PUBLIC ANTHROPOLOGY: CRITIQUE, COLLABORATION, INTERVENTION AND EXPERIMENTATION WITH PUBLICS

WiSe 2019-20 – BA in Europäische Ethnologie | 4 ECTS
Wednesdays, 12-14 - Room 212, IfEE

Lecturer: Dr. Tomás S. Criado, Chair of Urban Anthropology, IfEE
Office: Room 131 – Mührenstr. 40-41
+49 (0)30 2093 70849
E-mail: tomas.criado@hu-berlin.de
Office hours: Wednesdays 14:30-16:30 (appointment by email)

Summary of the course

What does it mean to undertake anthropology in contemporary domains populated by a wide variety of ‘publics’? Publics are perhaps the collective condition of knowledge production and circulation in the contemporary: not just as media-provoked entities—the ‘public sphere’ or scientific and professional societies, connected through ‘publications’—, but also the many uncertain and emergent collectives that gather in different degrees of involvement under issues of concern, and using a variety of mediums. An anthropology aware of its public dimension should hence not only be one that calls for other forms of media involvement—critical or otherwise—, but also, and more importantly, one that develops a wide variety of forms of engagement—ethnographic and non-ethnographic—with publics.

Combining the readings of texts as well as practical exercises, this course retraces the emergence of this field of interests to the works of different anthropologists exploring different modes of ‘public engagement’: from critical denunciation, militant or advocacy work to an experimentation with collaborative conditions of inquiry and public debate, but also of intervention. For this reason, the course also wishes to equip students to develop their work in a wide variety of ‘public genres’—texts, drawings, or audiovisuals, platforms and venues in more or less digital settings or venues—so that they could not only critique but also learn to collaborate, intervene and experiment in a wide variety of contemporary ‘public conditions’.
Basic readings

Although the course will be based on concrete readings per session, the following books will be available for your consultation in the library in case you wanted to read or know more:


Methodology and requirements to pass the course

In the course, we will all be working on issues and themes having to do with the contemporary housing and real estate crisis in Berlin (receiving loads of media attention, and being not only the source of many debates but also artistic and activist interventions).

Working in groups, choose a concrete topic on this theme on which to work. Throughout the course, you will have to do a small research around it. In the course we will be exploring how to re-equip as well as how make your anthropological skills matter to account for it. In order to pass the course, each person must do the following:

i. **Part I**: In each session 2 to 3 people, with the guidance of the lecturer, will prepare a presentation of the main and support texts; the remaining students will mostly read the main texts and ask clarifying questions and summarize the presentation in the moodle.

ii. **Parts II, III & IV**:
   - Students should form stable groups, who should choose a particular topic to undertake a small research project.
   - In each session, a representative of each group should work with other representatives from different groups to prepare a presentation on one of the ‘public genres’ or modes of ‘public engagement’, summarizing the different works. The remaining group members should ask questions, leading to understand how each ‘genre’ or mode of ‘engagement’ might be impacting on their small research and the potential output they might be producing.
   - As a closure of Part IV all groups will have to prepare an account to be displayed in a ‘public showroom,’ later uploading it to the moodle by 21.02.2020.
Organization of the course

16.10 | Introductory session

PART I. From ‘public anthropology’ to ‘anthropology amongst publics’

23.10 | Public anthropology

*Main text:


*Support texts:


30.10 | Anthropology amongst ‘publics’

*Main text:


*Support texts:


PART II. Public genres: Anthropological openings through different media

Using preparatory readings as examples, we will explore how to undertake different genres of public accounting. Your small research projects around the contemporary housing and real estate crisis in Berlin should be developed as a testing ground for them.

6.11 | Picturing (with) others

*Main text:

*Support texts:


**13.11 | NO CLASS**

**20.11 | Exhibiting**

*Main text:


*Support texts:


*Examples to analyze:

EBANO: [https://www.ebanocollective.org/](https://www.ebanocollective.org/)

Ethnographic Terminalia: [http://ethnographicterminalia.org/](http://ethnographicterminalia.org/)

**27.11 | Meeting**

*Main text:


*Examples to analyze:


4.12 | Gaming

*Main text:


*Examples to analyze:

- Workshop à la carte: https://workshopalacarte.wordpress.com/
- IfEE–Stadtlabor’s critical urban games

11.12 | Popularizing

*Main text:


*Support text:


*Examples to analyze:


18.12 | Digital openings

*Main text:

PART III. Public engagement: Anthropological modes

Using preparatory readings as examples, in class we will explore different types of engagement we might wish to develop to make our research public, and their implications.

8.1 | Critique & Militancy

*SSupport text:


*BSupport texts:


15.1 | Collaboration I: Co-writing

*Main text:


*Support text:

**22.1 Collaboration II: Para-siting and co-laboration**

* Main text:


* Support texts:


**29.1 Collaboration III: Devicing fieldwork**

* Main text:


* Support texts:


**PART IV. A debate and an exercise**

**5.2 Ethnographic refusal: A debate**

So far we have been discussing modes of engagement, but what if the public role of the anthropologist also included forms of ‘disengagement.’ When and how should that happen? Using elements from the small research pursued by the group, students should position themselves with regards to the implications of ‘ethnographic refusal.’
* Main texts:


* Support text:


12.2 Public showroom

All groups should display their accounts in any of the public genres and testing one of the modes of engagement here explored for a final ‘public showroom,’ inviting other colleagues and friends, the people you have been in touch with for your projects as well as other teachers. Students as a whole will be in charge of setting up the space where these different accounts should be discussed publicly.

After the showroom, each group should publish the account—or documentation of it—in the course’s moodle, accompanied by a brief explanation (250-500 words) on the type of public engagement sought, deriving from the course’s literature.

Deadline: **21.02.2020**