UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

COURSE SYLLABUS

Scrittura

2425-2-F0101R051-SC

Course title

Ethnographic writing

Topics and course structure

Although ethnography does not totally coincide with the production of written texts, the latter still constitute its main products. Experimenting with writing practices and analysing them critically therefore means measuring oneself against the heart of anthropological research, bringing to light its ‘constructive’ character, its artificial and at the same time ‘poietic’ nature, i.e. essentially creative. The course, of a purely workshop nature, will focus on this apparent oxymoron, showing on the contrary its interpretative potential, applicable beyond the specific disciplinary field of anthropology.

Through exercises and didactic activities, the students will first of all be called upon to think about ethnographic writing in a reflexive manner, retracing their own intellectual path and professional biography in order to open up spaces for collective debate. Starting from this positioning, the various phases in which anthropological research is articulated and the writing practices connected to them will be considered, both during the collection of data and during their re-elaboration (including bibliographical documentation, the drafting of field notes, the transcription of interviews and focus groups, the elaboration of ethnographies, the design), focusing in particular on the structure and forms of scientific texts.

In parallel, thanks to the group discussion of some academic articles and the analysis of other materials (blogs, websites, publishing platforms), the theoretical debate concerning ethnographic writing and, more generally, the production of anthropological knowledge and its dissemination and communication will be explored.

The approval of credits is linked to active attendance of at least 75% of the workshop meetings. Students who are unable to acquire the 4 credits through active participation in the workshop activities for at least 75% of the 40 hours foreseen (or through the other channels foreseen by the degree course) may contact the lecturer and the

Assistant Teacher of the Workshops (to be defined) before the start of the workshop to report their specific situation. The procedures for the acquisition of the 4 CFUs by exempt students will be explained during the first meeting of the workshop.

Objectives

Through this course, with constant and participative class attendance, the following learning is to be promoted in terms of

Knowledge and understanding:

- Understand the forms, characteristics and political and cultural meanings of ethnographic texts;
- Probing the academic debate pertaining to ethnographic writing and, more generally, to the production of anthropological knowledge and its dissemination and communication.

Ability to relate differentiated knowledge and models:

- Analysing the relationships between knowledge production, writing practice and ethnographic contexts;
- To create a space for reflection along the students' educational and working paths, capable of relating personal experiences and acquired knowledge through writing.

Ability to apply knowledge and models:

- Produce, rework and organise ethnographic material;
- Experiment with scientific-academic writing models;
- Conceiving and developing a research project.

Methodologies

The course, which is workshop-based in nature, consists of approximately 30 hours of interactive teaching and approximately 10 hours of lectures. Conditions will therefore be fostered for the creation of an environment where students can feel free to express themselves without fear of judgement.

Lessons will favour participative teaching methodologies such as: active learning, interactive lecturing, plenary discussion, individual and group exercises, portfolio (dossier).

There will be no classes delivered remotely (except for the first meeting which, as stated above, will be streamed to allow those who have asked for an exemption - within the time and in the manner laid down by the Degree Course - to find out about the activities envisaged for obtaining the 4 CFUs)

Online and offline teaching materials

The workshop includes the use of academic texts, lecture sheets, use of videos, e-learning platform.

Individualised teaching materials will be selected if necessary according to the personal and professional interests of the students.

Programme and references

The programme includes ten lessons, entitled as follows:

1. Writing about oneself and others. Introduction to the workshop and first orientation exercises
2. Making and unmaking ethnography. The field notes
3. Creating listening spaces. Interviews in anthropology
4. What do I do now? Analysing data
5. Writing an academic article
6. When the going gets tough. The thesis
7. The research project (objectives, expected results, actions and timeline)
8. The research project (methodology, outputs and deliverables, ethical issues)
9. Other writings, the writings of others. Ethnography outside the academy
10. An evaluation of the workshop.

The programme may be subject to change according to the needs expressed by the attending students.

Below are some suggested readings, in alphabetical order, which will be discussed during the lessons:

Aull Davies C. (2008). Reflexive Ethnography. A Guide to Researching Selves and Others. Routledge: London e New York. Chapter 1: “Reflexivity and ethnographic research”.
Clifford J. (1990). “Notes on (Field)notes”. In: Sanjek R. (ed.), Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
Clifford J., Marcus G.E. (1986). Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. Berkeley: University of California Press (trad. it., 1997, Scrivere le culture. Poetiche e politiche dell’etnografia. Roma: Meltemi). Introduzione: “Partial truths”
DeWalt K.M., DeWalt B.R. (2011). Participant Observation. A Guide for Fieldworkers. Plymouth: AltaMira Press. Chapter 8: “Informal interviewing in participant observation”.
Eco, U. (2017). Come si fa una tesi di laurea. Milano: La nave di Teseo.
Grassi, P. (2019). “Note al margine. Scrittura e riscrittura tra campi periferici ed etnografie”. Tracce Urbane. Rivista Italiana Transdisciplinare Di Studi Urbani, 3(5).
Hengl, T., Gould, M.D. (2002). Rules of Thumb for Writing Research Articles. https://webapps.itc.utwente.nl/librarywww/papers/hengl_rules.pdf
Malighetti R. (2002). “La cospirazione del silenzio”. In: Fabietti U., Malighetti R., Matera V., Dal tribale al globale. Introduzione all’antropologia. Milano: Mondadori.
Matera V. (2015). La scrittura etnografica. Esperienza e rappresentazione nella produzione di conoscenze antropologiche. Milano: Elèuthera.
Ronzon F. (2008). Sul Campo. Breve guida alla ricerca etnografica. Roma: Meltemi. Capitolo 4: “L’analisi dei dati”.
Wulff H. (ed.) (2016). The Anthropologist as Writer. Genres and Contexts in the Twenty-First Century. New York and Oxford: Berghahn. Chapter 3. “O Anthropology, Where Art Thou? An Auto-Ethnography of Proposals”.

Part of the bibliography may be customised and supplemented according to the individual and professional interests of the students.

Assessment methods

Credit approval is linked to active attendance at the lessons and the proposed activities. At the end of the workshop, students must also hand in a dossier (a written paper) collecting the materials produced during the

meetings and a 5-page concluding reflection.

Office hours

By appointment, to be agreed by e-mail: paolo.grassi@unimib.it

Programme validity

The programmes are valid for two academic years.

Course tutors and assistants

Sustainable Development Goals

QUALITY EDUCATION | DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH