?") as well as methodological ones ("how could anthropologists act in a situation of emergency?").

Module 3: From Mud to Quicksands

Conundrum: How is it possible to deal with the risks to which fieldwork researchers are exposed?

Topic: Risks to the investigators

Approach: Practical aspects of fieldwork research

*This module will deal with the topic of violence, both *qua* object of the anthropological research, and *qua* outcome of risks taken by the investigators -- some of them deriving from work-related hazards. The aim is that of developing critical awareness, as well as a set of guidelines that may help investigators guard themselves from incumbent and future dangers. Most themes will be drawn on volumes 40 and 41 of Anthropologie & développement, that is, APAD's bulletin (Association pour l'anthropologie du changement et du développement). In the end, we will refer to Alice Dreger's analysis (2011) of the academic fraud organised by Patrick Tierney in order to target an already controversial anthropologist named Napoleon Chagnon (see Module 4 for further details on substantial criticism of Chagnon's work, which are not included in the fraud case he was a victim of).*

Module 4: Marginalisation and Openness to Dialogue

Conundrum: How can we safeguard participating subjects, especially when vulnerable?

Topic: Human Trafficking

Approach: Research Ethics

The case Chagnon (see Module 3) does not only constitute a classic example of fraud carried out at the expense of the investigator (who is a victim, in this sense). In addition to this, it does also offer an opportunity to reflect on said anthropologist's very practices: notwithstanding the falsity of the accusations examined in Module 3, some of Chagnon's work is still exposed to reasonable critique about his methodology and ethical profile. In order to understand what are the issues at stake, this Module will draw on the National Statement of Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007, together with the 2018): this document, issued by the Australian government, provides a clear example of legal framework written in order to account for several issues concerning the safeguard of human subjects during research activities. Key questions: how can we evaluate risks for participants? How may we gather consent in a non-invasive way? Are there cases in which consent might not be issued explicitly? How can we safeguard and protect those subjects who participate our research activities? The aforementioned National Statement is state of the art, in this sense -- and yet it is not immune from criticism. On a similar note, we will cast an eye on the Italian norms on the same subject matters. Finally, in order to answer the above questions, we will look into: [a] Lenore Manderson et al.'s research on the ideas of public and private in anthropology (2015); [b] Cristiana Giordano's investigation on the role of confession in migratory practices and paperwork (2015); [c] The Trafficking of Underage Nigerian Girls in Italy (report by UNICRI -- United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute).

Module 5: Ritual Feasting and the Impact of Market Economy

Conundrum: Which factors should we consider when producing a "critical ethnography"?

Topic: Practices of alcohol consumption

Approach: Case study (local anthropology, Americanistics / American studies)

This module leads us to a huave community in Oaxaca (a State of Mexico). This is where Chiara Bresciani's anthropological investigations took place. The main topic of the module is alcohol consumption (both private and social), alcohol addiction, and the impact of free market on a community in which drinking plays a relevant cultural role. This study provides us with an opportunity to reflect upon the typology of factors that emerges from a detailed ethnographic survey of the area. Hence, Bresciani's work will become our training ground to reflect upon variables and working definitions of attributes, which do all contribute to the emerging framework presented in the study. Subsequently, it will be possible to extend our thoughts to the relationship between anthropology and normative definitions, such as those offered by public healthcare systems. This latter activity will illustrate how some concepts, whose usage is consolidated, are in fact sensitive to the social and cultural contexts, thus being open to further negotiation. Finally, the module will incidentally deal with the issue of marginalisation, and will also constitute a cornerstone for the later discussion on change in "traditional" societies (see Module 8).

Module 6: When Bodies Become Cultural Artefacts

Conundrum: How does conceptual change affect anthropological research?

Topic: Body modification (in particular: tattoos)

Approach: Subcultures and post-subcultures

The main focus of this module will be the concept of subculture: how it is defined by different anthropological schools, and how the concept of post-subculture emerged. In particular, we will compare and contrast the Chicago School and Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary and Cultural Studies. In order to illustrate the relevance of conceptual language for the purpose of anthropological research, we will evaluate the case of Body Modification and follow Derek Roberts' arguments on the subject matter (2015).

Module 7: A Den of Masks and Tricks

Conundrum: How can we collect and analyse digital sources?

Topic: "Meme wars"

Approach: Netnography and Theoretical Memetics

Drawing on Alessandro Caliendo's paper, entitled "Digital Methods for Ethnography: Analytical Concepts for Ethnographers Exploring Social Media Environments", this module will deal with the issue of carrying out anthropological investigations on the Internet. In a themes-oriented perspective, we will deal with Internet memes, and, in particular, the phenomena that propagated from the 4chan website (e.g.: the ebola-chan prank campaign). Within the framework generated by such themes, the module will focus on the difficulties related to the collection and analysis of data found in digital sources. Among the key questions of the module: what is the place of the Internet

within an ontology of digital artefacts? What is the ontological statute of memes? What kind of difficulties does the Internet pose to linguistic anthropology? How is it possible to gather accurate and reliable data from a crowd of self-appointed “tricksters” and potential “impostors” -- i.e. anonymous users?

