**Reading and Research Groups at UCL Anthropology**

Our approximately 100 research students form a vital part of the intellectual life of the Anthropology Department at UCL. In addition to their relationship to individual supervisors, and as well as attending one or more of the Department's five weekly research seminars, research students are expected to participate in regular Reading and Research Groups (RRGs). Bringing students and staff together to exchange ideas on themes of mutual interest, our RRGs draw their membership from all parts of the Department, as well as welcoming participants from other UCL Departments and other London Colleges.

Conceived as open spaces for the exchange of ideas in groupings that cut across divides between Biological Anthropology, Material Culture Studies and Social Anthropology, the RRGs are designed also to enliven the collective intellectual life of the Department and the wider College by organising regular public events, such as workshops, conferences and debates. They are also intended as fora for the development of scholarly publications, as well as applications for the funding of collaborative research projects.

Below are listed the RRGs that will be running in the Department this year. Further groups may emerge during the year, as research students and staff develop common interests in particular fields and directions in interaction with each other. If you wish to set up your own RRG (which you are more than welcome to do), please contact Martin Holbraad (m.holbraad@ucl.ac.uk), who is responsible for their co-ordination.

To join one or more RRGs you need to logon to the Departmental ‘Moodle’ system (http://moodle.ucl.ac.uk) and enrol in the corresponding Moodle module. Either search for the individual title in which you are interested, or search ‘ANTH RRG’ to view all of the options available. The same enrolment key, ‘RRG’, is needed to complete enrolment in each of the modules.

Some RRGs are open to Masters students, while others are restricted only to Research students. Masters students interested in joining a particular RRG are advised to consult the relevant RRG’s description below and, where appropriate, contact the RRG’s organiser(s) to inquire whether they can join.

For more information about the Reading and Research Groups you can also visit the Departmental web-pages, at:

https://www.ucl.ac.uk/anthropology/research/reading-research-groups
List of Groups

ANTHROPOLOGY OF CHRISTIANITY
READING GROUP
(Inter-collegiate group, coordinated by Alina Apostu, SOAS)

WHERE & WHEN: Every third Wednesday of the month at 6pm, Staff Common Room, UCL Anthropology Department, 14 Taviton St
FIRST MEETING: Wednesday 18th October, 6pm, Staff Common Room, UCL Anthropology Department
MOODLE DETAILS: https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=40391

This reading and discussion group engages with the wide-ranging phenomena called ‘Christianity’. We read widely, addressing western and eastern, credal and non-credal, historical and contemporary Christian groups. The group explores the many forms of Christianity in their points of contact with, transformations and impact upon larger social, cultural, political and religious spheres. Further, discussions also offer space for reflection upon the anthropological practice in the study of Christianity and its role and influence with the wider project of the anthropology of religion.

Many in the group are actively involved in research projects on or about Christianity so at times we take the opportunity to share some of our own working papers in a seminar-like setting.

The group is open to anyone with an interest in academic studies of Christianity. Please contact Alina Apostu (alina_apostu@soas.ac.uk) for more information or to be added to the email list. The group also hosts a Facebook page (managed by Anamaria Melhado), where information about seminars, conferences, exhibitions etc related to Christianity is posted.

ANTHROPOLOGY OF HINDUISM
(Organised by Priyesh Patel & Gayatri Juneja)

LOCATION: Fortnightly, 2pm Thursdays
FIRST MEETING: Thursday 26th October, at 2pm, Staff Common Room
MOODLE DETAILS: TBC

Hinduism is arguably one of the most difficult of the major world religious traditions to accurately define and explain in any concise manner, especially using Western models and modes of understanding. Unlike the Judeo-Christian approach to religion, in which a specific text, a unique prophet or set of prophets, and the teachings attributed to these prophets establish the main
parameters of the faith, Hinduism cannot be contained or defined in this way. What has come to be called “Hinduism” has had multiple influences in its origins and evolution, and it has myriad different manifestations. Yet amidst all these differences, there are certain basic concepts, beliefs, and approaches to life that, in one form or another, provide a continuum and a thread to link present to past. Furthermore, emigration by Hindus from the South Asian subcontinent to various parts of the world makes for interesting opportunities to discuss the diversity of Hinduism in the global diaspora.

