

UCL ANTHROPOLOGY
**READING AND RESEARCH
GROUPS**

October 2023

Reading and Research Groups at UCL Anthropology

All the way from undergraduate, Masters', PhD and through to postdoctoral research, our students form a vital part of the intellectual life of UCL Anthropology. In addition to their relationship to individual dissertation supervisors and other teachers and research mentors, and as well as attending one or more of the Department's five weekly research seminars, students conducting research at any level are encouraged 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 all five sections of our Department, the RRGs are designed also to enliven our collective intellectual life 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 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.

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

AFFECT, EMBODIED EXPERIENCES, AND ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT

(convenor: Naomi Madge, naomi.madge.20@ucl.ac.uk)

WHERE AND WHEN: Fortnightly during Terms 2 & 3

This RRG aims to cultivate a deeper understanding of anthropological studies brought forth by peers within our anthropology Ph.D. community.

The fortnightly sessions will provide a platform for students to share readings they find intriguing and believe could ignite interest and inspire fellow students to delve deeper into their own Ph.D. research. As we explore this interdisciplinary domain, we aim to move beyond traditional academic conventions, transcending themes to focus on empirical, methodological, and conceptual critical engagements with social processes. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss research in progress, fostering a collective intellectual growth.

All members with varied interests are encouraged to propose readings, contributing to a diverse and enriching discussion. Texts will be made available on Moodle to ensure easy access and facilitate engagement. We extend a warm welcome to all who are interested in this intellectually stimulating venture. Feel free to bring a beverage or snack of your choice and suggest readings if you wish. Reading all the materials is not mandatory for participation; however, it's recommended to read at least one or two texts to actively engage in the discussions. Please feel free to contact Naomi Madge at naomi.madge.20@ucl.ac.uk for more information and to express your interest in joining this exploration of affect, embodied experiences, and academic engagement within the field of anthropology.

ANTHROPOLOGY AND IMPERIALISM TODAY

Coordinated by Raff Poole raffik.poole.18@ucl.ac.uk

When: The first Wednesday of each month at 5pm (open to negotiation)

Where: Online (Microsoft Teams)

Please email me if you would like to join and I will create a group

Anthropologists in the 21st century have rightly discussed and debated ways of decolonising the practice of ethnography, the theory we apply to our data and the manner in which those we study are represented. Meanwhile, a struggle wages on against the US-led hegemonic imperialist order, with its domination of international finance institutions, multinational corporations, and overwhelming military power + intelligence backed by an elaborate propaganda machine that obscures its destructive role in the economic, social and political evolution of the rest of the world. The history of the last century has shown that nation states who attempt to assert sovereignty over their labour, industry, natural resources, democratic and civil institutions are targeted for regime change, both overtly through military interventions and/or economic warfare in the form of sanctions, and covertly through the funding and training of opposition groups, media and civil society institutions by the CIA and other US government funded agencies such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and USAID.

Any substantial resistance to this hegemonic order has usually taken the form of nationalist/anti-imperialist/socialist movements that harness the power of the nation state to chart an alternative course to US-led global capitalism, promoting policies aimed at benefiting their impoverished populations over the profits of multinational corporations. In the face of relentless imperialist subversion, these states may decide to implement a degree of 'authoritarian' measures in order to protect the hard-won gains of their movements. Liberal academics and some anthropologists - who tend towards an anarchism inspired by the egalitarian forms of self-organisation observed in some small-scale societies, holding a disdain for the oppressive machinery of the state in general - are often ambivalent in their support for these movements. At best, they may overlook the distorting effects that counterrevolutionary methods employed by Western powers have on the healthy development of these nation states. At worst, liberal academics may parrot propagandistic talking points around 'human rights' and 'democracy' that contribute to the demonisation of such states targeted for regime change by the imperialist powers.

How does imperialism work today? How do we practice an anthropology that is alive to the reality of imperialism as it exists now and challenges it in more than just theory? What should anthropology's relationship be to anti-imperialist movements? How should we relate to the potentially repressive actions of states resisting US-led hegemony? Should anthropology ditch anarchism for a more robust anti-imperialism? Where do we stand in the shift towards a multipolar world? If you find any of this interesting, or vehemently disagree with the picture painted above and wish to offer an alternative perspective, please join the Anthropology and Imperialism Today RRG to become part of a healthy dialogue towards ending imperialist domination.