Module 8: A Comparison of Paradigms (Part I - the Tropics)

Conundrum: How is it possible to undertake anthropological investigations in a rural context?

Topic: Tradition vs. Modernity

Approach: Rural Anthropology

This module takes its inspiration from Claude Lévi-Strauss’ Tristes Tropiques [‘Sad Tropics’]. Drawing on Lévi-Strauss, the thread will lead to Anna L. Tsing’s investigation of cultural changes in the Indonesian rainforests. In a theme-oriented perspective, it will be possible to review a case of anthropology undertaken in a tropical area. In a methods-oriented perspective, this module will offer insights into how to undertake fieldwork in such environment. Finally, in a theory-oriented perspective, the very idea of “tropics” will be debated qua conceptual construct; moreover, Tsing’s theory of “attrition” will be debated. Together with the next module, several aspects of the previous ones will be summarised.

Module 9: A Comparison of Paradigms (Part II - Cities)

Conundrum: How is it possible to undertake anthropological investigations in an urban context?

Topic: Homeless people and Marginalisation

Approach: Urban Anthropology

This module focuses on a recent study by Aimee Meredith Cox, which has given a voice to the young African-American women of a homeless shelter in Detroit. Cox shows how cultural expressions are used to break social hierarchies, which oppress and marginalise the subjects of her study. Talking topics, this module offers an opportunity to deal with the themes of “homelessness”, industrialisation, and the marginalisation of disadvantaged groups -- both in economic and cultural terms (racism). From a materials’ and methods’ perspective, the aforementioned study will provide an opportunity to examine how anthropological research may be undertaken in an urban context. Finally, from a theoretical perspective, the study will be a viable opportunity to make some points about the former sections, e.g. following a comparison with Module 8.

6. Assessment type and criteria

In order to complete the mandatory assessment for this subject, students may elect to follow **one** of the following pathways (that is, **either A or B -- not both**).

- A. *Written exam.* Three open-ended questions + three multiple choice questions.
 - a. Open questions will require students to apply their knowledge to issues detailed in the statement of the question.
 - b. Multiple choice questions will be in line with the self-assessment tests available throughout the course.
- B. *Oral exam.* It is divided into two parts:
 - a. Assessment of the candidate’s competencies, obtained by means of knowledge questions.
 - b. Discuss a research proposal (max 3,000 words), whose topic should be agreed in advance with the instructor.

A.

The assessment of open questions is based on a set of evaluative criteria:

- **Focus:** whether the candidate has understood the question and is answering to it in a relevant way; **up to 1 mark**
- **Organisation:** whether the answer is well-structured and divided in coherent way; **up to 1 mark**

- **Critical perspective:** whether the candidate considers different and alternative perspectives in her answer, each of them to an extent that may vary according to their relevance and soundness; **up to 1 mark**
- **Argument:** whether the reasoning is sound and coherent, thus displaying knowledge is applied in a rational way; **up to 2 marks**
- **Knowledge:** whether the candidate knows the research methods taught in class; **up to 2 marks**
- **Examples and sourcing:** whether the candidate does not answer vaguely and makes due reference to the literature relevant to the subject matter and to case studies presented in class (possibly, with the addition of personal knowledge to the blend); **up to 2 marks**

NOTE: each answer will be awarded **no more than 8 marks** out of the 9 marks available. This means students are given more opportunities to excel despite the occasional drawback (due to time constraints, organisation might vary, so that the instructor is ready to account for such extenuating a circumstance).

SUBTOTAL: 8 marks per question = 24 marks overall

The remaining marks will be awarded for the multiple choice questions (2 marks per answer = 6 marks)

TOTAL: up to 30 marks

B.

Pathway B consists of a research proposal, which shall demonstrate the candidate is able to competently deal with the following aspects:

- Delimit a research domain and a field to work with; **up to 2 marks**
- Generate a research question that is epistemically valid; **up to 2 marks**
- Undertake a short but satisfying literature review; **up to 6 marks**
- Identify appropriate research methods and describe how they will be applied; **up to 6 marks**
- Anticipate and predict risks and hazards due to the fieldwork nature of the research; **up to 4 marks**
- Demonstrate the proposed investigation is sustainable, that is, it does not harm participating subjects and, possibly, provides them with appreciable benefits; **up to 4 marks**.

SUBTOTAL: 24 marks, which will be supplemented by the interview questions, which will assess the candidate's general knowledge of the subject matter (up to 6 additional marks).

TOTAL: up to 30 marks.

