

QUEER/ING ETHNOGRAPHY: A PRACTICUM

African and African American Studies 215 / Spring 2021

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Class meets Thursdays 12:00-
2:45pm on Zoom.

Office Hours: by appointment.

This workshop offers students an opportunity to envision and formulate research projects that (1) involve a substantial ethnographic component and that (2) are centrally informed by gender and sexuality studies, queer and feminist methodologies, queer of color critique, postcolonial theory, and/or queer theory from the Global South. Students will participate in a weekly seminar where, through intensive writing exercises, they will identify social phenomena of interest and craft conceptual questions and methodological tools to research them. The goal of the course is to help students imagine cutting-edge ethnographic research projects on issues related to, among other things, sexuality, gender, intimacy, love, kinship, and friendship in contexts shaped by the legacies of colonialism, racism, capitalism, and globalization. The workshop will also host a few speakers who will trace back their award-winning books in queer ethnography to their work as doctoral students. The seminar is open primarily to graduate students in the early stages of envisioning and designing doctoral projects in African and African America Studies, Anthropology, Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and related fields. Enrollment is limited to nine students.

Course Requirements

Grades will reflect students' level of engagement in terms of writing assignments, assigned readings, and in-class discussions as well as the extent to which they will have acquired critical knowledge and writing skills throughout the semester.

- ❑ *Attendance, participation, discussion question.* Attendance is mandatory for the practicum format to work. Because much of this practicum is scheduled around the circulation and discussion of student writing, it is essential that you submit your writing assignments on time and that you contribute to the discussion of your classmates' work. When other readings are assigned—including for session dedicated to discussions with visiting authors—please prepare a brief discussion question in advance and submit it on our Discussion board on the Canvas site.
- ❑ *Introducing the Readings.* During the weeks when readings are assigned (weeks 2, 3, 7, 8, 9), two students will initiate discussion by raising a set of questions (10 minutes at most). Then, they will contribute to the discussion by raising new questions and critical points. Students will be graded according to how well they prepared to discuss the readings. The goal of this exercise is to encourage you to engage rigorously with the readings, unpack their arguments, and discover their significance. A sign-up sheet is circulated during the first and second week of classes.

- ❑ *Writing Assignments.* Throughout the semester, each student will write four 1000-word assignments. Although the total amount of writing for the semester is relatively short (4,000 words total), much time will be spent rewriting them. Each assignment should be rewritten several times to incorporate the feedback received during workshops from classmates and the instructor as well as new ideas and techniques you discovered in our conversations with visiting authors about their work. The assignments include the following:

1. *“Blog Entry” Essay* (1,000) words describing the phenomenon of your study.
2. *Ethnographic Moment Essay* (1,000) reflecting on the question of “why is researching this phenomenon important” through the description of an object/event related to it.
3. *Scholarly Debate Essay* reflecting on 2-3 authors who have written on similar phenomena and on how you see their work relative to your own future research and writing.
4. *Method Tool-kit Essay* reflecting imaginatively on the kinds of research and writing methods you wish to adopt, how they relate to one another and how they are important.

First drafts of assignments 1 and 2 are due *February 12*; first drafts of 3 and 4 along with revised drafts of 1 and 2 are due *March 26*; and, finally, revised drafts of assignments 1, 2, 3, 4 are due *April 23*. Please refer to the assignment sheets on Canvas (under “Assignments”) for more details on each exercise and instructions on how to submit your writing.

Required Texts

The following texts are available on the course’s library reserve (through Canvas) or on Hollis:

- ❑ Dankwa, Serena Owusua (2021) *Knowing Women: Same-sex Intimacy, Gender, and Identity in Postcolonial Ghana*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- ❑ Lamott, Anne (1994) *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- ❑ Lara, Ana-Maurine (2020) *Queer Freedom: Black Sovereignty*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- ❑ Lino e Silva, Moises (forthcoming) *Minoritarian Liberalism: A Travesti Life in a Brazilian Favela*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- ❑ Luna, Sarah (2020) *Love in the Drug War: Selling Sex & Finding Jesus on the Mexico-US Border*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

All other readings (including all unpublished manuscripts) will be available on Canvas. No unpublished manuscript—including the work of your classmates—may be circulated beyond the immediate purposes of this course without the explicit permission of its author.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

WEEK 1
January 28

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the practicum. No readings.

