

RDEV40330 Social Anthropology- Module Outline

Delivery Period: 1st November- 18th November

Coordinator: Dr Sahr Yambasu

Lecturers: Dr Sahr Yambasu, Dr Kristina Roepstorff

Credit: 5 ECTS

About the Module

This module introduces the role of anthropology in humanitarian crises. From an anthropological standpoint, disasters represent radical disruptions that challenge the existing social and cultural orders, including those of the helpers. Attempts to understand the lives of societies and, in the present sphere, the activating mechanisms and effects of conflict and catastrophe, are expressed through very different approaches. Some favour a specific theme, based on specific technical knowledge, whether in a legal, economic or medical dimension. Other approaches, however, endeavour to unite these sectorial methods through a principal concern to emphasise the sequences, causal relationships and consequences of such phenomena.

For anthropologists, knowledge should be gained regarding a reality which is situated on the level of locality, the place where individuals, as social beings, live their daily lives. These individuals are not necessarily aware of the forces and structures which influence their decisions, their way of thinking or their behaviour, but these make an impression upon their daily lives, their idea of the world, their family relationships, their neighbourhood, their environment and beliefs, their perceptions and influences operating in their societies. Disruptions (wars, disasters, forced population movements), which humanitarian aid attempts to alleviate, tear apart the invisible social fabric which surrounds the victims and gives meaning to their lives. It is this social fabric which requires better understanding, with its distinctive features within a certain culture, a certain society. For when a humanitarian operation is launched, it does not find itself faced with a mass of isolated individuals, cut off from all relationships (except in extreme cases), but with people who are suffering, not only physically, but also as a result of the dismantling of their social and cultural world. Their struggles for survival are accompanied by another struggle which is often in vain and which requires assistance and attention, that of rebuilding this social fabric around themselves. To be unaware of this is to run the risk of dangerous simplification, as has indeed been demonstrated by the failure and unnatural effects of some aid programmes.

On successful completion of the course students should be able to:

1. Show an articulated understanding of the importance of identifying underlying economic mechanisms, social structures, ideas and values related to different groups and societies.
2. Demonstrate the relevance of specialist ethnographic knowledge and how this applies for instance to landscape, causes of natural disasters, the importance of common vs. codified law; kinship vs. citizenship; health/disease models predicated on moral notions of evil/goodness vs. allopathic medicine.
3. Have the key skills necessary for empowering beneficiaries by supporting local participation.

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4. Demonstrate the skills to understand and communicate with beneficiaries, authorities and donors from different cultures and social and political levels and/or different pre-established situations.
5. Appreciate of the delicate subtleties and difficulties in working in multicultural and multidisciplinary teams.
6. Demonstrate the capacity to communicate with audiences in an ethical manner and beyond description.
7. Demonstrate a good understanding of social relationships in HA intervention situations at various levels.

Lecture Schedule

Topic	Dates and times	Venue	Lecturer
Introduction to Social Anthropology	1 st November 11am-1pm	A004 Health Sciences	Sahr Yambasu
Anthropology and Humanitarian Action	3 rd November 11am-1pm	Ag1.18Agriculture	Kristina Roepstorff
Anthropology of Violence and War	3 rd November 2pm-5pm	Room G01	Kristina Roepstorff
Anthropology of Aid & Gifts	4 th November 11am-1pm	G-08 Agriculture	Kristina Roepstorff
The Logic of Intervention	4 th November 2pm-4pm	Room G01	Kristina Roepstorff
Anthropological Theory & Method	7 th November 11am-1pm	TBC	Sahr Yambasu
Anthropological Theory & Method	7 th November 2pm-4pm	Room G01	Sahr Yambasu
The Context of Humanitarian Action-II Responding to and coping with crises	9 th November 11am-1pm	Ag1.18 Agriculture	Sahr Yambasu
The Context of Humanitarian Action-II Responding to and coping with crises	9 th November 2pm-4pm	Room G01	Sahr Yambasu
Representation & Signification practices Critical issues in Humanitarian Action: Development & Repatriation	10 th November 11am-1pm	Ag1.18 Agriculture	Sahr Yambasu
Representation & Signification practices Critical issues in Humanitarian Action: Development & Repatriation	10 th November 2pm-4pm	Room G01	Sahr Yambasu

Assessment

Details of the assignments and exams are provided below. **All submissions must be made via NOHA Blackboard.**