Provisional reading list (this is by no means exactly what we will read - we can pool together some materials in the first meeting. More contemporary / anthropology-related materials would be great so any suggestions welcome)

Bolender, K (2019): *Manufacturing the Enemy: the Media War Against Cuba*

Brzezinski, Z (1997) *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*.

Losurdo, D (2015) *War and Revolution: Rethinking the Twentieth Century*

(2011) *Liberalism: A Counter-History*

Parenti, M (1995): *Against Empire*

(1997) *Blackshirts and Reds: Rational Fascism and the Overthrow of Communism* especially Chapter 2: "Let us now praise revolution" and chapter 3: "Left anticommunism"

Sankara, T (1988) *Thomas Sankara Speaks: The Burkina Faso Revolution 1983-87*

Saunders, F. S. (2013) *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*

Anthropology and Infrastructures

Coordinated by [Branwen Spector](#)

Proposed meeting time: fortnightly, 4-6pm on Thursdays

Where: online

Anthropological studies of infrastructure have been on the increase since the 1990s. With valuable studies of so-called 'hard' infrastructures including water, telecommunications, media, waste, and energy. These have formed a base for their study, now the term infrastructure has been expanded to include 'soft' examples including social media, human infrastructures, and many others. This reading and research group would explore classic and new studies of infrastructure, embracing their "slipperiness" (Edwards 2003: 2) to answer questions on what infrastructures tell us about the modern state, flows of capital, development, and human creativity. By using infrastructures as a site to explore the relation between the material and the social, and breaking

down the relationship between those who design and those who use infrastructures, we will also pay attention to the diverse methodologies that anthropologists use to study them. We will also address the notion that we may have passed 'peak infrastructure studies' by critically examining the category 'infrastructure' to determine its value to anthropological analysis.

Members are welcome to present ongoing work on infrastructure and suggest readings.

Approaching the Biosocial

Coordinated by Sahra Gibbon s.gibbon@ucl.ac.uk Catherine Borra Catherine.borra.19@ucl.ac.uk and Taylor Riley taylor.riley@ucl.ac.uk

Where: Virtual Teams Meeting

When: Monthly meetings. First Monday of month 4-5.30pm. First meeting 6th November, Second meeting 4th December

The biosocial is a paradigm which aims at understanding health beyond the single-discipline frameworks provided by the social and biological sciences. Biosocial research aims to capture the dynamics by which the world gets under our skin, and vice-versa how our distinct corporealities are situated within ecosystems made of complex social, biological and environmental entanglements.

'Approaching the Biosocial' is a reading group exploring the histories, methodologies and intersections pertaining to biosocial anthropology. This would be relevant to those who are interested in doing biosocial anthropology/ethnography, exploring what the biosocial is as a new/old concept and thinking about how cross-disciplinary dialogue can push the methodological and theoretical parameters of biosocial research and anthropology today. We welcome all those interested in engaging in these areas from across diverse sub-disciplinary fields within anthropology

Our first meeting on **6th November 4-5.30pm** we will introduce ourselves and also read and discuss Meloni et al's 'Introducing the new Biosocial Landscape' in Palgrave Handbook of Biology and Society

Our second meeting on **4th December 4-5.30pm** we will reflect on the historical and contemporary contexts and definitions of the biosocial including thinking about how this has been entangled eugenic thinking. For this session we will reflect specifically on UCL's [Eugenics Legacy Education Project \(ELEP\)](#)

All relevant readings will be made available on the teams channel

Creative and Critical Pedagogies

Coordinated by: Matthew Doyle (matthew.doyle@ucl.ac.uk)

Where: Hybrid. Online and Staff Room in 14 Taverton Street

When: TBC - 3 Times per Term during Terms 1,2 and 3

This group represents a forum in which to discuss the teaching of anthropology across the department in ways that go beyond conventional lecture and seminar learning and foster a more inclusive, democratic and transformative educational experience. We aim to combine theory with practice by discussing scholarly work on different aspects of critical pedagogy alongside practical teaching strategies, experiences and concerns. Traditional reading group activities will be complimented with public events. such as panel debates, invited external speakers and film screenings.

Initial topics will include teaching as an emancipatory experience, supporting international students and transformative learning. We intend to read a range of pedagogical theory, including Paulo Freire, Bell Hooks, John Dewey, Orlando Fals-Borda, Antonia Darder, Jean Piaget and Henry Giroux. However, the group is democratically organised and members are welcome to propose topics and readings. We especially welcome suggestions of underrepresented scholars from the Global South.