Open to all!

For more information, contact Priyesh Patel at priyesh.patel.17@ucl.ac.uk

ANTHROPOLOGY OF WRITING
(Coordinated by Annamaria Dall’Anese)

LOCATION: TBC
FIRST MEETING: TBC
MOODLE DETAILS: https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=41137

Anthropologists, as most academics, spend a large share of their time writing, and much has been published about the role of the author in ethnographic monographs. The study of how people engage with writing has, however, been pursued more by other disciplines, such as social history, than by anthropology. This reading group aims to understand what role writing, in all its forms, plays among different communities. If it possible to ‘do things with words’, then what power do words acquire when they are written down as opposed to merely pronounced? We will explore issues such as self-narration and agency, surveillance and bureaucracy, the nexus between orality and textuality, as well as that between writing and the visual arts.

For more information contact Annamaria Dall’Anese at ucsadal@ucl.ac.uk

ANTHROPOLOGY OF WORK:
COSMOLOGIES AND PERSONHOOD

Weekly on Tuesdays 2pm-3pm (starting 10/10/2017)
Room TBC (see moodle page)

Organisers: Julia Sauma and Miranda Sheild Johansson

What is work and how do activities labeled as work shape our identities and societies? Anthropology has long discussed labour, how it is conceived cross-culturally, what it is thought to produce and how this production is valued. This
RRG will read and discuss literature that investigates the cosmological foundations of work and how work relates to the production of personhood, as well as examining specific themes such as property, power and hierarchy. We will mainly draw on ethnographies coming out of the Amazon and the Andes, bringing these into conversation with other regions and broader literature.

For further information please contact

Miranda at m.johansson@ucl.ac.uk and/or Julia at juliasauma@gmail.com

ANTHROPOLOGY
(Coordinated by Rebecca Williams)

WHERE & WHEN: Wednesdays 1–2pm – for locations see moodle page
FIRST MEETING: 11TH October, 1-2pm
MOODLE: https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=44421&section=0

Anti-Anthropology addresses the position and practice of contemporary anthropology in relation to its not-so-distant beginnings. As a discipline with roots entangled in colonial history, modern methods of research and representation still rely on extractive practices. Through a series of bi-weekly discussions, this RRG will tease out the relationship between researcher and researched; confronting the inequalities and exploitations we both address and produce in our work as ethnographers. Addressing the ‘ethics of anthropology’ theoretically and practically, we will ask what it means to conduct ‘post’colonial anthropology and whether such a thing can ever exist?

Term 1:
- Alice Goffman: The Trials of the Ethnographer – 11th Oct ‘17
- Knowledge AS Power – 25th Oct ‘17
- Ethnography AS Extractive – 8th Nov ‘17
- Fair Representation = Fair Play? – 22nd Nov ‘17
- Conducting “Post”colonial Anthropology – 6th Dec ‘17

Further information, readings and meeting locations can be found on the Moodle page: https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=44421&section=0

For anything else, please contact Rebecca.williams.12@ucl.ac.uk
COSMOLOGY, RELIGION, ONTOLOGY AND CULTURE (CROC)
(Coordinated by Allen Abramson and Martin Holbraad)

WHERE & WHEN: Once a month, Fridays 4pm, Staff Common Room
FIRST MEETING: 4pm, Friday 27th October, Staff Common Room
MOODLE DETAILS: http://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=11135

CROC is a regular gathering of graduate students and staff who share an interest in cosmologically informed approaches to anthropology. Conceived as a space to share ideas, read good books and discuss each other’s work, the group has for the past five years brought together people working on such topics as religion and ritual, mythical landscapes, risk and death in the modern world, indigenous mathematics, cosmologies of exchange, ontologies of emotion and seduction, and much more.