No.	Type	Topic	Weightage	Grade Type	Details to be given on	Submission Deadline
1	Group Assignment	Write a short book review [1000 words] of Keizer's book, Help: The Original Human Dilemma. In what sense, if any, are his observations relevant to humanitarian agents?	20%	Letter	1 st November (queries to be discussed on 7 th November)	14 th November
2	Individual Assignment	Taking a crisis situation of your choice, analyze it from an anthropological perspective. Suggest ways you would approach addressing the crisis as coordinator of humanitarian assistance in that situation.	20%	Letter	1 st November (queries to be discussed on 7 th November)	16 th November
3	Exam	End Semester Exam	60%	Letter	9 th November	18 th November

Useful Links:

1. UCD Exam Regulations:
https://www.ucd.ie/registry/assessment/student_info/examregulations.pdf
2. Modular Grades Explained:
http://www.ucd.ie/registry/assessment/student_info/modulargradesexplained.pdf
3. Resits and Remediation:
<http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/asug/remediationoffailedmodules/>
4. For any other query regarding assessment of modules, please contact: Sulagna (Sulagna.maitra@ucd.ie)

Anthropology and Humanitarian Action

The first unit starts by reflecting on the meaning of culture before introducing students to socio-cultural anthropology as an academic field of study. The unit provides students with a brief overview of the history of the discipline and familiarizes them with themes and concepts. Students will then explore and discuss the various ways in which anthropology contributes to the study of international humanitarian action. Taking an anthropological perspective, this unit (re)defines common concepts in the field of humanitarian action such as vulnerability, disaster, risk and gender. At the end of the unit students will:

- Be able to identify socio-cultural issues in international humanitarian action
- Be sensitized to (inter)cultural aspects of humanitarian action
- Have an understanding of anthropology as a scientific field of study that looks at the socio-cultural dynamics of humanitarian action
- Be able to explain and critically assess the key role anthropology plays in the emergence of new perspectives on humanitarian action

In preparation for this unit, please read:

- Eriksen, H.T., *Small Places, Large Issues: An Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology*, (2001), London: Pluto Press, pp. 1-23
- Minn, P. (2007), "Toward an Anthropology of Humanitarianism", *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, <https://sites.tufts.edu/jha/archives/51>

Follow up Readings (mandatory):

- Henry, D., "Anthropological Contributions to the Study of Disasters", in: McEntire, D., and Blanchard, W., (eds.) (2007), *Disciplines, Disasters and the Emergency Management: The Convergence and Divergence of Concepts, Issues and Trends from the Research Literature*, Springfield: Charles C Thomas Publisher
- Redfield, P. and Bornstein, E. (2011), An Introduction to the Anthropology of Humanitarianism, in Ibid. (eds.): *Forces of Compassion*, Santa Fe: SAR Press

Recommended Readings:

- Anthropology in Humanitarian Assistance (1998), NOHA Bluebook
- Blaikie, P. et al. (eds.) (1994), *At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability, and Disasters*, London: Routledge
- Fassin, D. (2012), *Humanitarian Reason. A Moral History of the Present*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- MacClancy, J. (ed.) (2002), *Exotic no more: anthropology on the frontlines*, Chicago: Chicago University Press
- Robben, A. & Sluka, J. (eds.) (2012), *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*, Oxford: John Wiley & Sons
- Wasson, Ch. et al. (eds.) (2012), *Applying Anthropology in the Global Village*, Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press

Anthropology of Violence and War

Anthropologists have developed different tools to analyze the meanings, everyday experience and effects of violence and war. In this unit, students will get acquainted with some important anthropological positions and findings about violence and warfare. Watching an ethnographic film about a Bosnian village at the beginning of the war (1992), students will reflect on the emergence of physical violence in a specific community setting and critically assess categories of “ethnicity” and “ethnic conflict”. At the end of the unit students will:

- Demonstrate an articulated understanding of the concepts of violence and war in anthropology
- Critically assess assumptions and categories in the analysis and interpretation of violent conflicts from an anthropological perspective

In preparation for this unit, please read:

- Roepstorff, K. (forthcoming), “Armed Conflicts and Humanitarian Crises: Insights from the Anthropology of War”, in: Heintze, Hans-Joachim und Joost, Herman (eds.), *International Humanitarian Action: NOHA Textbook*, Berlin: Springer
- Eller, J. (2000), *From Culture to Ethnicity to Conflict: An Anthropological Perspective on International Ethnic Conflict*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, Introduction

Film: “*We are all Neighbours*” (UK 1993, 52 min., Debbie Christie & Tone Bringa)

Follow up Readings (mandatory):

