

Problems of Method: Interdisciplinary Graduate Seminar --SOC 671 4H

Fall 2022

Graduate Department, 725 Spadina Avenue, Room 240

Seminar Meeting Time: Wednesday 9-11 AM

Professor Mahua Sarkar

mahua.sarkar@utoronto.ca

Office: 725 Spadina Avenue, Room 244

Course Website

Course Description

This interdisciplinary graduate seminar focuses on mainly three qualitative research methodologies—archival research, ethnography, and oral history—with particular attention to significant ongoing debates regarding the epistemologies underpinning each of these. The course focuses on both the practical aspects of these methodologies and examples of works that employ them. An underlying aim of the course is to evaluate critically the dualisms central to positivism—a paradigm that is challenged, and yet continues to be influential as part of the “disciplinary unconscious” that informs contemporary social science and humanities scholarship.

Requirements and Evaluations

- 20% Attendance, discussion questions, and overall quality of participation.
- 80% Final research paper/critical analysis, round-table presentation, abstract
 - Abstract and bibliography 5%
 - Presentation 20%
 - Final Paper 55%

Attendance and Participation (20%)

- Regular attendance and respectful, active participation in discussions throughout the term is mandatory.
- Please read all texts and watch films designated for each week before class (unless otherwise announced).
- Please post 2 key points/questions /comments (no more than one page, double spaced) each week on the Discussion Board by 8:30 am. These posts –meant to facilitate discussion in the seminar--will not be graded individually, but will count cumulatively toward the class participation grade.

- Each student will lead class discussion once during the term. Depending on class size, one or more students may introduce the readings assigned in any given week. We will prepare a presentation roster at the beginning of the term.
- Participation in class will be evaluated based on both the regularity of contributions to the discussion, as well as the level of understanding of the texts (readings, films, lectures) reflected in them.

Final Paper and Presentation (5% + 55% + 20%)

- A one-page abstract and preliminary bibliography due on **November 2, 2022** on Quercus. Please make appointments to see me well before this date to discuss possible topics.
- A term paper (20 pages, typed, double-spaced, 12 point font, 1" margins) submitted to Ouriginal no later than 11:59 pm on **December 16, 2022**.
- The term paper may follow one of the following two formats:
 - i. A comparative critical review of significant debates around two methodologies discussed in the course. This critical review must include
 - a. A discussion of texts included in the syllabus in connection with two methodologies.
 - b. A minimum of 4 academic sources outside of course readings (e.g. journal articles, monographs, book chapters) must be consulted and integrated into the final paper for a passing mark.
 - c. A really good paper will offer a comparative discussion of the two chosen methods.
 - ii. A research paper based on original research that students will conduct using one of the methodologies the course spotlights.
 - a. The paper must draw on readings assigned in connection with any one methodology and
 - b. Consult and integrate a minimum of 4 academic sources outside the course readings (e.g. journal articles, monographs, book chapters).
- Papers will be evaluated in terms of the students' ability to identify key debates and frame their own contribution—in terms of either primary or secondary research-- within them. To be considered exceptional, a paper must demonstrate both analytical rigour and ability to synthesize ideas and debates, rather than simply summarise texts or report findings. It must also adopt a critical comparative stance.

- Students will also present their final papers at a Roundtable mini conference towards the end of term. Depending on class size, the Roundtable may take 1 or 2 seminar meetings.

Late Submission of Assignments

- All assignments must be submitted on time.
- If you experience an illness, injury, or a family emergency that requires an extension for your final paper, please contact Professor Sarkar within 24 hours of the said event.
- Any request for an extension must be accompanied by appropriate documentation (e.g. doctor's note).
- As a rule, I will not accept late assignments outside of emergencies.

Academic Integrity Clause

Copying, plagiarizing, falsifying medical certificates, or other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Any student caught engaging in such activities will be referred to the Dean's office for adjudication. Any student abetting or otherwise assisting in such misconduct will also be subject to academic penalties. Students are expected to cite sources in all written work and presentations. See this link for tips for how to use sources well:

(<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize>).

According to Section B.I.1.(e) of the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters it is an offence "to submit, without the knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere."

By enrolling in this course, you agree to abide by the university's rules regarding academic conduct, as outlined in the Calendar. You are expected to be familiar with the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters

(<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/code-behaviour-academic-matters-july-1-2019>) and Code of Student Conduct

(<https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/students/#codeconduct>) which spell out your rights, your duties and provide all the details on grading regulations and academic offences at the University of Toronto.

