



## Making the Strange Familiar & the Familiar Strange

Investigating the Social behind Spirituality and the Unseen through Anthropological Fieldwork  
(A Hybrid Practical Course)

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CILAS

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**Imponderabilia**

*n.* a series of phenomena of great importance which cannot possibly be recorded by questioning or computing documents, but have to be observed in their full actuality.

such things as the routine of a man's working day, the details of his care of the body, of the manner of taking food and preparing it.

A term used by Bronislaw Malinowski in his book called 'Argonauts of the Western Pacific'

“Yet ethnography, through participant observation of the social and cultural worlds, opens out the possibility of an understanding of reality which no other method can realize.”

(David Walsh, 2000)

## **Spirituality and the Unseen: Making the Personal Academic Course Description**

Anthropology is the study of people, cultures, and the human condition. This course introduces the study of anthropology in a practical hands-on manner. It's all about “making the strange familiar and the familiar strange”. The participants will be encouraged to engage in discussions about anthropology as a field, otherness, rapport, access, among other important facets of conducting social qualitative research. They will also be engaging practically with writing fieldnotes, conducting participant observation and interviews, and editing their work to come up with a mini ethnography. This all will be covered with the theme: Spirituality and the Unseen by investigating rituals, activities, and experiences that are considered spiritual.

### **Course Objectives**

Some of the questions we're going to cover in this course are:

- What is anthropology as a field and mode of knowledge and practice.
- How to read and analyze ethnographies.
- How to conduct ethnographic fieldwork on spirituality. (Participant observation and fieldnotes)
- How to conduct semi-structured interviews.
- How to make the personal academic/professional. (Auto-ethnography on spiritual experiences)
- How do we use our ethnographic eye to try and understand our everyday lives?

### **This course will help participants:**

- Get introduced to ethnographic reading and writing.
- Understand and use participant observation as a tool to investigate the social.
- Write fieldnotes.
- Understand how to make personal experiences academic.
- Learn how to edit your work.
- Conduct ethnographic fieldwork/mini ethnography on spirituality, the focus is the student's choice.

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**Course: Hybrid (Online and Offline) - 6 Sessions and a Presentation day**  
**Meetings: Tuesdays 6:30pm – 9:30pm**

**Session 1 – Tuesday May 17<sup>th</sup>** (What is Anthropology?)

In class Activity: What is culture?

To read before class:

Delaney, C and Kaspin, D. Chapter 1: Disorientation and Orientation in Investigating Culture: An Experiential Introduction to Anthropology. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.

To watch:

An introduction to the discipline of anthropology  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5aglbqTEig>

Or Anthropology bel 3araby - What is anthropology?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDpQv1rEv9U>

**Session 2 – Tuesday May 24<sup>th</sup>** (Participant Observation and Fieldnotes)

In class Activity: Listen and Analyze the song “Tom’s Diner” and write a fieldnote.

To read before we meet:

Shane the Lone Ethnographer

AND

Walsh, David. 2000. Doing ethnography. In Seale, Clive (ed.).

OR

Small talk

OR

Thick Description

To Watch in class: What is Ethnography?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOBh8haj4E0>

**Session 3 – Tuesday May 31<sup>st</sup>** (Reading Ethnographies)

In class activity: Mini presentation on the ethnography on spirituality you chose to read.

To read before class:

Choose and read one of the introductions in:

Religion/Spirituality/The Unseen:

Evans-Pritchard – Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande

Greenwood – Magic, Witchcraft and the Otherworld: An Anthropology

Spectacle and Sacrifice by David Johnson

Not Quite Shamans by Morten Axel Pedersen

Miracles and Extraordinary Experience in Northern Kenya by Bilinda Straight

Readings Recommendations (More ethnographies)

Gender:

Farha Ghannam - Live and die like a man

Lila Abu-Lughod – Veiled Sentiments

John Wood – When Men are Women

Economy:

Sudhir Venkatesh – Off the Books: The Underground Economy of the Urban Poor.

<https://sfcollege.libguides.com/ethnography-reading-guide>

<https://www.unl.edu/rhames/courses/212/ethnography.htm>

**Session 4 – Tuesday June 7<sup>th</sup>** (Auto-ethnography on spirituality and the Objectivity Debate)

How to make the personal/spiritual academic/professional

To read before class:

Butler (2003) – Giving an Account of oneself.

OR

Carolyn Ellis (2004). The ethnographic I

**AND**

“From Skeptic to Practitioner” in Meanings of Mindfulness and Spiritual Awakening  
Affliction and Healing in Contemporary Cairo.

In class activity: Write a fieldnote on a spiritual experience and share it.

**Project proposal due.**

**Session 5 – Rescheduled Sunday June 12<sup>th</sup>**

**Ethnographic Workshop for projects.**

**Session 6 – Tuesday June 21<sup>st</sup>** (Conducting Interviews)

To read before class:

Brewer, John. 2000. Ethnography. In Bryman, Alan (ed.).

Activity for next class: Conduct a mini semi-structured interview with someone on spirituality.

**Session 7 – Tuesday June 28<sup>th</sup>** (Editing and Proofreading)

In class activity: Share interviews insights

To read before class:

Moeran, B. (2011) The Craft of Editing: Anthropology's Prose and Qualms

**Session 8 - Presentations Day: SATURDAY JULY 2<sup>nd</sup>**