The group runs regular meetings, in which pre-circulated texts are discussed. These may be published texts relevant to the themes of the group or texts written by the group’s members (draft articles, thesis chapters, project proposals, etc.). The group is envisaged as a prime intellectual forum for students conducting research in the fields of cosmology, religion, ritual, myth, imagination and so on. In some years the group has continued to meet during Term 3 and/or the summer. In addition, every year we welcome external speakers – in the past these have included Bruce Kapferer, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro and the late Mary Douglas. CROC also regularly organises international workshops, which have in recent years included such figures as Marshall Sahlins, Gregory Schrempp, Caroline Humphrey, Don Handelman, Daniel Miller and Marilyn Strathern among many others.

For more information, contact Martin Holbraad – m.holbraad@ucl.ac.uk
Details about CROC’s past activities are at http://www.ucl.ac.uk/anthropology/research/research_reading_groups/croc

DATA POWER
(organised by Antonia Walford)

WHERE & WHEN: Wednesdays 5.00 - 6.30pm, Staff Common Room
FIRST MEETING: Wednesday 25th October
MOODLE DETAILS: https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=44633

Digital data practices are becoming a part of contemporary social life. Meta-data that is generated online is creating new knowledge economies, and shaping the course of political elections and forms of political engagement; biometric data is being used to re-define the nation state; self-tracking devices have profound implications for the provision of health services and the production of bodies; machine learning techniques and algorithms increasingly underpin finance, surveillance, medical research and
scientific experiments. Despite this, there is relatively little anthropological engagement with these emerging data practices. Do these practices and configurations just re-inscribe forms of power we recognise, or are they part of new apparatuses of control and resistance altogether? How is digital data re-shaping social life - bodies, imaginaries, practices, politics, relationality - and what is the social life of digital data? In this RRG, we will critically examine some of the responses that have emerged from across the humanities and social sciences to these questions and others, with a view to thinking about how anthropology can contribute to these debates empirically, conceptually, and methodologically.

Texts will be available on the Moodle page (see above)

For more information contact antonia.walford@ucl.ac.uk

Term 1:
25th Oct - Algorithmic Cultures
15th Nov - Dataveillance and Biometrics
6th Dec - Big Data

DIGITAL ANTHROPOLOGY
(Coordinated by Shireen Walton)

WHERE & WHEN: Three times a Term (see dates below)
FIRST MEETING: Tuesday 24th October 4–6pm, Staff Common Room
MOODLE DETAILS: https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=36005

The Digital Anthropology RRG welcomes graduate students, postdocs and staff interested in sharing ideas, discussing literature and exploring latest research in digital anthropology. Each meeting we will discuss pre-circulated texts, engage with aspects of each other's work, and critically examine on-going digital anthropological research projects – particularly those making innovative use of (and developing) digital methods and technologies for ethnographic research.

The focus each term will differ. In term 1, we will be looking specifically at the Smartphone, and we will link to the recently launched ERC-funded project in the department ASSA - The Anthropology of Smartphones and Smart Ageing, headed up by Daniel Miller: http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/assa/

Dates for Term 1:

Tuesday 24th October 4–6pm**
Tuesday 21st November 4–6pm
Tuesday 12th December, 4–6pm

**in collaboration with the RRG on Trajectories of Anthropology Today
Anthropology Staff Common room (ground floor)
Reading: Julie Soleil Archambault’s book Mobile Secrets: Youth, Intimacy, and the Politics of Pretense in Mozambique
http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/M/bo25681045.html

Tuesday 21st November 4–6pm

Reading: Everyone Dies Young: Time Without Age by Marc Augé

Tuesday 12th December, 4–6pm
TBC

Please contact Shireen Walton at shireen.walton@ucl.ac.uk for more information.

