Course Description

This course introduces you to the young and vibrant field of the anthropology of media. Media—tools of communication and representation such as film, telephones, radio, the Internet, photography, and television—have become increasingly important to people’s everyday lives across much of the globe. The anthropology of media investigates the mediated nature of contemporary life from an anthropological perspective, focusing on the social worlds that shape and arise from the production, circulation, and consumption of media in a variety of contexts.

Organized around media and social formations, this course covers topics that include the role of media in constituting and contesting national identities, forging oppositional political visions, enabling transnational imaginaries, and shaping modernity/ies. It thus introduces students to key concepts in the social sciences. The media and social forms we will address are as diverse as video activism in Aboriginal Australia, photography in rural India, wall murals in post-revolutionary Iran and rock concerts in North America.

Throughout the course, we will assess claims about media’s role in globalization and cultural homogenization while also considering the countervailing tendencies of diverse and often unexpected media practices around the world. “The Anthropology of Media” will grant you a critical perspective on the role of media in your own life and an understanding of the ways in which your media experience is similar to and distinct from those of people in other cultural contexts. There are no pre-requisites for this course other than a willingness to open your mind and view the world—and the media—around you from an anthropological perspective.
Course Texts: These texts are available for purchase in the bookstore; copies should be available on reserve at the library as well. In addition to these books, required readings marked with an R in the Course Schedule below are available for download on the course’s Sakai website under the ‘Resources’ tab. See https://sakai.wellesley.edu.


Recommended Text (Selections from this text will be available on the Sakai course website, so it is not necessary to purchase this text unless you prefer to own a hard copy):


In-Class Screenings: You are required to attend in-class screenings. These films will also be made available on e-reserve at Clapp Library so that you can watch them again in order to write your essays.

Baichwal, Jennifer, dir. Manufactured Landscapes, 2007, 90 min.
Featherstone, Don, dir. BabaKiuersia, 1986, 29 min.
Flaherty, Robert, dir. Nanook of the North, 1922, 79 min.
Khan, Faiza, dir. The Supermen of Malegaon, 2008, 52 min.
MacDougall, David and Judith MacDougall, dirs., Photo Wallabs, 1991, 60 min.
Massot, Claude, dir. Nanook Revisited, 1994, 60 min.
Panh, Rithy, dir. Land of Wandering Souls, 2000, 100 min.

Requirements
I. Class Participation and Attendance: 20%
The success of this course depends on your thoughtful, lively, respectful, and creative engagement with the media and written texts that are assigned, and with the conversation in the classroom. You are required to attend all class meetings, and to read all the assigned material before class.

• Discussion Questions: Post one well-considered and eloquently written discussion question to the Discussion Forum on the course’s Sakai web site by 10:00 a.m. before each class meeting – except for those days on which reading is not assigned and those
on which a paper is due. Consider not only questions pertaining to theoretical or conceptual issues that intrigue or perplex you, but also ones that invite analysis by your classmates and that synthesize and compare issues across readings. Come to class prepared to discuss your own question and those of your classmates.

- **Presentation:** In the last few days of the class, present the ethnographic research project that you are proposing in your term paper in a formal 15-20 minute presentation, complete with clips/websites/other visual materials that illustrate the media phenomenon you are studying. More details about this assignment will be forthcoming.

Your attendance, the analytical and formal quality of your discussion questions, your contribution to classroom conversation, and your final presentation will together determine **20%** of your final grade.

II. Papers – more specific instructions will be conveyed later.

**Essay #1: 25% Due Mon., Oct. 4**
Theory and Media: In a formal, 4-5 page paper, engage with one unit of readings and put them into conversation with one of the films that we have seen in class thus far.

**Essay #2: 25% Due Mon., Oct. 25**
Theory and Media: In a formal, 5-7 page paper, engage with one unit of readings and put them into conversation with one of the films that we have seen in class thus far.

**Term Paper: 30% Due Thurs. Dec. 9**
**Ethnographic Project Proposal:** This is a 10-12 page proposal—the kind that one could submit to a funding agency for a grant—to conduct ethnographic research about media forms and practices connected to issues raised in the class and your own interests. You will read an example of a successful research grant application that will serve to guide you.
- You are required to hand in a one-paragraph description [typed] of your stated project to me on **Mon., Nov. 8**
- The proposal must include a bibliography that includes at least 5 course readings and 4 additional texts. A preliminary bibliography is due in class on **Mon., Nov. 15**.

**Guidelines/Regulations**

- Laptops, iPads/Pods, cell phones, and other electronic devices may NOT be used in the classroom. All electronic devices must be switched off for the duration of class (not just silenced).
- I will be available to respond to emails and phone calls only between 10:00 am and 6:00 pm on weekdays.
- More than three absences must be accompanied by a letter from a doctor or an explanation of relevant religious observance, or your participation grade will be lowered.
- Those who do not attend the first class meeting will be dropped from the course.
- Late work will not be accepted, nor will I grant extensions or incompletes; there is no January Option for this course.
- Students must abide by the Wellesley Honor Code. Plagiarism will be strictly punished. Please be aware that improper citation can constitute plagiarism. Take care to learn and follow the proper citation practices of the discipline of anthropology. See the AAA Style Guide in the Resources folder of this course’s Sakai website.
• Papers will be graded according to the standards of the Wellesley College Writing Program, which will be handed out during the first class meeting.
• Students with disabilities who require disability-related accommodations are encouraged to work with Jim Wice, the Director of Disability Services. Find Jim on the third floor of Clapp Library. If you have a disability, including a learning disability, that is undocumented, Jim will arrange for you to be tested, and for appropriate accommodations to be made.

