SEMINAR DESCRIPTION

Political ethnography is an interdisciplinary research strategy based on the immersion of the researcher in the subject matter and reasoning from within social practice to generate contextual knowledge claims. The seminar accordingly focuses on the study of politics ‘from below’ and ‘from within’ to make sense of power relations in particular political settings. It addresses research questions that require an investigation into the meanings of specific political practices, concepts and processes to situational actors in order to illuminate wider-ranging or more theoretical issues of political concern.

While the course does not elaborate on the philosophical underpinnings of interdisciplinary research, it operates at the conceptual level which presupposes familiarity with different research traditions. It discusses at length the principles of interpretive research however and as such engages texts from across social sciences and social theory. The seminar is open to all researchers interested in the study of politics, but it is particularly suitable for those that intend to conduct fieldwork that requires some degree of ‘ethnographic sensibility’, including different modes of in-situ interviewing (e.g. conversational interviewing, ordinary language interviewing), different degrees of participant observation, and the reconstruction of policy meanings.

The seminar is reading intensive and requires considerable engagement from the participants.

EVALUATION

1. Seminar contribution – 15 %
2. Resumes – 40%

The chapters from the IRD textbook are to be read by everyone and they are not to be included in the resumes. For your resumes, please every time choose two readings, on the assumptions that the others have been skimmed as well. Resumes must not exceed 350 words. Each resume needs to include the following:

- how the texts assigned for the session fit together, i.e. how they approach the theme of the seminar;
- the argument of each reading yet not lifted from the text but summarized in a way that demonstrates the understanding of its logic;
- the basic shortcomings/conceptual and empirical flaws of each reading.
Resumes should be sent by 5 pm on the day before the seminar and they will serve to organize the discussion.

3. Essay based on fieldwork – 45%

SEMINAR BREAKDOWN

1. Thinking interpretatively

The basic premises of interpretive inquiry and interpretive research design


Additional:


2. Abduction and in-situ concept development

Elements of abductive reasoning and concept formation

- IRD, Chapter 3

3. Constructing the field

The notion of the field and its generation. The indigenous researcher.


Additional:


4. Reflexivity and ethics in production of knowledge

Cogeneration of knowledge and reflexive methodology

• IRD, Chapter 6.

5. Fieldwork and PO (in IR)

• IRD, Chapter 5
6. Talking with people: conversation and interrogation