DIRT, EXCREMENT, ANNIHILATION, DECAY (DEAD)
(Coordinated by Rebecca Williams and Timothy Carroll)

WHERE & WHEN: Meeting details will be circulated via Moodle.
MOODLE DETAILS: https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=35845

This RRG sets out to investigate the murky yet fertile terrain of dirt, waste, remains and shit, and ask what this decomposing matter can do for anthropology. Thinking beyond the assumed stability of ‘objects’ and ‘persons’ and the neat categories of ‘valuable’ and ‘rubbish’, DEAD will explore the dirty work of ideas around pollution, filth and trash and their relationship to politics, places and publics. We will also consider the aesthetics and temporality of death and decay, and the productivity of these processes for art, history and daily life.

For more information, please contact Timothy at: t.carroll@ucl.ac.uk

HUMAN ECOLOGY RESEARCH GROUP (HERG)
(Coordinated by Katherine Homewood)

WHERE & WHEN: Every Tuesday, 2-4pm, (location varies)
FIRST MEETING: Tuesday 10th October, 2-4pm, Daryll Forde Seminar Room

MOODLE DETAILS: All MSc AED students as well as PhD students supervised by MB, CG, KH, JL, SR, EW in the area of Human Ecology, are enrolled on the HERG site on Moodle, at the start of each term. HERG’s
Moodle site includes a current news notice-board, funding opportunities, job offers, reading lists, links to outside organisations and seminars of interest.

The Human Ecology Research Group (HERG) provides a stimulating and cutting edge interdisciplinary forum for postgraduate research students (both Masters' and PhDs) developing, discussing and disseminating their work. Some 25 postgraduate researchers (including MSc's and postdocs), together with 6-7 staff, meet on a weekly basis for work in progress, research methods, reading and workshop sessions.

HERG focuses, on the one hand, on the impact of environmental and population policy and management on people’s livelihoods, health and welfare, and on the other, on the impacts of changing resource use on environment and biodiversity. HERG members are currently working on interactions of conservation and development in regions ranging from Amazonia, East and West Africa to Siberia and South East Asia; in ecosystems from tropical rain forest through drylands to coastal and riverine wetlands, and with a research focus ranging from broad themes (e.g. Climate change, REDD+, wellbeing as a measure of development interventions) through specific issues (bushmeat; fire management regimes; fishers and aquatic resources, pastoralists and payments for wildlife conservation) to single species conservation / development interactions with people (e.g. great apes/large carnivores/turtles).

Research explores the interactions of environmental policy and livelihoods, mostly but not always in developing countries and rural settings, and focuses particularly on ecosystem and threatened species ecology, household economy and livelihoods diversification.

For more information visit:
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/anthropology/research/research_reading_groups/herg

HUMAN EVOLUTIONARY ECOLOGY GROUP (HEEG)
(Coordinated by Ruth Mace, Andrea Migliano and Sarah Peacey)

WHERE & WHEN: Thursdays, 1-2pm, Taviton 14, 132
FIRST MEETING: Thursday 5th October

The Human Evolutionary Ecology Group, located in the Department of Anthropology at UCL, investigates human ecology from an adaptive perspective. We study human behaviour and life history as adaptations to local environments - which includes not only human behavioural ecology but also the related areas of evolutionary demography, evolutionary medicine and cultural evolution. Many of us are specifically interested in human reproduction, including human reproductive scheduling and patterns of parental investment and we are also working on the ecology of cooperation. Members have a range of projects including those based on field studies
ranging from hunter-gatherers, to post-industrial, urban populations in the UK, and some that are making use of existing historical or modern medical or demographic datasets. We discuss any papers the group feel are of interest, and may also host informal talks from each other or visitors. We combine with palaeoanthropologists working in UCL to gain a broader spectrum view of human evolution, both past and present.

For more information visit [http://www.ucl.ac.uk/heeg/](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/heeg/)

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**LATIN AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGY SEMINAR**

Inter-collegiate seminar run at the School of Advanced Study, London University, Senate House. Coordinated by Ainhoa Montoya (ILAS, SAS), Agustín Diz (LSE), Johanna Gómez (UCL), Martyn Wemyss (Goldsmiths), Natalia Bonet (Kent)

WHERE & WHEN: Alternate Thursdays 5:30 - Senate House.
FIRST MEETING: Thursday 26 October 2017 (Room 246). Opening session by Mette Louise Berg.