All of your submitted assignments will automatically be run through a new plagiarism detection tool, Ouriginal, for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. (Ouriginal replaces Turnitin.) In doing so, you will allow your assignments to be included as source documents in the Ouriginal reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of

the Original service are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation website: <https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>

Accessibility Services

It is the University of Toronto's goal to create a community that is inclusive of all persons and treats all members of the community in an equitable manner. In creating such a community, the University aims to foster a climate of understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of all persons. Please see the University of Toronto Governing Council "[Statement of Commitment Regarding Persons with Disabilities](https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/statement-commitment-regarding-persons-disabilities-february-25-2021)" at <https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/statement-commitment-regarding-persons-disabilities-february-25-2021>.

In working toward this goal, the University will strive to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities, participate in the full range of activities that the University offers, and achieve their full potential as members of the University community. We take seriously our obligation to make this course as welcoming and accessible as feasible for students with diverse needs. We also understand that disabilities can change over time and will do our best to accommodate you.

Students seeking support must have an intake interview with a disability advisor to discuss their individual needs. In many instances it is easier to arrange certain accommodations with more advance notice, so we strongly encourage you to act as quickly as possible. To schedule a registration appointment with a disability advisor, please visit Accessibility Services at <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>, call at 416-978-8060, or email at: accessibility.services@utoronto.ca. The office is located at 455 Spadina Avenue, 4th Floor, Suite 400.

Additional student resources for distressed or emergency situations can be located at distressedstudent.utoronto.ca; Health & Wellness Centre, 416-978-8030, <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>, or Student Crisis Response, 416-946-7111.

Equity and Diversity

All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect. It is our collective responsibility to create a space that is inclusive and welcomes discussion. Discrimination, harassment and hate speech will not be tolerated; please alert me to any behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of any person in this course or otherwise creates an intimidating or hostile environment. You'll find

additional information and reports on Equity and Diversity at the University of Toronto online at <http://equity.hrandequity.utoronto.ca>.

Copyright

Please note that lectures and course materials are considered Intellectual Property of the instructor and they are covered by the Copyright Act, RSC 1985, c C-42. These materials are made available to you for your own study purposes, and cannot be shared outside of the class or “published” in any way. Lectures, whether in person or online, cannot be recorded without the instructor’s permission. Posting course materials or any recordings you may make to other websites without the express permission of the instructor will constitute copyright infringement.

Readings: Readings will be accessible via Quercus. Many are also available online through the UofT Library. In the event that the number of chapters assigned exceed the copyright restrictions, it is your responsibility to get the relevant chapters copied from the physical copies of the books placed on Reserve at the library.

Books (Selected Chapters)

- Clifford, James and George E. Marcus (eds). *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. 25th Anniversary edition. University of California Press, 2020 (Introduction, “Partial Truths”)
- Ginzburg, Carlo. *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989 (Chapters 5 and 8)
- Nagy Hesse-Biber, S. and P. Leavy (eds.) *Approaches to Qualitative Research: A Reader on Theory and Practice*. Oxford Univ. Press, 2006 (Chapters 1 and 2)
- Perks, Robert and Alistair Thomson (eds.) *The Oral History Reader*, 3rd edition. Taylor & Francis, 2015 (Chapters by Haley [1], Portelli [4], James [6]).
- Sarkar, Mahua. *Visible Histories, Disappearing Women: Producing Muslim Womanhood in Late Colonial Bengal*. Duke, 2008 (“Colonial Cast” and “Difference in Memory”)
- Steinmetz, George (ed.). *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences: Positivism and its Epistemological Others*. Duke, 2005 (“Introduction”, and chapters by Keane [Estrangement], and Eley [On Your Marx]).
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolphé. *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Beacon Press, 20th Anniversary Edition, 2015 (Chapters 1&2)

