# Doing anthropological research: Advanced course for PhD students
## Netherlands School for Anthropology (NESA)

## COURSE OUTLINE

## 1. General information

Study load: 6 ECTS
Instruction language:  English

Teacher and course developer(s)/coordinator:
Dr. Joost Beuving (Radboud University) has over 20 years of ethnographic research experience and he published widely in high-quality journals. He is the co-author of *Doing Qualitative Research. The Craft of Naturalistic Inquiry* (Amsterdam University Press). He can be reached at joost.beuving@ru.nl. Co-developers are Dr. Edwin Rap (Utrecht University) and Elke Linders, MSc (Radboud University).

Period:
2022 Fall (November/December), Monday afternoon, 13:30 – 17:00.
Venue: University of Utrecht, particulars to be announced.

## 2. Introduction
This advanced research course helps you, a PhD student in anthropology and/or a related social science discipline, to broaden and deepen your ethnographic literacy. The course considers ethnography as anthropology's epistemological core, and it is organised around five emergent problems in anthropological research, here summarised as (a) the (s)p(l)ace of the field, (b) data ethics- and management, c) multi/interspecies ethnography, (d) ethnographic cyber/e-research, and (e) team science. The course offers you a set of fundamental reflections about these problems and it explores ongoing methodological innovation that is emerging in response to it, meanwhile keeping a sharp eye on anthropology's broader academic ecosystem. At the same time, the course is committed to applying these fundamental reflections and explorations to your research practice(s): *doing* anthropological research features centre stage. To foster this craft-based commitment, the course is organised as seven weekly, intensive research seminars during November/December, wherein you work on research assignments tailored to your own PhD study, present work-in-progress to your peers and the course teacher, as well as prepare a final essay exploring a key ethnographic/methodological challenge in your own study.

## 3. Entry requirements
The course assists you to design and execute your PhD research project. It assumes that you are familiar with ethnographic research methods on MA/Research MA level, preferably in combination with some practical ethnographic fieldwork experience. If you lack these requirements, you are advised to consult with the teacher ahead of the start of the course. It is further advisable that you follow the course in an early stage of your PhD project.
On **Wednesday September 7th** we will organise an **introductory session** to get acquainted with your specific needs and wishes, based on which we will further develop the course.

## 4. Weekly schedule

| | Week | Theme | Description |
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| *introduction* | 1 (7 Nov) | The course and you | *Course objectives, weekly schedule, deliverables as well as your expectations and contributions.* |
| | | We begin the course by taking stock of your research background and professional experience(s), as well as of your expectations of, and expected contributions to, the course. It further introduces you to the main themes of the course, specifically ethnography as anthropology's epistemology and emergent methodological issues following from it. It discusses the many challenges that anthropology faces in 21st century social research as well as the various solutions to grapple with them, specifically questioning around how these challenges and solutions reshape the field and enable new forms of anthropological research. The session ends by outlining the rest of the course to you, and by discussing the various deliverables (assignments, final essay). | |
| *fundamentals* | 2 (14 Nov) | (S)p(l)ace of the field | *Where is the field? How does your ethnographic case study square with it?* |
| | | Due to ongoing processes of globalization and digitization, the 'field' of ethnographic fieldwork in reality encompasses multiple places, spaces and actors/species, those occupying the virtual/cyberworld included. Conceptualising where your field is situated, and how your ethnographic case(s) articulate(s) with it, requires careful reflection about the flows of people, 'stuff' and ideas across the online/offline, global/local and human/non-human binaries that informs your case(s). It further raises novel questions about the self, the multiplicity of identity(ies) and the locus of agency: in the rise of new digital subjectivities (*homo digitalis*), and in connection with other non-human actors and/or species; and how can we study them anthropologically? | |
| | 3 (21 Nov) | Data ethics- and management | *What is 'data'? How to cope with the consequences of data auditing? What does it mean to be a responsible academic in the auditing era?* |
| | | Universities subject anthropology to an increasingly strict 'data auditing' regime purported to pre-empt academic fraud: fabricating facts where there are none, ignoring unruly or unwelcome facts & cetera. Yet the associated data management systems reduce complex ethical issues in the field to a bureaucratization of decency. Further, informed consent, widely seen as a panacea to overcome ethical ambiguity, imparts the routine creation of artificial research situations. Moreover, it assumes consensus about 'data', yet how does this square with the processual nature of ethnographic material, viewing data as a social construction that you create through particular research procedures and in resonance with some theoretical frame of reference? And how can anthropologists strategically navigate the auditing framework, yet remain morally and reflexively accountable? | |