The Latin American Anthropology Seminar series is a forum in which anthropologists in the early phase of their careers working on Latin America can present their work and get feedback in a supportive and collaborative environment, as well as build connections between researchers and departments. It is jointly run by the Institute of Latin American Studies and several London-based Anthropology departments such as LSE, Goldsmiths and UCL. The seminars take place fortnightly at the Senate House during term time. Seminars are chaired by peers on a rotational basis and take the form of around 45 minute presentations so as to leave time for questions and discussion.

For information on all meetings visit:
[http://anthropologyseminarilasblogs.sas.ac.uk/events/](http://anthropologyseminarilasblogs.sas.ac.uk/events/)

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**MEDICAL MATERIALITIES**

(organised by Dr Timothy Carroll and Dr Aaron Parkhurst)

WHERE & WHEN: see moodle for details
FIRST MEETING: see moodle for details
MOODLE DETAILS: [https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=28929](https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=28929)

Medical Anthropology has long recognised the importance of the ‘material culture’ of medicines and healing practices, focusing on the symbolic, social, or even cosmological relationships between persons and the ‘things’ of
healing: plants, pharmacon, syringes, robes, hospital rooms and spirit masks, to name but a few. However, these medicinal things are not often explored as agents in their own right, and instead are placed within larger structures of healing, illness, personhood and well-being. Material Culture studies offers various ways of theorising artefacts, their properties, affordances and relationships within sociocultural contexts. However, the historical trajectory of the interdisciplinary discussions of material culture studies have, for the most part, paid little attention to clinical and bio-medical contexts, and while there is work on health and notions of wellbeing in material culture studies, these exist as largely parallel discussions. Recognising the potential for integration and mutual critique between the subdisciplinary discussions, this RRG will investigate possible points of cross fertilisation between medical anthropology and material culture studies. For further information, please email Timothy at: t.carroll@ucl.ac.uk.

**ONTogenesis:**

Simondon’s Modes of Existence, from Technical Object to Personhood
(coordinated by Ludovic Coupaye)

WHERE AND WHEN: Thursday, lunch times (12:00), Place TBC.
FIRST MEETING: Thursday, 19th of October
MOODLE DETAILS: https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=44423

After many attempts over the year, Gilbert Simondon’s major philosophical work, *On the Modes of Existence of Technical Objects*, has been translated and published in 2017.

Though rarely known by the English-Speaking anthropology community, Simondon’s influence has been indirectly felt through anthropological readings of Deleuze & Guatarri (e.g. Ingold), up to the work of Bruno Latour on the Enquiry of the Modes of existence. In a Bergsonian tradition, Simondon dealt with the question of ontogenesis and emergence of both social and material forms, through practices and engagements in ways that prefigured and more or less indirectly influenced, approaches dealing with relational ontologies, such as the New Melanesian ethnography (Strathern, Wagner), materiality (e.g. Ingold), or ANT (Latour).

This first year, we intend to concentrate on Simondon’s book and investigate its relevance for contemporary themes and debates on design, materiality, technics, technology, the digital and technocracy.

There will be fortnightly 1 hour meetings during Thursday, lunch times (12:00). All are welcome. Readings will be circulated a week in advance.

For more information to receive the readings contact Ludovic Coupaye, l.coupaye@ucl.ac.uk
This reading and research group is part of the Refuge in a Moving World Network. The network brings together experts from across the UCL who work on displacement, forced migration, exile and conflict. The PhD-wing is an initiative coordinated by Victoria Tecca (UCL Anthropology) and Claire Fletcher (UCL Geography). Readings will focus on topics such as asylum, border theory, immigration and mobility, as well as the social impact of forced migration on people’s emotions and well-being. The readings are aimed at MPhil/PhD level, but others are welcome to join (please refer to the Moodle page to access the readings for each week; non-UCL students please see the reading group’s Facebook page. If you cannot access the readings through your own institution, please contact Claire and Victoria).

