Challenges in Contemporary Fieldwork Workshop

SPS Third-term Workshop 2019-2020

Dates:   
27 May 09:00-11:00; 13:00-3:00
28 May 10:30-12:00; 13:30–3:00
29 May 10:30-12:00; 13:30-3:00

Location: This workshop will take place through zoom: https://eui-eu.zoom.us/j/94201313615?
This workshop carries 10 credits
Register for this workshop

Organising administrative assistant: Maureen Lechleitner

Instructor: Dr. Caitlin Procter (RSCAS)

The impact that research in the field can take on the health and wellbeing of those conducting fieldwork has led to concern over university preparedness for fieldwork. In the wake of several high profile cases of detainment, torture, and death of doctoral students at European universities, this workshop is designed to provide students conducting fieldwork with the tools they need to navigate complex research challenges. This three-day workshop is about doing qualitative research in complex settings, and the kinds of challenges that can arise during fieldwork in relation to safety and risk, ethics, gender, health and mental health.

Rather than only providing a space for researchers to share their experiences, this workshop aims to fundamentally improve the ways in which conventional qualitative methods are taught, with a focus on situating these methods in the kinds of challenging environments in which they might be used. This will include practical exercises on the use of qualitative research methods in complex settings, such as gaining access to research participants in contexts of violence; safety and risk in doing interviews with members of armed groups or individuals engaged in street violence or crime; and conducting focus groups on sensitive subjects, or with individuals who do not usually engage with institutions or institutional processes.

However, challenges in contemporary fieldwork are not limited to so-called ‘difficult’ or ‘extreme’ settings, and both researchers and their interlocutors are vulnerable to numerous challenges regardless of where they work. The workshop will therefore also include a broader, and more holistic training on how researchers can better protect themselves before, during and after conducting fieldwork on in complex settings, including in elite institutions. In addition, this workshop will also provide a space for pre- and post-field researchers to connect, network, and learn from each other. Part of each session will involve working in smaller groups of both pre- and post-field students responding to particular hypothetical fieldwork situations.
**Course Preparation**

All students should think through and be prepared to speak briefly to the following questions during the workshop:

*for students who are pre-fieldwork*
- What are the ethical challenges that might emerge during your fieldwork?
- What are the risks you might face during your fieldwork? What risks does your fieldwork pose to your research participants?
- How will your gender, ethnicity and class impact your fieldwork?
- How do you plan to take care of your health and mental health during fieldwork?

*for students who are currently doing fieldwork, or are post-fieldwork*
- What were the ethical challenges that you faced during your fieldwork? Can you give one example of how you navigated these challenges?
- What were risk you faced during your fieldwork that you had not prepared for? What risks did your fieldwork pose to your research participants? Can you give one example of how you mitigated these risks?
- How did your gender, ethnicity and class impact your fieldwork?
- What did you do to take care of your health and mental health during fieldwork?

**Course Outline**

**Day One**

**Session 1: “The ethics of fieldwork preparedness”**


**Session 2: Practicalities and challenges of doing remote fieldwork during COVID-19**


**Day Two**

**Session 3: Ethical decisions in the field**


**Session 4: Safety and risk during fieldwork**

Peter, M., & Strazzari, F. 2017. ‘Securitisation of research: fieldwork under new restrictions in Darfur and Mali.’ *Third World Quarterly*, 38(7): 1531-1550. [Link]


**Day Three**

**Session 5: Positionality in fieldwork**


**Session 6: Health and mental health during and after fieldwork**


**Assignment**

An essay on the ethical challenges connected to your doctoral research project; and how you plan to/have mitigated these challenges. 2,000 – 3,000 words. Deadline Thursday June 4th.

**Additional Resources**

The New Ethnographer: www.thenewethnographer.org
Advancing Research on Conflict: www.advancingresearchonconflict.com
#MeToo Anthropology: www.metooanthro.org
Further reading


Giglietto, Fabio, Luca Rossi & Davide Bennato (2012) The open laboratory. Limits and possibilities of using Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube as a research data resource. Journal of Technology in Human Services, 30: 3-4, 145-159


Pachirat. T. “Working Undercover in a Slaughterhouse: An Interview with Timothy Pachirat” Medium. [Link].