Course Schedule
1. Thurs. Sept. 9
Introductions all around.
Screening: BabaKievera (dir. Don Featherstone, 1986, 29 min.)

Part I. Theoretical Foundations

Readings:
• Kelly Askew, “Introduction”, in The Anthropology of Media: A Reader --only pages 1-10.

3. Thurs. Sept. 16
National Public Spheres and Transnational Imaginaries
Readings:

Part II: Media Forms, Social Practices

4. Mon. Sept. 20
Active Audiences and the Dynamics of Media Reception
Readings:
• Jo Tacchi, “Radio Texture: Between Self and Others,” in Askew & Wilk Anthropology of Media. R
• Elizabeth Hahn, “The Tongan Tradition of Going to the Movies,” in Askew & Wilk, Anthropology of Media R.
• Don Kulick, and Margaret Wilson. “Rambo’s Wife Saves the Day: Subjugating the Gaze and Subverting the Narrative in a Papua New Guinean Swamp,” in Askew & Wilk, Anthropology of Media. R

5. Thurs. Sept. 23
The Social Sites of Media Production
Readings:
• Arlene Davila, “Culture in the Ad World: Producing the Latin Look,”
• Barry Dornfeld, “Putting American Public Television Documentary in its Places,”
• Tejaswini Ganti, “‘And Yet My Heart is Still Indian’: The Bombay Film Industry and the (H)Indianization of Hollywood,”

6. Mon. Sept. 27
Screening: The Supermen of Malegaon. Dir. Faiza Khan, 52 min., 2008

7. Thurs. Sept. 30
Television and the Cultural Politics of Nation States:
Readings:

8. Mon. Oct. 4  *** Short Paper 1 due
Radio and Telephony
Readings:

Witnessing and Activism
[Note: The second McLagan, Gregory, and Torchin are included in a single PDF.]
**Screening:** Rest of *Burma VJ: Reporting from a Closed Country*, dir. Anders Ostergaard, 86 min., 2009.

**Diasporic Media and Transnational Imaginaries:**

**Readings:**
- Mayfair Yang, “Mass Media and Transnational Subjectivity in Shanghai”,

12. Mon. Oct. 18

*Migrant Media* Chapters 1-4.

13. Thurs. Oct. 21

*Migrant Media* Chapters 5-8.

*** Short Paper 2 due  
**The Politics of Indigenous Media**

**Readings:**
- Faye Ginsburg, “Native Intelligence: A Short History of Debates on Indigenous Media”.  

**Screening:** *Satellite Dreaming*, 1991, Ivo Burum for CAAMA, 54 min.

15. Thurs. Oct. 28

**Readings:**
- Faye Ginsburg, “Screen Memories: Resignifying the Traditional in Indigenous Media,”

**Screenings:** *Nanook of the North* dir. Robert Flaherty, 1922 (selections) and *Nanook Revisited*, dir. Claude Massot, 1994 (selections).

16. Mon. Nov. 1st  
**Photography as Archive and Practice**

**Readings:**
- Christopher Pinney, Intro.
- Stephen Sprague, “Yoruba Photography: How the Yoruba See Themselves”
- Jo-Anne Driessens, “Relating to Photographs”
- Michael Aird, “Growing up with Aborigines”
- Hulleah J. Tsinhnahjinnie, “When is a Photograph Worth a Thousand Words?”


### 17. Thurs. Nov. 4
Reading:

### 18. Mon. Nov. 8  ***Abstracts for Final Paper Due***
Reading:


### 19. Thurs. Nov. 11  
Media and Youth in Contemporary Iran
Reading:

### 20. Mon. Nov. 15  ***Preliminary Bibliography for Term Paper due***
Reading:
- *Warring Souls* Chapters 5-end.


### 21. Thurs. Nov. 18  NO CLASS—AAA Meetings

### 22. Mon. Nov. 22  
Rethinking “The Digital Age”
Readings:

*Screenings: Manufactured Landscapes*, dir. Jennifer Baichwal, 90 min., 2007 (selections)
*Land of Wandering Souls*, dir. Rithy Panh, 100 min, 2000 (selections)

### 23. Thurs. Nov. 25  NO CLASS—THANKSGIVING BREAK

### 24. Mon. Nov. 29th  
Concluding Thoughts: Reflecting on Media as Social Practice
Student Presentations A
25. Thurs. Dec. 2  
   Student Presentations B

26. Mon. Dec. 6  
   Student Presentations C

27. Thursday Dec. 9  
   *** Term Papers due in my office before 5:00 pm.