Refuge in a Moving World is an interdisciplinary, highly collaborative group giving PhD researchers the opportunity to exchange ideas and research. There is also the opportunity to facilitate sessions by presenting your own research (if you’re interested, please contact Claire and Victoria). The aim is to create a broad network of researchers interested in refugee and forced migration studies across the University of London network. The meeting schedule for Term 1 is as follows; sessions will continue into Term 2 with topics chosen by attendees:

**17 October – Introduction/Representations of Refugees**
This introductory session will explore the various ways in which refugees and asylum-seekers are represented by academics, NGOs, the media, and themselves. We will discuss the implications of certain forms of representation through Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's argument in 'Representations of Displacement from the Middle East and North Africa'. We'll end this first session with some wine!

**31 October – Intersectionality**
This week’s session discusses an intersectional approach to studies of forced migration, examining the multiple discriminations faced by refugees and asylum seekers due to race, gender, class, and sexual orientation. How can we incorporate a decidedly gendered and postcolonial approach when studying the lived experience of displacement? Who might academics and aid organisations be silencing through their various research and aid distribution mechanisms?
14 November – Sexuality (presented by Aydan Greattrick)
This week the readings will focus on the issues of LGBTQI asylum claimants and refugees. We will be exploring how heteronormative and western assumptions of sexual identity impact those seeking asylum. This session will also examine how religious non-heteronormative refugees situate themselves within broader discourses of progress, particularly when confronted with the legal framework.

28 November – Camps: Who Benefits?
This week we will examine the implications of camp organisation. Who organises the camp-space, and who benefits from any ensuing hierarchies? How does this differ in a space founded and organised by refugees as opposed to humanitarian or government bodies?

12 December – Faith (presented by Claire Fletcher)
The place of faith in responses to forced migrants has received increased academic attention over recent years. In this session, we will be considering the dominance of secular responses to forced migration. The main question will focus on how faith-based organisations are responding to forced migrants? We will also reflect on how faith-based responses differ, and are also similar to their secular counterparts.

TRAJECTORIES OF ANTHROPOLOGY TODAY
(Coordinated by Martin Holbraad and Danny Miller)

WHERE AND WHEN: Tuesdays 4-6pm, twice a term, at the Staff Common Room (see below for details)
FIRST MEETING: Tuesday 24th October, 4-6pm, Staff Common Room
MOODLE DETAILS: there is no moodle page for this group – meetings are advertised by email to the whole department, and everyone is welcome to come along to one or more sessions, as they wish.

This is a collective reading experiment, open to all members of the department (from first year undergraduates to Emeriti Profs). For each meeting we a selected recent books within the discipline (the whole of it!), and then come together for collective discussion, using the book to gauge where the discipline of anthropology is at the moment, and where it might be heading. The guiding question in this exercise is what kinds of anthropology we want to encourage or deflect in relation to the continued development of our discipline and its engagements with the contemporary world.

In Term 1 this year the sessions will be:
Tuesday 24th October: *Mobile Secrets: Youth, Intimacy, and the Politics of Pretense in Mozambique*, by Julie Soleil Archambault
http://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/M/bo25681045.html

Tuesday 5th December: *The Resonance of Unseen Things: Poetics, Power, Captivity, and UFOs in the American Uncanny*, by Susan Lepselter
https://www.press.umich.edu/7172850/resonance_of_unseen_things

Meetings will be twice a term, and will be held in the Staff Common Room, at 4-6pm on Tuesdays. In each session we'll be discussing a single, whole monograph. We make every effort to ensure that these are electronically available from the library, or Open Access. The group’s membership is entirely fluid – feel free to drop in just for a single session if the book under discussion is of particular interest, or come to all sessions and use this as an opportunity to read and discuss things you wouldn’t ordinarily encounter.

So, everyone is very welcome, with the one condition that everyone makes every effort to read the whole volume under discussion.