IMPORTANT: all *research proposals* shall be submitted **2 weeks before the chosen examination date**. All proposals will be subject to plagiarism checks. Verified plagiarism makes students liable to failure in the subject and possible disciplinary outcomes. Suspicion of plagiarism will be dealt with the student; when naive or inadvertent, it will be dealt with by the course convenor and proper adjustments will be made in order to eliminate all advantage that was unfairly gained. Deliberate and non-naive offences will result in an automatic fail and immediate report to the Faculty, which will undertake further disciplinary measures according to current regulations. (**Note:** this algorithm takes its inspiration from [the relevant flowchart issued by the University of Auckland](#)).

7. Resources

7.1 Prescribed study materials

- Video-lectures (both recorded and live, depending on subscription)
- Lecture notes (in Italian, pending approval of English as the main language of instruction)
- Slides
- Self-assessment tests

7.2 Recommended readings

Please note that the following sources are recommended, but not compulsory. What you will find here is the draft reference list the convenor has used for each chapter of his lecture notes. Upon upload on the learning management system, the subject convenor will update and adjust such reference lists.

How to obtain these sources. Since most of them are available on the Internet under a fair use license, links are provided for each source. Should sources be unavailable, it is recommended candidates contact the course convenor privately in order to arrange file sharing under fair use regulations. When in doubt, write me.

- **Handbook:** Pavanello, M. (2009). *Fare Antropologia: Metodi per la Ricerca Etnografica*. Bologna: Zanichelli.
- **Module 1:**
 - American Anthropological Association (AAA). (2016). *AAA Long-Range Plan*. Retrieved at: <https://www.americananthro.org/ConnectWithAAA/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=1985> (last access: 12/11/2018) [note: this is the 2016 version of the plan. The one criticised in the other sources is the 2010-2011 one]
 - Elie, S. D. (2012). The Production of Social Science Knowledge beyond Occidentalism: the quest for a post-exotic anthropology. *Third World Quarterly*, 33(7), pp. 1211-1229. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2012.691828>
 - Gusterson, H. (2011). What if They Had a Science War and Only One Side Came? [magazine article]. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. URL: https://www.chronicle.com/article/What-if-They-Had-a-Science-War/125828/?sid=cr&utm_medium=en&utm_source=cr (retrieved on 12/11/2018)
 - Keane, W. (2003). Self-Interpretation, Agency, and the Objects of Anthropology: Reflections on a Genealogy. *Comparative studies in society and history*, 45(2), pp. 222-248. URL: www.istor.org/stable/3879315 (last access: 12/11/2008).
 - Lancaster, J. B. and Hames, R. (2011). Statement on the Publication of Alice Dreger's Investigation, 'Darkness's Descent on the American Anthropological Association: A Cautionary Tale'. *Human Nature*, 22(3), pp. 223-224. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12110-011-9106-8>
 - Latour, B. (2010). Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern. *Critical Inquiry*, 30, pp. 225-248. Retrieved at <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/89-CRITICAL-INQUIRY-GB.pdf> (last access: 12/11/2008)
 - Lende, D. (2011). A Vision of Anthropology Today -- and Tomorrow [blog entry]. *PLOS Blogs: Neuroanthropology*. URL: <https://blogs.plos.org/neuroanthropology/2011/02/11/a-vision-of-anthropology-today-%E2%80%93-and-tomorrow/> (last access: 12/11/2018)
 - Myhre, K. C. (2006). The Truth of Anthropology: Epistemology, Meaning, and Residual Positivism. *Anthropology Today*, 22(6), pp. 16-19. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8322.2006.00472.x>
- **Module 2:**
 - Beneduce, R. (2008). Introduzione: Etnografie della Violenza. *Antropologia*, 9-10, pp. 5-47. Retrieved at http://www.academia.edu/20986331/Introduzione_Etnografie_della_violenza (last access: 12/11/2008).
 - Dei, F. (2005). *Antropologia della violenza*. Milano: Meltemi.