| | 4 (28 Nov) | Multi/inter-species ethnography | *How can anthropology accommodate the ethnographic study of more-than-human socialities? What is the place of non-human species in anthropological research?* |
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| *innovations* | | | In response to essentializing discourses of the Anthropocene, anthropological research increasingly engages with studying the dynamic interface of human and more-than-human socialities, bridging biological, cultural and political modes of ethnographic inquiry. Multispecies ethnography presents an intellectual innovation that addresses human interactions with animals, plants and other life forms. Foregrounding conviviality and interactional encounters between humans and nonhumans, such studies explore interspecies intersubjectivities, softening the 'nature-culture' divide. Moreover, the term 'species' warrants further deconstruction; what to make, for instance, of virtual interfaces powered by 'virtually intelligent' algorithms as well as social companion robots? |
| | 5 (5 Dec) | Doing ethnographic e-research | *How can virtual ethnography and other e-research strategies enrich 'classical' anthropological fieldwork? What are consequences for the objects we reflexively study?* |
| | | | A wave of new e-research strategies and accompanying debates engulfs anthropology, and how can this enrich ethnographic practice? A useful distinction may be made between, on the one hand, online ethnographic data associated with 21$^{st}$ century digital interfaces and technologies, often as mobile apps, which can be explored with novel e-research strategies such as visual and network methods applied to social media platforms. On the other hand, we can also study on-line, digital worlds as distinctive object, such as multiplayer global games. And what to make of a special ethnographic problematique, which regards how on-line connectivity punctuates off-line social interaction, for instance in the platform economy? |
| *ecosystem* | 6 (9 Dec) | Team science | *How can anthropologists collaborate with other disciplines and/or citizens while making its unique ethnographic contribution?* |
| | | | Funding regimes favour inter/multi/trans-disciplinary research teams over stand-alone research initiative, requiring a fundamental rethinking of what disciplinary collaboration however shaped entails. How to marry, for instance, variance-oriented ('quantitative') and interpretive ('qualitative') traditions in social research? How can they be made to speak 'symphonically'? Further, there is increasing scope for, and demand of, the general public to partake in social research teams as 'citizen scientists. Though enticing, this raises novel questions how academic and social problems may converge in a meaningful way? What does such co-creation of social research mean for, say, academic standards and the nature of social knowledge? In sum, how can anthropology reposition itself in this changed ecosystem while staying committed to making its unique ethnographic contribution? |

| | 7 (16 Dec) | Concluding session | *Lessons learnt, consequences for your further anthropological study.* |
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| *wrapping-up* | | We end the course in a collaborative round table wherein we explore the main lessons learnt, thereby specifically focusing on your work and the advances in ethnographic literacy that you made during the course. We will take stock of further steps that you could take to continue to improve the quality of your ethnographic work, including a reflection on new, interesting questions that could be explored more in-depth, considering ethnographic approaches that you may benefit from and literature that you may find inspiring. Thus, we will take a survey of interesting themes for further ethnographic inquiry after integration of the various assignments, with a view to identify interesting topics for your final essay. | |

## 5. Literature
The course draws on a selection of journal articles and book chapters, which will be announced and circulated before the course starts.

## 6. Coursework
The coursework consists of weekly assignments that are connected to your own PhD study. You are required to present the assignments to your peers, and to prepare a final essay. More details about the assignments, presentation and final essay will be circulated prior to the start of the course.

## 7. Literature

*To be supplied in advance of the course*

## 8. Assignments
*To be supplied in advance of the course*

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