Recommended Reading (read at your own convenience):

- ❑ Lamott, Anne (1994) *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Pantheon Books.

WEEK 2
February 4

QUEER/ING METHOD, ETHNOGRAPHY, POLITICS

- ❑ Ghaziani, Amin and Matt Brim (2019) "Queer Methods: Four Provocations for an Emerging Field." In A. Ghaziani and M. Brim (eds) *Imagining Queer Methods*. Pp. 3-27. New York: New York University Press. [24pp]
- ❑ Holman, Stacy Jones and Anne M. Harris (2019) *Queering Autoethnography*. New York: Routledge. [Read Introduction and Ch 6] [25pp]
- ❑ Muñoz, Jose Estaban (2009) "Queerness as Horizon." In J. E. Muñoz *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. Pp. 19-32. New York: New York University Press.
- ❑ Boellstorff, Tom (2007) "Introduction: Queering Disciplines in Time." In T. Boellstorff *A Coincidence of Desires: Anthropology, Queer Studies, Indonesia*. Pp. 1-34. Durham: Duke University Press.
- ❑ Manalansan, Martin F. (2014) "The 'Stuff' of Archives: Mess, Migration, and Queer Lives." *Radical History Review* 120: 94-107.

WEEK 3
February 11

DISCUSSION WITH AUTHOR (I): SARAH LUNA

- ❑ Luna, Sarah (2020) *Love in the Drug War: Selling Sex & Finding Jesus on the Mexico-US Border*. Austin: University of Texas Press. [Read Introduction, Ch 2, 3, 5]

Class discussion noon-1pm; visit from Prof. Luna: 1-2pm

WEEK 4
February 18

STUDENT WORKSHOP (I)

WEEK 5 February 25	STUDENT WORKSHOP (II)
WEEK 6 March 4	STUDENT WORKSHOP (III)
WEEK 7 March 11	<p>DISCUSSION WITH AUTHOR (II): MOISES LINO E SILVA</p> <p>❑ Lino e Silva, Moises (forthcoming) <i>Minoritarian Liberalism: A Travesti Life in a Brazilian Favela</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Selections] [Manuscript will be available beginning on March 1]</p> <p><i>Class discussion noon-1pm; visit from Prof. Lino e Silva: 1-2pm</i></p>
WEEK 8 March 18	<p>DISCUSSION WITH AUTHOR (III): SERENA OWUSUA DANKWA</p> <p>❑ Dankwa, Serena Owusua (2021) <i>Knowing Women: Same-sex Intimacy, Gender, and Identity in Postcolonial Ghana</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Read Prologue, Introduction, Ch 2, 4]</p> <p><i>Class discussion noon-1pm; visit from Dr. Dankwa: 1-2pm</i></p>
WEEK 9 March 25	<p>DISCUSSION WITH AUTHOR (IV): ANA-MAURINE LARA</p> <p>❑ Lara, Ana-Maurine (2020) <i>Queer Freedom: Black Sovereignty</i>. Durham: Duke University Press. [Read Pp. 1-109]</p> <p><i>Class discussion noon-1pm; visit from Prof. Lara: 1-2pm</i></p>
WEEK 10 April 1	STUDENT WORKSHOP (IV)
WEEK 11 April 8	STUDENT WORKSHOP (V)
<i>April 15</i>	<i>Wellness Day. No class.</i>
WEEK 12 April 22	STUDENT WORKSHOP (VI)

WEEK 13 STUDENT WORKSHOP (VII)
April 29