Articles

- Abu-Lughod, Lila. "Can there be a Feminist Ethnography?" *Women and Performance*, 5, 1 (1990): 7-27.
- Atkinson, Paul, Amanda Coffey, and Sara Delamont, "Ethnography: Post, Past and Present." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, Vol. 28, 5 (October 1999): 460-471.
- Becker, Howard, S. "The Writing of Science". *Contemporary Sociology*, 16, 1 (January 1987): 25-27
- Burton, Antoinette. "Introduction," in A. Burton (ed.) *Archive Stories: Facts, Fiction and the Writing of History*. Duke, 2005.
- Crasnow, Sharon. "Is Standpoint Theory a Resource for Feminist Epistemology? An Introduction". *Hypatia* vol. 24, no. 4 (Fall, 2009): 189-192
- Deegan, Mary Jo, "The Chicago School of Ethnography," in Paul Atkinson et al. (eds.) *The Handbook of Ethnography*, 2001.
- Ghosh, Amitav. "The Imam and the Indian", in *Incendiary Circumstances*. Houghton Mifflin, 2005.
- Harding, Sandra. "Standpoint Theories: Productively Controversial". *Hypatia* vol. 24, no. 4 (Fall, 2009): 192-200
- Miles, Tiya, "Of Waterways and Runaways", *Michigan Quarterly Review*, July 1, 2011.
- Passerini, Luisa "Work ideology and consensus under Italian fascism" in *The Oral History Reader*, First Edition, 53-62.
- Randolphe, John "On the Biography of the Bakunin Family Archive", Burton, A. (ed.) *Archive Stories: Facts, Fiction and the Writing of History*. Duke, 2005
- Schrock, R. "The Methodological Imperatives of Feminist Ethnography", *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, 5 (2013). Available: http://www.jfsonline.org/issue5/pdfs/Schrock_FINAL.pdf
- Scott, David. "Locating the Anthropological Subject: Postcolonial Anthropologists in Other Places." In *Traveling Theories, Traveling Theorists, Inscriptions* Vol. 5, eds. J. Clifford and V. Dhareshwar.
- Stacey, Judith, "Can there be a Feminist Ethnography?" in *Women's Words*, eds. S. Gluck and D. Patai, 1991.
- Thompson, Alistair. "Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History", *The Oral History Review*, 2007, Vol.34 (1): 49-70

Films (Subject to availability)

- Exterminate All the Brutes*, Episode 1, Director: Raoul Peck, 2021.
- Kitchen Stories*. Director Bent Hamer, 2003
- Waltz with Bashir*, Director: Ari Folman, 2008.

Provisional Course Schedule

I. Positivism and its Others

- 9/14: Film and Discussion, *Kitchen Stories*. Director Bent Hamer, 2003 (92 min.)
- 9/21: Steinmetz, “Introduction”, Keane, “Estrangement, Intimacy”, Sewell, “The Political Unconscious”, and Eley, “On your Marx”, all in Steinmetz (ed.) *The Politics of Method*.

II. Defining Qualitative Research

- 9/28:
 - Guba and Lincoln, “Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Methods” in *Approaches to Qualitative Research*
 - Sprague and Zimmerman, “Overcoming Dualisms”, in *Approaches to Qualitative Research*
 - Crasnow, “*Is Standpoint Theory a Resource for Feminist Epistemology?*”
 - Harding, “Standpoint Theories: Productively Controversial”.

III. The Historical Method and Archives

- 10/5: Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, Chapters 5 & 8.

10/11—10/14: No Class Reading Week UTSC

- 10/19:
 - Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, Chapters 1 and 2.
 - Sarkar, “The Colonial Cast” in *Visible Histories*, Chapter 1.
 - Film Discussion: *Exterminate All the Brutes, Episode 1* (Please watch film before coming to class)

Recommended:

- Randolphe, “On the Biography of the Bakunin Family Archive” in *Archive Stories*

IV. Ethnography Debates

- 10/26:
 - Clifford, “Partial Truths” in *Writing Culture*
 - Becker, “Writing Science”.

- Scott, “Locating the Anthropological Subject: Postcolonial Anthropologists in Other Places.”
- Ghosh, “The Imam and the Indian” in *Incendiary Circumstances*

Recommended:

- Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont, “Ethnography: Post, Past and Present.”
- Deegan, “The Chicago School of Ethnography” in *Handbook of Ethnography*
- 11/2:
 - Abu-Lughod, “Can there be a Feminist Ethnography?”
 - Stacey, “Can there be a Feminist Ethnography?” in *Women’s Words*

****One page Abstract and Preliminary Bibliography for Final Paper due** on November 2.**

V. Oral History

- 11/9:
 - Alistair Thompson, “Four Paradigms”, *The Oral History Review*.
 - Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” in *The Oral History Reader*

Recommended:

- Passerini, “Work ideology and consensus under Italian fascism” in *The Oral History Reader*, First Edition, 53-62.
- 11/16:
 - James, “Listening in the Cold,” from *The Oral History Reader*.
 - Sarkar, “Difference in Memory”, Chapter 5 in *Visible Histories*

11/23 & 11/30: Round table: Presentation of Final Papers

VI. Ending

- 12/7: Film and discussion: *Waltz with Bashir*

Final Papers Due on Ouriginals by 11:59 pm on December 16.

