

070:526 Graduate Seminar in Urban Ethnography

Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas

Spring 2004

Prof. Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas

Class: Wednesday, 1:10-3:30 pm

Office Hours: Thursday, 4-5:30 at the Center for Latino Arts and Culture (122 College Ave)

I. Course Description

Ethnography stands at the core of anthropological knowledge production, of anthropological explanation and interpretation of culture and social life. The anthropological concept of ethnography has two meanings: ethnography as process (ethnographic “fieldwork”) and ethnography as product (ethnographic “text”). The process of ethnographic fieldwork involves relationships, communication, situated listening, observation and analytical reflection. Yet, rather than technique or method, ethnography in both senses of the word is a stance of knowledge production.

Likewise, as an embedded and embodied social inquiry, *urban* ethnography has the potential to provide detailed, textured, and grounded empirical formulations of the myriad changes that are remaking the face of 'late modern' societies as a result of the sweeping restructuring of economy, society, culture and politics across the globe. As anthropologists continue to grapple with changing notions of 'the field' from local to global, this course covers recent and emerging scholarship that explores theoretical problems of modernity, transnationalism, and diaspora in specific historical, political, and spatial contexts. Drawing on a range of ideas from world systems theories of globalization to notions of the invention of diasporas, to postmodern ideas of social constructions, the course emphasizes the interrelations between local and global cultural processes. These processes disrupt the often essentializing tendencies of ethnography and instead push us to examine different criteria for analyzing and constructing “communities” and “identities.” By engaging in critical examination of classic and contemporary urban ethnographies, particularly of the U.S., the course considers how anthropologists have thought about the varied forms of urbanism or “the city” and the communities that inhabit, deploy, and are shaped by them, while also considering the epistemological and theoretical concerns that emerge from these representations. Students will be asked to consider their own research projects in light of these epistemological and methodological complexities.

II. Requirements-- Students will be evaluated based on the following assignments and projects:

Attendance and Class Participation (20%): Students are expected not only to attend every class on time, but also to be prepared to discuss the readings and participate actively each time. Students will also be expected to contribute to discussions in class on a weekly basis. In pairs, each student will be responsible for facilitating two class sessions during the semester. The “*facilitators*” will be expected to prepare discussion questions and activities that will engage and instruct the class participants. They

should *not* deliver a mini-lecture or detailed description of the readings, but rather find strategies to stimulate conversation and discussion. The readings for which each student will be responsible will be assigned at the beginning of the semester. Since this is a graduate seminar, a large part of the responsibility for making class discussions relevant and engaging will fall on each student. Make sure, therefore, that you come to class having done the readings carefully.

Critical Essays and Responses (20%) : Every week each student will be required to hand in a *one- to two-page critical essay* on the assigned readings. These critical essays should demonstrate the student's reflection and analysis of key themes on the reading, as well as the student's personal insights. If there are multiple readings on any given day, the critical essay must integrate all of the readings and identify relevant themes, arguments, and methodologies. In the last twenty or so minutes of every class, students will exchange critical essays with each other. Each student will write a "response" to a classmate's critical essay. The critical essays and responses will be collected at the end of each class, and a grade will be given for all critical essays and responses at the end of the semester.

Autobiographical Essay (10%): Students will be asked to write an autobiographical essay on the topic of "Personal Encounters with Ethnography." Feminist theorists have taught us that our understanding of the world is deeply rooted in our experiences and vantage points (i.e. our subjectivities). Based on this premise, each student will write an essay about the lived experiences that have shaped how she/he views the world in general, and the ethnographic project (generally speaking, not necessarily her/his own ethnographic research) in particular. If you still have questions about this assignment once we discuss it in class, refer to Ruth Behar's "Biography in the Shadows," the concluding chapter of her book *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story*.

Oral Presentation and Prospectus/Bibliography (10%): Each student will be required to deliver a 15-20 minute presentation based on her/his final paper. On the day of the presentation, each student will hand in a 2-3 page prospectus, outlining the main goals and themes to be discussed in the final paper, as well as a 12-15 source bibliography, including books and journal articles.

Final Paper (40%): Students will be required to complete a 25-30 page paper on a topic of their choice to be determined in consultation with the instructor. The paper should be conceived as a potentially publishable journal article. Graduate school is the best time to begin submitting articles to journals and creating an adequate research agenda, and doing so will be greatly helpful once you are on the "job market." Take advantage of this classroom opportunity to write a high-quality, creative paper that can also serve as a contribution to your field of interest (40%).

III. Readings: The books for the class will be available at the Douglass College Bookstore. The journal articles will be available for purchase (as a package) from Pequod Printing (119 Somerset Street). The readings for the class will be on reserve at Alexander Library. Additionally, many of the journal articles can also be downloaded electronically from the respective e-journals referenced.

Caldeira, Teresa. 2000. *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in Sao Paulo*. Berkeley:

University of California Press.

De Genova, Nicholas, and Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas. 2003. *Latino Crossings: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and the Politics of Race and Citizenship*. Routledge.

Gregory, Steven. *Black Corona*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hartigan, John. 1999. *Racial Situations: Class Predicaments of Whiteness in Detroit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Ortner, Sherry. 2003. *New Jersey Dreaming: Capital, Culture, and the Class of '58*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Sandhya, Shukla. 2003. *India Abroad: Diasporic Cultures of Postwar America and England*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

IV. Course Overview

January 21: Introduction

Anthropology and Cities

January 28: Foster, George M. and Robert V. Kemper. "Anthropological Fieldwork in Cities." Gmelch and Zenner, pp. 131-145.

Harvey, David. "Cartographic Identities: geographical knowledges under globalization." In *Spaces of Capital*. New York: Routledge, pp.208-233..

Lefebvre, Henri. "Social Spaces." In *The Production of Space*. New York: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 68-168.

[Low, Setha M. 1996. The Anthropology of Cities: Imagining and Theorizing the City. Annual Review of Anthropology. 25: 383-409.](#)

Zukin, Sharon. "Whose Culture? Whose City?." In *The Culture of Cities*. New York: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 1-47.

The "Downtown": Lifestyles, Consumption, and the Politics of Urban "Renewal"

February 4: Di Leonardo, Micaela. 1998. "Patterns of Culture Wars." *Exotics at Home: Anthropologies, Others, American Modernity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 314-437.

Pollan, Michael. 1997. Town-Building is No Mickey Mouse Operation. *The New York Times Magazine*. December 14: 56-88.

Zukin, Sharon. 1998. Urban lifestyles: diversity and standardization in spaces of consumption. *Urban Studies*. 35(5-6):825-839.

"Inner"-City: Urban Spaces and Racial Formations

February 11: Goudreau, Isar. 2002. "Changing Space, Making Race: Distance, Nostalgia, and the Folklorization of Blackness in Puerto Rico." *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 9: 281-304.

Rabinowitz, Dan. 2002. "Oriental Othering and National Identity: A Review of Early Israeli Anthropological Studies of Palestinians." *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 9: 305-325..

Ramos-Zayas, Ana. 2001. "Racializing the 'Invisible' Race: Latino Constructions of 'White Culture' and Whiteness in Chicago." *Urban Anthropology* 30(4): 341-380.

Wacquant, Loïc. 1997. Three pernicious premises in the study of the American ghetto. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. 21(2):341-353.

February 18: Gregory, Steven. *Black Corona*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

February 25: No class due to prior conference commitment. However, students will be asked to hand in the Autobiographical Essay by 5 PM PM at the Center for Latino Arts and Culture (122 College Avenue). Students will also be invited to attend a lecture that I will be giving in the American Studies Department on Friday, March 5th.as a way of compensating for the missed class (however, attending the lecture is optional).

March 3: Hartigan, John. 1999. *Racial Situations: Class Predicaments of Whiteness in Detroit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Urban-ness/Suburban-ness, and Classed Identities

March 10: Ortner, Sherry. 2003. *New Jersey Dreaming: Capital, Culture, and the Class of '58*. Durham: Duke University Press.

March 17: Spring Break. No class.

Citizenship and "Illegality" in the City

March 24: De Genova, Nicholas, and Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas. 2003. *Latino Crossings: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and the Politics of Race and Citizenship*. Routledge.

Sex and the City

March 31: Brennan, Denise. 2001. "Tourism in Transnational Places: Dominican Sex Workers and German Sex Tourists Imagine One Another." *Identities*, Vol. 7(4): 621-663.

Howe, Alyssa Cymene. 2001. [Queer Pilgrimage: The San Francisco Homeland and Identity Tourism](#). *Cultural Anthropology*. 16(1):35-61.

Illouz, Eva. 1997. "An All-Consuming Love." In *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

"A Dangerous Place": The City and Crime-Talk

April 7: Caldeira, Teresa. 2000. *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in Sao Paulo*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Global Cities, Cultural Commodities

April 14: Sandhya, Shukla. 2003. *India Abroad: Diasporic Cultures of Postwar America and England*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

April 21: Condry, Ian. "Japanese Hip-Hop and the Globalization of Popular Culture." Gmelch and Zenner, pp. 372-387.

Graham, Mark, and Shahram Khosravi. 2002. "Reordering Public and Private in Iranian Cyberspace: Identity, Politics, and Mobilization." *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 9: 219-246.

April 28: Oral Presentations

May 5: Final Paper DUE