Both students and staff are welcome to participate and we will be making announcements shortly about public events via UCL mailing lists and social media.

Feel free to contact (matthew.doyle@ucl.ac.uk) for information on how to join.

Creativity

Coordinators: Dalia Iskander, Carrie Ryan and Alison Macdonald

When: Twice a term in Terms 1, 2 & 3. Days/times TBC.

Where: TBC.

Stuart McLean (2009) defines creativity as the 'bringing forth of new material, linguistic, or conceptual formations or the transformation of existing ones', highlighting the processual nature of creativity as 'a poetics of making'. In this RRG, we will explore what creativity is, how it is brought into being and what effect it has on being-in-the-world in a multitude of contexts. We will explore related concepts of play, innovation, experimentation, fun and transformation

and crucially the methodological ways we can investigate and generate creativity through anthropological practice. The RRG will run over three terms and will not just involve reading academic texts. Instead, it will be more hands on and include engaging with film, fiction, games, art, craft and more. Content, activities and timings will be decided by the group.

Please get in touch (Dalia.Iskander@ucl.ac.uk) for more information on sessions.

Crisis, intimacy and friction

Coordinators: Alice Millar (alice.millar.20@ucl.ac.uk) and Katie Pfeiffer (Katherine.pfeiffer.20@ucl.ac.uk)

Where: Hybrid

When: Flexible, fortnightly in term times

First meeting: w/c Monday 16 October

This RRG looks at instances of crisis and the networks, infrastructures and shapes of 'we' that are generated. We explore literature on networks, STS, crisis anthropology and ethics and aim to build towards an open-ended understanding of how communities recognise themselves, keep others out and negotiate their boundaries with the world around them.

The Anthropology of Emotions

Coordinated by: Carol Balthazar & Jo Cook

When: T1 & T2, 3 meetings per term (please see below)

Where: G13A (Staff Common Room)

Since the 1980s the study of emotions in social sciences has gained new traction and scholars have investigated how culture shapes emotions in different social settings. A broad set of debates emerged which attempts to define the connections and disconnections between concepts such as emotion, affect, feelings, body, discourse, language, etc. Due to our independent work on the anthropology of joy (Jo Cook) and nationalist grief (Carol Balthazar), we come together to revise and discuss some of the influential work on the anthropology of emotions. We are particularly interested on how an attention to emotions may allow for interdisciplinary conversations with Psychology and Neuroscience. We will meet 3 times per term (see below) and welcome other researchers who are interested in this conversation to join us.

T1

Friday 27th Oct 11-1pm

Emotions:

Beatty, Andrew 2014 'Anthropology and emotion'. In *JRAI* 20 (3): 545-563.

Beatty, A. 2013 'Current Emotion Research in Anthropology: Reporting the Field'. *Emotion Review*, 5(4): 414–422.

Friday 24th November 11-1pm

Discourse:

Rosaldo, M.Z. (1980) *Knowledge and Passion: Ilongot Notions of Self and Social Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. **Chapter 2: Knowledge, passion, and the heart**

Lutz, C. A. and Abu-Lughod, L. (eds) (1990) *Language and the Politics of Emotion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. **Introduction: emotion, discourse, and the politics of everyday life.**

Friday 8th December 2-4pm

Embodiment:

Milton, K. (2005) 'Meanings, Feelings and Human Ecology', in *Mixed Emotions: Anthropological Studies of Feeling*. Oxford: Berg.

Tokin, Elizabeth (2005) 'Being there: Emotion and Imagination in Anthropologists' Encounters', in *Mixed Emotions: Anthropological Studies of Feeling*. Oxford: Berg.

T2

Thursday 11th Jan 2-4pm

Biology/ "Instinct"

Myers, F.R. (1973), 'Emotions and the Self: A Theory of Personhood and Political Order among Pintupi Aborigines', *Ethos* 7(4): 343-70.

Schieffelin, E.L. (1983), 'Anger and Shame in the Tropical Forest: On Affect as a Cultural System in Papua New Guinea', *Ethos* 11(3): 181-209.

Wednesday 21st Jan 2-4pm

Affect:

Massumi, Brian 2001 *Parables for the Virtual*. Duke University Press. Chapter: The Autonomy of Affect.

Mazzarella, William. 2009. "Affect: What Is It Good For?" In *Enchantments of Modernity: Empire, Nation, Globalization*, edited by Saurabh Dube, 291–309. London: Routledge.