- Ellsberg, M. and Heise, L. (2005). *Researching Violence Against Women: A Practical Guide for Researchers and Activists*. Washington (DC, USA): World Health Organization, PATH. Retrieved at <http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/9241546476/en/> (last access: 12/11/2018)
- Hemer, S. R. (2018) Debating Appropriate Approaches to Violence in Lihir: The Challenges of Addressing Gender Violence in Papua New Guinea. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 19(2), pp. 138-153, DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2017.1420097>
- Jolly, M. (2012). Prologue: The Place of Papua New Guinea in Contours of Gender Violence. In M. Jolly and C. Stewart, *Engendering Violence in Papua New Guinea* (pp. xvii-xxvii). Canberra: ANU Press.
- Jorgensen, D. (2014). Preying on those close to home: witchcraft violence in a Papua New Guinea Village. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 25, pp. 267-286. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/taja.12105>
- Médecins Sans Frontières. (2010). *Hidden and Neglected: The Medical and Emotional Needs of Survivors of Family and Sexual Violence in Papua New Guinea*. Retrieved at <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/what-we-do/news-stories/research/papua-new-guinea-hidden-and-neglected> (last access: 12/11/2018)
- Médecins Sans Frontières (2016). *Return to Abuser: Gaps in Services and a Failure to Protect Survivors of Family and Sexual Violence in Papua New Guinea*. Retrieved at <https://www.msf.org.au/article/project-news/return-abuser> (last access: 12/11/2018).
- **Module 3:**
 - Batinga-Kinzi, S. (2014). L'ethnographie au risque de l'agression : expérience de terrain à risque. *Anthropologie & développement*, 40-41, pp. 87-97. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/anthropodev/302>
 - Dreger, A. (2011). *Darkness's Descent* on the American Anthropological Association: A Cautionary Tale. *Human Nature*, 22(3), 225-246.
 - Hagberg, S. and Körling, G. (2014). Inaccessible Fields: Doing Anthropology in the Malian Political Turmoil. *Anthropologie & développement*, 40-41, pp.143-159. URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/anthropodev/308>
 - Sundberg, M. (2014). Ethnographic Challenges Encountered in Rwanda's Social Topography. *Anthropologie & développement*, 40-41, pp. 71-86. URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/anthropodev/300>
- **Module 4:**
 - Australian Government, National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council (2018[2007]). *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*. URL: <https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018> (last access: 12/11/18).
 - Giordano, C. (2015). Lying the Truth: Practices of Confession and Recognition. *Current Anthropology*, p. S0000. URL: <http://www.istor.org/stable/10.1086/683272>
 - Manderson, L. et al. (2015). On Secrecy, Disclosure, the Public, and the Private in Anthropology: An Introduction to Supplement 12. *Current Anthropology*, 56(S12), pp. S183-S190. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/683302>
 - UNICRI. (2010). *La tratta delle minorenni nigeriane in Italia: i dati, i racconti, i servizi sociali*. URL: <http://www.piemonteimmigrazione.it/site/images/stories/tratta/documenti/TrattaMinorenniNigeri aItalia IT.pdf> (last access: 12/11/2018).
- **Module 5:**
 - Bresciani, C. (2012). Alcolismo, marginalizzazione e cambio culturale: una etnografia critica del consumo di alcol in una comunità huave (Messico) / Alcoholismo, marginalización y cambio cultural: una etnografía crítica del consumo de alcohol en una comunidad huave (México). *Atti del XXXIV Convegno Internazionale di Americanistica – Perugia 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 e 10 maggio 2012*, pp. 343-356. URL: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/269096360_Alcolismo_marginalizzazione_e_cambio_culturale_una_etnografia_critica_del_consumo_di_alcol_in_una_comunita_huave_Messico_Alcoholism_o_marginalizacion_y_cambio_cultural_una_etnografia_critica_del_consumo (last access: 12/11/2018).
- **Module 6:**
 - Bomberger, C. et al. (2005). *Un corps pour soi*. Paris: PUF.

- Roberts, D. (2015). Modified People: Indicators of a Body Modification Subculture in a Post-Subculture World. *Sociology*, 49(6), pp. 1096-1112. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0038038514554672>
- Thomas, N. Cole, A. Douglas, B. (eds). (2005). *Tattoo: Bodies, Art and Exchange in the Pacific and the West*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- **Module 7:**
 - Caliandro, A. (2018). Digital Methods for Ethnography: Analytical Concepts for Ethnographers Exploring *Social Media Environments*. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 47(5), pp. 551-578. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0891241617702960>
 - Geismar, H. (2015). Tricksters everywhere. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 5(2), pp. 375–381. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14318/hau5.2.021>
 - Kien, G.(2013). Media Memes and Prosumerist Ethics: Notes Toward a Theoretical Examination of Memetic Audience Behavior. *CSCM*, 13(6), pp. 554-561. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1532708613503785>
 - Ludemann, D. (2018). /pol/emics: Ambiguity, scales, and digital discourse on 4chan. *Discourse, Context & Media* 24, pp. 92-98. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2018.01.01>
 - Marcus, O. R. and Singer, M. (2017). Loving Ebola-chan: Internet memes in an epidemic. *Media, Culture & Society*, 39(3), pp. 341-356. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0163443716646174>
- **Module 8:**
 - Lévi-Strauss, C. (1955). *Tristes Tropiques*. Paris: Plon.
 - Tsing, A. (2004). *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton University Press.
- **Module 9:**
 - Cox, A. M. (2015). *Shapeshifters: Black Girls and the Choreography of Citizenship*. Duke University Press.

See the end of each lecture notes file for an updated reference list.

7.3 Other resources / Further materials

Nil