

Summer School

Going public: Social Sciences and Humanities in the 21st century in Europe

Stream 4. Material Culture and Identity

Presentation: Student Home Assignment: **Fieldwork. Belonging and Monuments** (20 min.) by Professor Sarah Holst Kjaer; Questions (10 minutes).

3rd Meeting

9.6.2022, 11:00-13:00 (Berlin time) via Zoom



Course description

- ‘Going Public’: The public’s access to academic resources, participation and recognition.
- ‘Going Public’ also means to **not just work with and speak about** communities, but also to actively engage with them, identify problems and work jointly on solutions.
- The course offers theoretical foundations and methodological apparatuses placed to explore social and communal issues; what this apparatus has on the impact on everyday life and experiences of people and communities.

Learning objectives (selection):

- Gain an understanding of what publically oriented social sciences and humanities may mean.
- Learn about the prominent research and dissemination methods employed in the orientation of these disciplines towards a wider audience and develop a critical and constructive perspective on their uses.
- Explore and understand the ways and strategies through which local, regional, national and transnational identities are forged in the public sphere by means of joint academic and grassroots, i.e. community- and stakeholder-derived, exchanges in contemporary Europe.

<https://civis.eu/en/civis-courses/going-public-social-sciences-and-humanities-in-the-21st-century-europe>



Going Public. Researcher's engagement

About the lynching of Black Americans (over 5000 murdered between 1882-1927):

"Two considerations [...] broke into my work and eventually disrupted it: first, one could never be a calm, cool and **detached scientists** while Negroes were being lynched, murdered, and starved; and secondly, there was **no such definite demand for scientific work** of the sort that I was doing" (W.E.B. Du Bois 1940: 34, after Mowatt 2018).



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W. E. B. Du Bois](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W._E._B._Du_Bois)

Google search: hope - rope

Going Public. Methods

Participant Observation (ethnographic method)

- Observing, but still 'gazing' at a community (semi-positivistic ideal aiming **not** to affect the observed)
- Stakeholder interviews: identifying different group's engagements and interests in a process
- Researcher's role: detachment, 'neutrality', consensus (studying singular group's world-view)
- Writing observations down, doing interviews, sharing results (and voices) with the research community.

Action Research (ethnographic method)

- Observing, but also engaging in a community's goal (activistic ideal, facilitate knowledge in decision-making processes, 'excavate' solutions and perspectives)
- Stakeholder interviews: identifying and affecting different group's engagement and interests in a process
- Researcher's role: bottom-up, taking a stand/solidarity, hegemony (power-relations between groups)
- Writing observations down, doing interviews, sharing results (and voices) with the community itself (and the research community).

Cultural arenas can be more or less difficult and problematic!



Prioritised inspirational literature for the home-assignment:

1. Ehn, Billy, Löfgren, Orvar & Wilkes, Richard (eds.) 2016: Taking Cultural Analysis Out Into The World. In: *Exploring Everyday Life. Strategies for Ethnography and Cultural Analysis*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 131-144
2. Hansen, Kjell 2003: The Sensory Experience of Doing Fieldwork in an 'Other' Place. In (eds. Jonas Frykman & Nils Gilje), *Being There. New Perspectives on Phenomenology and the Analysis of Culture*. Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 149-167
3. Kjær, Sarah Holst 2019: Village Vintage in Southern Norway. Revitalisation and Vernacular Entrepreneurship in Culture Heritage Tourism. In (eds. Francissco Martínez & Patrick Laviolette), *Repair, Brokenness, Breakthrough. Ethnographic Responses*. New York & Oxford: Berghahn, 178-196
4. Mowatt, Rasul A. 2018: The peculiar heritage of lynching in America. In (eds. Mattias Frihammar & Helaine Silverman), *Heritage of Death. Landscapes of Emotions, Memory and Practice*. New York: Routledge, 178-192
5. Frihammar, Mattias 2018: "At last Garbo is coming home": Celebrity, death and nation. In (eds. Mattias Frihammar & Helaine Silverman), *Heritage of Death. Landscapes of Emotions, Memory and Practice*. New York: Routledge, 65-77
6. Tschoepe, Aylin Yildirim 2019: Dirtscapes. Contest over Value, Garbage and Belonging in Istanbul. In (eds. Francissco Martínez & Patrick Laviolette), *Repair, Brokenness, Breakthrough. Ethnographic Responses*. New York & Oxford: Berghahn, 149-177



Home-Assignment for Summer School

Ethnographic assignment on cultural materiality and the belonging to a place

*Should be conducted at the student's current home-place (**observe: can be solved individually and in group**)*

Prepare by reading the literature for this assignment, choose (go online) a monument or a place, prepare 3-5 interview-questions designed to probe for people's perception of the place (significance/'cultural importance').

On site: Do ethnographic observations: take photos, record and/or write down when you 'hang-out' at the place for three-six hours.

Undertaking of the participant observation: **Write down** your observations (time of day, weather, sounds, people's activity around the monument/place, their age, gender, ethnicity, what they are doing, their actions, etc.). Incorporate as many signifiers (phrases from people, and descriptions from your observation) as possible, in order to 'frame the place' and the people's activities, at that particular day.

Possible focus for questions and the observation: How do people seem to 'belong' to the place? **How do they behave and tell** about the site's cultural symbolism and meanings? Do they (dis)agree with certain public meanings? What does the monument/place mean to them? Do they feel alienated or included?

Ethics: Approach people and initiate the interviews. Make sure, they know that you are doing a student assignment on people's relationships to monuments/places, that participation is voluntary and that you will only use the interview for student discussions/presentations.

Presentation: Belonging. A Monument/Place of Cultural Significance

At the Summer School in Tübingen

Appr. **15 minutes student presentation** (power-point), **5 minutes** for discussion.

1. The Place/Monument
2. Your **research question** (concerning 'the meanings of belonging to your informants') and how you got interested in it
3. Your method: how you observed , took notes, your ethical reflexions, present your interview-questions and key-informants

Through your collected material:

4. Describe the materiality, context and situation
5. Describe 'the cultural significance' to the informants (select words and descriptions from your observations in order to define 'site importance': tensions, signifiers, behaviour of the informants) at this particular site.
6. Your key-results (connected to your research question)