Thursday 29th Feb 2-4pm

Phenomenology:

Throop, Jason 2015 'Ambivalent happiness and virtuous suffering'. In, *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 5 (3): 45-68.

Throop, Jason 2017 'Despairing moods: Worldly attunements and permeable personhood in Yap'. *Ethos* 45 (2): 199-215.

HUMAN ECOLOGY RESEARCH GROUP (HERG)

(Coordinated by Katherine Homewood k.homewood@ucl.ac.uk)

WHERE & WHEN: Every Tuesday, 2-4pm in Room 431, 16 Taviton Street

MOODLE DETAILS: 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) brings interdisciplinary environmental anthropology to focus on the impact of resource policy and management on people's livelihoods, health and wellbeing, and on the impacts of changing resource use on the environment and biodiversity. Our research group emphasises interdisciplinarity to develop new understandings and narratives of people's interactions with places, plants and animals. We develop methodologies for mixed methods and co-produced research to address spiralling crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, social and environmental justice.

HERG includes some 25 staff, postdoctoral and postgraduate researchers, drawn from the fields of social and environmental anthropology and biological ecology, working on interactions of resource use, conservation, business and development:

- in regions ranging from Latin America and the Caribbean, East, Central and West Africa to Europe, Central, South and South East Asia;
- in ecosystems as varied as tropical rain forests, drylands, coastal and riverine wetlands and urban environments;
- with a research focus ranging from single species interactions with people (e.g. great apes, large carnivores, cassava) through to broader themes such as indigenous and local environmental activism, fire management regimes, fishers and aquatic resources, pastoralists, corporate social responsibility, international environmental initiatives (e.g., REDD+, carbon accounting and payments for wildlife conservation); and
- with a particular interest in ecosystem and threatened species ecology, policy interventions, household economy and livelihood diversification, and the perspectives and wellbeing of often marginalised peoples.

"HERG has been integral to my development as an interdisciplinary conservation anthropologist, in particular, the weekly seminars. They are not only a great venue for researchers working on global conservation and

development issues to share their findings, but also to gain valuable feedback on your own work from some of the most prominent experts in the field." Sahil Nihjawan, UKRI Future Leaders Postdoctoral Research Fellow, UCL Anthropology and the Institute of Zoology, Zoological Society of London

For more information, including our seminar list, please see <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/anthropology/research/human-ecology-research-group-herg>

Human Evolutionary Ecology Group (HEEG)

(Coordinated by Ruth Mace and Erhao Ge)

WHERE & WHEN:

Every Thursday, 1-2 pm, IOE - Endsleigh Gardens (9-11), Room G16 (Term 1)

Every Thursday, 1-2pm, Taviton (16), Room 535 (Term 2)

Every Thursday, 1-2pm, Taviton (14), Room 130 (Term 3)

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 feels are of interest and may also host informal talks from each other or visitors.

For more information contact erhao.ge.20@ucl.ac.uk and/or visit <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/heeg/>

Anthropology of Islam

Coordinated by Ashraf Hoque a.hoque@ucl.ac.uk, Igor Cherstich i.cherstich@ucl.ac.uk, Stefan Williamson Fa swilliamsonfa@gmail.com, Joseph Buckley joseph.bukcley.18@ucl.ac.uk, and Jonathan Galton j.galton@ucl.ac.uk

Where: First meeting TCRU Library, 27 Woburn Sq, venue TBC thereafter (in person)

When: Wednesday 6 Dec 23, monthly thereafter

The reading group aims to illuminate our understanding of the similarities as well as differences of Muslim lives as they are lived in diverse social, political and religious contexts in the 21st century. The geographical scope is unlimited, and recognises the range of Muslim experiences in both majority and minority contexts across the globe. Particular topics may address any aspect of Islam as it is lived and experienced in the multifaceted contexts of human life, and as such we aim to explore a wide range of quotidian Muslim voices within important scholarly debates around what Islam is, and how it might be defined and studied.

Since the publication of Talal Asad's (1986) influential essay, the anthropology of Islam has burgeoned into a vibrant sub-discipline. Since the turn of this century, the scope and appeal of anthropology has broadened, attracting interest from a diverse range of scholars, including a growing number from the Global South. These developments have prompted questions cutting to the heart of some of the discipline's canonical assumptions. Is Islam a 'lived' tradition or a 'textual' one? What impact has the secularisation of religion in the West had on the study of Islam? How do Muslim subjectivities developed in majoritarian contexts differ from those in diaspora? Does the study of Islam necessitate interdisciplinary engagement with philosophy and theology, history and politics, gender and class?