- Rao, A., Bollig, M. and Böck, M. (eds) (2007), *The Practice of War: Production, Reproduction and Communication of Armed Violence*, New York: Berghahn Books, pp. 1-19
- Richards, P. (ed.) (2005), *No Peace, No War: An Anthropology of Contemporary Armed Conflicts*, Athens: Ohio University Press, pp. 1-20

Recommended Readings:

- Anderson, B. (1983), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London
- Falola, T. & Ter Haar, H. (eds.) (2010), *Narrating war and peace in Africa*, University of Rochester Press, Rochester
- Hinton, A. (ed.) (2002), *Annihilating Difference. The Anthropology of Genocide*, Berkeley: University of California Press
- Reyna, S. & Downs, S. (eds.) (1994), *Studying War: Anthropological Perspectives*, Amsterdam: Gordon & Breach Science Publishers
- Robben, A. & Nordstrom, C. (1995), *Fieldwork under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*, Berkeley: University of California Press

Anthropology of Aid & Gifts

In this unit students examine the relationship between givers and recipients of humanitarian aid through an anthropological lens. In reference to academic research on gift-giving this unit addresses power relations in the interaction of givers and receivers as well as discusses the social function of gift-giving from a cross-cultural perspective. At the end of the unit students will

- Be able to analyse through an anthropological lens the interaction between givers and recipients of humanitarian aid
- Have knowledge of the social dynamics of gift-giving and be able to apply it to humanitarian action

In preparation for this unit, please read:

- de Torrenté, N. (2013), 'The Relevance and Effectiveness of Humanitarian Aid: Reflections about the Relationship between Providers and Recipients', *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 80(2): 607-634

Readings:

- Advanced Readings are uploaded on Blackboard

Follow up Readings (mandatory):

- Harrell-Bond et. al. (1992), Counting the Refugees: Gifts, Givers, Patrons and Clients' *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 5 (3-4): 205-225
- Khan, A.A. (2012), 'Religious Obligation or Altruistic Giving? Muslims and Charitable Donations', in: Barnett, M. and Gross Stein, J. (eds), *Sacred Aid: Faith and Humanitarianism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Recommended Readings:

- Bercovitch, E. (1994), "The Agent in the Gift: Hidden Exchange in Inner New Guinea", *Cultural Anthropology*, 9(4)
- Betteridge, A. (1985), "Gift Exchange in Iran: The Locus of Self-Identity in Social Interaction", *Anthropological Quarterly*, 58(4)
- Bornstein, E. (2012), *Disquieting Gifts. Humanitarianism in New Delhi*, Stanford: Stanford University Press
- Eck, D. (2013), 'Religious Gifts: Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain Perspectives on Dana', *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 80(2): 359-379
- Mauss, M. (2001) [1925], *The Gift*, London: Routledge

The Logic of Intervention

Building on the insights from the previous units, students in this unit will critically assess the logic of intervention in humanitarian crises. The unit addresses the social consequences of humanitarian crises and interventions. This unit further draws attention to the interactions of different humanitarian actors and the role of perceptions and power in these interactions; as well as looking at intercultural aspects of interventions in humanitarian crises situations. At the end of the unit students will:

- Explain, analyse and critically assess the logic of interventions in humanitarian action from an anthropological perspective
- Demonstrate an articulated understanding of the socio-cultural consequences of humanitarian crises and interventions

In preparation for this unit, please read:

- Autessere, S. (2014), *Peaceland. Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention*, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-19
- Donini, A. "Humanitarianism. Perceptions, Power", <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/humanitarianism-perceptions-power>

Follow up Readings (mandatory):

- Gamburd, M. (2014), "Introduction: Political Ethnography of Disaster", in: *ibid.*, *The Golden Wave: Culture and Politics after Sri-Lanka's Tsunami Disaster*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press,
- De Waal, A. (2002), "Anthropology and the Aid Encounter", in: *Exotic no more: anthropology on the frontlines*, Chicago: Chicago University Press

Recommended Readings:

- De Waal, A. (1997), *Famine Crimes: Politics and Disaster Relief Industry in Africa*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Leonard, P. (2010), *Expatriate Identities in Postcolonial Organizations: Working Whiteness*. Burlington: Ashgate.
- Mosse, D. (ed.) (2011), *Adventures in Aidland: The Anthropology of Professionals in International Development*, Oxford: Berghahn Books
- Scott-Smith, T. (2014), "Control and Biopower in Contemporary Humanitarian Aid: The Case of Supplementary Feeding", *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 28(1)
- Wilder, A. and Morris, T. (2008), "Locals within locals': Cultural sensitivity in disaster aid", *Anthropology Today*, 24(3): 1-3

Readings for Dr. Sahr Yambasu will be provided in class.