

**B.A. (H) Sociology**  
**Discipline Specific Elective 08**  
**Reading Ethnographies**

**Course Objectives:**

1. This course encourages the student to read ethnographic texts in their entirety. Any one set of texts from the four pairs are to be chosen. Readers are relatively free to interpret the texts within the parameters mentioned below.
2. Suggested readings can be utilized to frame specific questions while reading the ethnographic texts and writing about them. The examination, however, will be patterned on the parameters mentioned in the Course content.
3. A brief rationale before the four sets of ethnographies has been provided in the form of a reading to familiarize the students with the essence of the paper and to outline what is intended in the process of 'reading' an ethnography.
4. The committee of courses at the Department of Sociology may prescribe these or any other pairs of texts for any given academic year.

**Course Learning Outcomes**

1. At the end of the course students should be able to identify the expanse of social scientific knowledge and be proficient with the technique and have the patience to read, understand and critically analyze full-length texts that are often about another, unfamiliar culture.
2. The course aims to encourage interdisciplinary thinking between sociology, anthropology directly but also with philosophy and literature, through reading of ethnographies. It also seeks to bring the student to a global standard of familiarity with different types of classics within the combined disciplines of sociology, anthropology and ethnology.
3. The Course will enable students to not only come to terms with the making of human knowledge but also identifying limits of enquiry by learning and engaging in critical thinking about the research presented in the ethnographies. They are also expected to be able to work with ethnographic description as a unit of knowledge at par with numbers in quantitative studies.
4. Doing this Course will help the student discover the strength of small details and to identify what matters to people. They would also be able to engage with the community and understand the significant role of subjective and objective knowledge systems through the exercises in participant observation

## Course Content

1. Ethnographic Mode of Enquiry
2. Constructing the Ethnographic Object
3. Ethnographic Practices and Styles.

## Course Units with Readings

(Given the Nature of the Paper there is only **one** compulsory reading 1.0.

Other than this each college can choose which set of readings they would like to teach in each Semester)

### Week 1- Compulsory Reading

1.0. 'How to Read Ethnography' by Paloma Gay y Blasco and Huon Wardle, London: Routledge, 2007.

#### 1. Weeks 2-14

Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1922. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. Studies in Economics and Political Science, no. 65. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Srinivas, M. N. 1976. *The Remembered Village*. Delhi: OUP.

**Or**

#### 2. Weeks 2-14

2.1. Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 1937. *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*. London: Oxford University Press.

2.2. Taussig, Michael. 2010 (1980). *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*. Chapel Hill: University of Carolina Press.

**Or**

#### 3. Weeks 2-14

3.1. Lewis, Oscar. 1961. *The Children of Sánchez: Autobiography of a Mexican Family*. New York: Random House.

3.2. Cohen, Lawrence 1998. *No Aging in India: Alzheimer's, The Bad Family, and Other Modern Things*. London: University of California Press.

**Or**

**4. [Weeks 1-14]**

4.1. Mead, Margaret. 1928. *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilization*. New York: Harper Collins.

4.2. Willis, Paul. 1977. *Learning to Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. Columbia: Columbia University Press.

**References:**

**Compulsory Readings:**

**Compulsory Reading:**

‘How to Read Ethnography’ by Paloma Gay Blasco and Huon Wardle, London: Routledge, 2007.

**Additional Resources:**

Clifford, James and George Marcus . 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. London: University of California Press.

Kumar, Nita. 1992. *Friends, Brothers and Informants: Fieldwork memoirs of Banaras*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Levi-Strauss, Claude. 1973. *Tristes Tropiques*. London: Penguin.

Rabinow, Paul. 1977 [2007]. *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Rosaldo, Renato. 1989. *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analyses*. Boston: Beacon Press.

**Audio Visual Material:**

Screenings of ethnographic films will complement the teaching.

Video documentation around the ethnographies could also be used concurrently while reading texts.

**Teaching - Learning process**

The subject is designed to be reader-student centric. It is believed that the student would follow a rigorous regime of reading the texts and participating in the class room discussions. That is the reason why barring the key texts, other texts have been kept outside the mandatory reading list.

However the teacher's role is significant in two ways:

1. Bringing on board perspectives on how to read ethnographies.
2. Drawing attention to details that are likely to be missed by the students.

### **Assessment Method**

Interactive classroom sessions keep the full-length text fresh in the memories of both students and teachers. The modes of assessment which include assignments, enactments, presentations etc, are designed to test the critical skills of reading ethnographies and not so much as reproducing the descriptions of the texts.

### **Key Words**

Fieldwork, Participant Observation, Enquiry, Data Gathering, Ethnography, Perspectives Questionnaire, Interview, Social scientific knowledge, Description, Documentation, Diary, Other cultures, Subjective and Objective Knowledge.