Pirates, Plants, People: Discussions about Bioprospecting, Access and Benefit Sharing, and Local Ecological Knowledges

Coordinated by Zander Simpson alexander.simpson.23@ucl.ac.uk

Where: In-person, venue TBC depending on interest.

When: Fortnightly, specifics TBC depending on interest.

First Meeting: Term 1, specifics TBC depending on interest.

Plants, among other "natural resources", are being extracted by biopirates to the detriment of both human and animal communities – often in the name of finding new pharmaceuticals.

Biopiracy refers to the practice of extracting knowledge of the environment from (commonly Indigenous) peoples without providing adequate compensation – such as in the case of The Body Shop’s “partnership” with the Kayapo (Turner, 1995). While the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Nagoya Protocol aimed to clarify how the benefits harvested from traditional knowledges of the environment should be shared fairly, these waters are still murky and full of pirates. Even in cases where compensation is provided, there are still questions about whether it has been provided to the appropriate knowledge keepers, whether interlocutors have the authority to grant access to the knowledge or “resources”, and whether intellectual property rights are a useful framework in these contexts.

People from a range of both disciplinary perspectives and familiarities with these discussions are encouraged to become members of the group – and get their hands dirty with the case studies which will be circulated prior to meetings.

Members are welcome to present their ongoing work relevant to the field, and may suggest other researchers outside of UCL they would like to invite to give a presentation to the group.

Queer-y-ing the “we”: queer, crip, anti-racist methods for anthropological research otherwise

Contact: Tone, Niharika, Pooja

tone.walford@ucl.ac.uk

niharika.pore.23@ucl.ac.uk

pooja.narayan.23@ucl.ac.uk

Please email Tone if you want to join and we can add you to the teams and send round the texts beforehand.

Meetings:

Weds 25th Oct - 4pm - Staff Common Room

Weds 15th Nov - 4pm - Staff Common Room

Weds 6th Dec - 4pm - Staff Common Room

Who is the “we” of anthropology? Anthropology has spent a lot of time debating the ‘Other’, but not so much time addressing the ‘we’: there is often an assumed figure of the anthropologist, and an assumed homogeneity, which eclipses the massive diversity of positions, subjectivities and identities of anthropologists. This also often leads to the idea that there is one correct way to relate to the people we work with, and working with groups of people you identify with has often been discouraged as ethically problematic. In this RRG, we’ll be reading and watching texts and resources drawn from queer, crip, critical race and other approaches that can equip us to do research in intersectional, reflexive, politically-engaged and community-driven ways that problematise these assumptions. How do we bring ourselves, including our own reflexive intersectionalities and positionalities, into our work? How can the design and method of our research match the ethics and aims of our projects? What forms of ethnography can we develop that reflect this as well as commitments to the communities we work with? How can we produce research that might be useful and meaningful for those communities, and does this have to be pitted against or tangential to the intellectual contribution of the work?

We will split the readings between more theoretical and conceptual investigations of intersectionality, method, and queer, crip, anti-racist and

other approaches; and more practical examples of people who are doing the kind of work we'd like to draw from (sometimes both together!).

ALL WELCOME: This RRG is hosted by queeranth but open to the whole department.

We'll decide between us what to read each week but below are some indicative texts. Some weeks in T2 we might read each others' texts as we try to build what we learn into our work.

Possible texts:

Chua, L and Mathur, N (2018) - *Who are 'We'?. Reimagining Alterity and Affinity in Anthropology*. Berghahn Press

Liboiron, M (2021) *Pollution is Colonialism*. Duke University Press

Dokumaci, A (2023) *Activist Affordances....* Duke University Press

Lethabo King, T (2019) *The Black Shoals....* Duke University Press

Puar, J (2017) *Terrorist Assemblages*. Duke University Press

[Amin Ghaziani and Matt Brim \(2019\) *Imagining Queer Methods*. NYU Press.](#)

[Robert McRuer \(2006\) *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*. NYU Press. 2006.](#)

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) *Decolonising Methodologies*. Zed Books

McKittrick, K (2021) *Dear Science and Other Stories*. Duke University Press

Hartman, S (2006) *Lose Your Mother....* Macmillan Publishers.

Sharpe, C (2016) *In the Wake....* Duke University Press

[Queer Feminist Science Studies: A Reader – Feminist Technosciences. Cyd Cipolla, Kristina Gupta, David A. Rubin and Angela Willey. University of Washington Press. 2017.](#)

Savarna Citations of Desire: Queer Impossibilities of Inter-Caste Love - Akhil Kang, 2023 (on moving beyond savarna people's lens of caste and queerness in India)

Caste-ing Queer Identities - Dr Ujithra Ponniah & Dr. Sowjanya Tamalapakula (on the intersections of caste, queerness, and gender in India where caste is often left out of the equation by savarna academics)

Braiding Sweetgrass - Robin Wall Kimmerer

feminist subjectivity, watered - Astrida Neimanis

A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None - Kathryn Yusoff

Afghan Muslim Aunties and Their Queer Gifts - Ahmad Qais Munhazim

Browne K, Nash CJ. *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research*. Ashgate; 2010.

Underflows – Cleo Woelfe-Erskine. University of Washington Press 2022

Film & Video

London Community Video Archive: the-lcva.co.uk

Otherness Archive: othernessarchive.com

The Social and Cultural Study of Music

Coordinated by Adam Possener adam.possener.23@ucl.ac.uk

Where: In Person, venue tbc.

When: Monthly, tbc, dependent on interest.

First meeting: tbc, dependent on interest.

This reading group aims to explore music's relationship to social and cultural processes. The study of music in the social sciences has traditionally been shaped by the so-called 'homology' model - that musical sound is reflective of social structure and that an analysis of the social is sufficient to frame and understand musical sound. In more recent years, there has been a turn away from this model and instead anthropologists, musicologists, and ethnomusicologists have started to view music as multiply mediated, fluid, and amorphous (Born 2010). Music should not merely be considered as reflecting

social structure, rather it enacts, shapes, and produces a plethora of socialities on both a micro and macro scale. This reading group will explore recent innovations in the social and cultural study of music. This will include: discussion of music and digitality; music and genre; music, space and place; music as politics, and a range of other interdisciplinary approaches to the study of music. Each session will engage with one or two central texts concerning a particular theme. I strongly welcome people from a range of different backgrounds so we can foster an interdisciplinary approach.

Please email me if you are interested: adam.possener.23@ucl.ac.uk so we can organise a mutually convenient time and place.

SoS - Sustainability Of Socio-ecological systems

Leader: Dr. Rafael Morais Chiaravalloti

Meetings: 2-3pm on Thursdays

Summary: Social and environmental systems are under pressure worldwide, on one hand, biodiversity faces a mass extinction process and, on the other, traditional livelihoods have been squished by economic and conservation interests. The promotion of a new kind of develop, in which brings a balance between livelihoods and nature constitutes a conceptual shift in the way we analyse systems, called Social-Ecological Systems (SeSs). SESs encompass the interactions between humans and nature. They comprise multiple subsystems and variables that interact across space and time and are characterised by complexity, natural variation, non-linearity and uncertainty. By taking a holistic approach to our investigation of social and environmental problems we can begin to create space for discussion and action that explores the balances of power, authority and control between different social groups who interact with the natural world producing a variety of outcomes. Nonetheless, such a solid understanding of SeSs needs to be done by gathering different case studies and perspectives on it. Solutions for the current social and environmental challenges will only rise if we have a clear understanding of them. This Research Group will be focused on debating theory, case studies, and solutions for the sustainability of socio-ecological systems.

Sounding Art via Anthropology

Coordinated by Angela McArthur a.mcarthur@ucl.ac.uk and Amanda Butterworth amanda.butterworth.23@ucl.ac.uk

Where: Hybrid. Room TBC at UCL Marshgate, Stratford

When: Last Wednesday of each month between November 2023 and May 2024, 3pm - 4.30pm.

We warmly invite scholars across UCL and from other Universities to join this interdisciplinary arts/ anthropology reading group centred around sound. Sound as a practice - both as a research framework and an expression of research, whether formal or community-based.

Our group will explore examples of theory and practice from both fields (arts/ anthropology) with the aim of understanding, evaluating and deepening the cross-contributions possible between these fields. Many creative practitioners working with sound already contextualise their work in anthropological discourse. We will be highlighting such approaches, alongside the work of anthropologists whose sensibilities symbiotically reflect this (for example Feld, Ingold, Helmreich, Rice, Cox). We will also look at a broader range of anthropological work, and examine how it has been used by artists, and explore why artists have an interest in such work.

We are also open to new topics and reading suggestions and participants are welcomed to present papers and research projects.

In case you want to join us, and these days and time do not work for you, please get in touch and we can try to move around

Stories, Wayfaring and Worldmaking

Convenor: Dan Artus

Where: TBD, but in the department

When: Monthly from Thursday 26th October (roughly 3 times a term)

Whether in sacred texts, scientific papers, collective memory, literature, poetry or art, bodily performance or quiet chatter amongst friends there are multiple ways of knowing and meaning-making in the world. Whilst these are inevitably entangled with various local hierarchies of, techno-scientific forms of knowledge demonstrate particular hegemonic capacity to represent the real.

Whilst long critiqued activists and scholars from a range of disciplines and contexts, this critique has become writ large in the purportedly 'rational' West. Whether described as fatigue with experts, post-truth or a rise in misinformation and conspiracy theories there are profound shifts in which kinds of knowledge and whose stories count. The purpose of this reading group is to interrogate these crises, exploring the difficulties they pose but also their potentiality as generative spaces for new solidarities and alternative modes of being.

Secondly, it invites critical reflection on how ethnography itself can act as a tool for critiquing epistemic injustices as it straddles the boundary between story and science.

An hour's discussion is intended for a reading, whilst the last half hour is intended to provide a space for contributors to experiment with telling stories in different ways. This may change as we experiment with the format, but that's the loose plan for the moment.

Thinking about value: storage, materiality, politics

(Convener: Charles Dolph; c.dolph@ucl.ac.uk)

When and where: Wednesdays, 5:00-6:30 pm, bi-weekly starting 1 November in Room 132, Anthropology Department.

Value continues to be among the most vibrant topics of anthropological inquiry. If David Graeber's attempted synthesis helped renew interest over two decades ago, there has since been a veritable flourishing of work concerned with value. The last few years, for example, have seen multiple special issues of journals such as *Economic Anthropology* and *Dialectical Anthropology* devoted to analysing value in relation to politics, change, crisis, and labour. This RRG invites scholars from across UCL and other universities to engage with a cross-section of scholarship and debates in value studies, with particular attention to value storage, materiality, and politics as distinct but overlapping areas of inquiry. The storage, and by implication, circulation of value is fraught with dynamics of power and morality, occlusion and display. What can attention to the competing actors, entities, and institutions and their claims to properly perform this vital collective task tell us about these dynamics? How might we think about the ways in which specific material properties of different value-forms (e.g. money, gold, grains) shape, in turn, these dynamics of value storage and its various technological devices? Finally, as value articulates temporality and futurity, we will consider how it serves to galvanize a range of political projects and imaginaries.

Members are also welcome to suggest readings and present ongoing work.

Possible readings (we can decide collectively what we want to read):

- Angosto-Ferrández, Luis F., ed. 2022. "Special Issue: Anthropology and the Labor Theory of Value." *Dialectical Anthropology* 46 (1).
- Bear, Laura, ed. 2020. "Speculation: A Political Economy of Technologies of Imagination." *Economy and Society* 49 (1).
- Collins, Jane L. 2017. *The Politics of Value: Three Movements to Change How We Think about the Economy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- D'Avella, Nicholas. 2019. *Concrete Dreams: Practice, Value, and Built Environments in Post-Crisis Buenos Aires*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Delvenne, Pierre. 2021. "Suspended Commodification: Assetization and the Politics of Silobolsa in Argentine Soybean Agriculture." *Journal of Cultural Economy* 14 (3): 319–31.
- DuBois, Lindsay, and Daniel Salas, eds. 2021. "Special Issue: Value and Politics." *Dialectical Anthropology* 45 (1).
- Ferry, Elizabeth. 2020. "'Deep in the Earth a Shining Substance:' Sequestration and Display in Gold Mining and Central Banks." *Journal of Cultural Economy* 14 (4): 1–19.
- Graeber, David. 1996. "Beads and Money: Notes toward a Theory of Wealth and Power." *American Ethnologist* 23 (1): 4–24.
- Maurer, Bill. 2005. "Does Money Matter? Abstraction and Substitution in Alternative Financial Forms." In *Materiality*, edited by Daniel Miller, 140–64. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Peebles, Gustav. 2014. "Rehabilitating the Hoard: The Social Dynamics of Unbanking in Africa and Beyond." *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 84 (4): 595–613.
- Souleles, Daniel Scott, Matthew Archer, and Morten Sørensen Thaning, eds. 2023. "Special Issue: Value and Change, Value in Crisis." *Economic Anthropology* 10 (2).
- Weiner, Annette B. 1992. *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving*.

Berkeley: University of California Press.

TikTok Ethnography Collective

Coordinated by: Yathukulan Yogarajah, Elena Liber and Toby Austin Locke

When: Fortnightly, Thursday 6-7pm,

Where: Zoom - <https://ucl.zoom.us/j/96130855658>

Website: <https://www.tiktokethnography.com/>

WhatsApp Group: <https://chat.whatsapp.com/DyGVm6cZCBbBNncW37K3wf>

First Meeting: Thursday, 19th October

The TikTok Ethnography Collective is a collaborative research project that brings together undergraduates, postgraduates, lecturers, professors, and non-university members, to conduct research on the social media, micro-vlogging platform TikTok.

This research has two main aims:

- Explore what an ethnographic approach can offer understandings of TikTok.
- Experiment with the anthropological possibilities of collaboration.

As a collective, we run workshops, conduct interviews, engage in creative writing and drawing, and explore other ways in which we can ethnographically engage with TikTok.

This Reading and Research Group will be an extension of our regular fortnightly meetings, where we discuss all things related to TikTok. This includes discussion about what TikTok is, the political and economic structures that it's part of, the infamous TikTok algorithm, and to simply discuss what TikTok is showing us at the moment. We also read and discuss relevant literature to better understand the contemporary social media landscape.

All are welcome to join our fortnightly meetings!

To join contact either Yathu(y.yogarajah@ucl.ac.uk), Elena (e.liber@ucl.ac.uk), Toby (toby.locke@ucl.ac.uk).

Transgenerational Inheritance and Anthropology

Coordinated by Ursula Paredes ursula.paredes@ucl.ac.uk

Where: Hybrid. Room TBC at 14-16 Taviton Street

When: twice a month Thursday 4-5pm (first session Thursday 26th) until end of March 2024

The phenomenon of transgenerational inheritance explains how important experiences in the life of our ancestors can affect our life history traits, behavior, and health trajectories. Traditional anthropology considers how collective experiences are transmitted to groups of people who have their cultural identity. Biology explores the biological substrates that acquire experiences (epigenetic marks) and that allow inheritance of stress through generations, explaining, embodiment of inequalities, evolution of novel phenotypes, responses to environmental stressors, even altering the evolutionary history of populations.

An initial focus of the groups would be reading on classics of the transmission of stress and behavioural health outcomes in human and non-human primate societies, taking examples from biological, evolutionary, medical and ethnographical literature. Feel free to share your own literature findings, and if you are working on something related, come and discuss your new results with a friendly and multidisciplinary audience.

Transplanetary Ecologies

Coordinated by Makar Tereshin, makar.tereshin.21@ucl.ac.uk and Rachel Hill rachel.hill.21@ucl.ac.uk

WHEN: next meeting on Wednesday, 22nd November 2023. We will meet every month until the end of the academic year

WHERE: Online via Zoom.

Continuous human presence in Low Earth Orbit, increasing expansion of techno-scientific infrastructures beyond Earth, and the extractivist ambitions of the commercial 'New Space' sector call for a reconsideration of the conventional analytical frameworks used to describe emergent (extra)terrestrial political, ecological, and social processes. The Transplanetary Ecologies reading group will interrogate this emerging paradigm, asking questions such as: how do the various infrastructures of space science exact their own ecological tolls? How do contemporary

configurations of (neo)colonial power, engendered by progress-oriented visions of contemporary space industries, shape our understanding of extraterrestrial environments? What forms of (trans)planetary ecologies are needed to account for the imaginaries, materialities and entanglements brought about by space science? What do increasing calls for space sustainability mean in practice?

Over the academic year 2023/2024 we will gather to discuss these questions and more. Our reading group is open to all, irrespective of your level of space related knowledge. Our first session considers gendered histories and the Apollo Guidance Computer, and will take place on zoom on Wednesday, 25th October 2023 at 4pm BST (3pm UTC) – ZOOM link below.

Our texts this month:

- “Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronic Manufacture”(2014) by Lisa Nakamura (this text covers the production of Fairchild chips crucial for the Apollo Guidance Computer).
- Short video about how software for the Apollo Guidance Computer was woven by master weavers <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P12r8DKHsak>
<https://ucl.zoom.us/j/96141569431>