

NOG



Netherlands Research School of Gender Studies

**Masterclass with Ramy Aly and Nisrine Chaer
Monday 5 November 2018
Utrecht University
15.00 - 17.30 hrs**

The Ethnographic Turn in Cultural Studies and the Cultural Studies Turn in Anthropology

Cultural Anthropology and Cultural Studies share the same object of study while maintaining distinct disciplinary approaches to culture. Yet, so little distinguishes contemporary scholarship within these two fields, begging the question – what’s the difference? For many the main point of contention in this sibling rivalry has been the issue of methods, with most arguing that ethnography is anthropology. An ethnographic approach sees culture as an assemblage of people, spaces, technologies, materialities, landscapes and senses. Ethnographers try to capture this complexity through particular methods like participant-observation, field notes, interviews and methodological stances like autoethnography; these are in and of themselves both promising and perilous. In this masterclass we will explore the ethnographic turn in Cultural Studies and the Cultural Studies turn in Anthropology to try and understand what relevance ethnographic methods might have for cultural studies research. Within the cultural studies tradition, ethnography has either been associated with the Chicago tradition of realist urban sociology on the one hand or with classical British Anthropology in the context of the study of non-European cultures. These associations while understandable can overlook the way in which ethnography has breached disciplinary boundaries and how categories of self and other, method and theory have been critically reassessed. By engaging with contemporary texts (Chaer 2016; Aly 2015a; 2015b) that bridge and disrupt cultural studies, anthropology and post-structuralism, we will think about how ethnographic methods may offer insights into the texture and politics of the everyday, and offer new representations of self and other. Cultural studies has itself often been problematised for the opaqueness and paucity of its empirical methods yet anthropologists have long abandoned the idea of empiricism in their relationship to ethnography which is decidedly no longer a depoliticised writing of difference. The texts we present will offer some of the workings of an ethnographic approach in the study of identitarian politics, sexuality, ethnicity, gender and class in Beirut and London using autoethnographic approaches focusing on leisure spaces, dance, protests, senses and sounds.

Starting from a discussion of the assigned texts by the two teachers of the masterclass, the participants will be invited to reflect on their own research (project) and the place of ethnographic methodology in it. The teachers will moderate the discussion among peers and offer feedback drawing on key recent developments concerning the use of ethnographic methods across the fields of Cultural Studies, Gender and Queer Studies, and Postcolonial Studies.

In preparation for the 2.5 hour long masterclass, students are asked to read the assigned texts, and prepare a response to the following questions based on their own research projects and interests:

- Where is the culture you’re researching?
- What places, experiences and senses animate the social world you are researching?
- In whose everyday and in what spaces and senses is it reflected?
- What methods do you envisage using to access these?

Required texts:

- 1) Chaer, N. (2016). 'Sensing Activism in Urban Spaces: Queer Leisure, Clubbing and Protesting', in *Sensing Meem Space(s). Queer Activism in Beirut and the Potentials of Affect*. (Master's Thesis). University of Utrecht, NL.
- 2) Aly, R. (2015a). 'Going for Shisha: Doing Gender Ethnicity and Class', in *Becoming Arab in London: Performativity and the Undoing of Identity*, London, Pluto Press (Anthropology, Culture and Society Series).
- 3) Aly, R. (2015b). 'Dancing Class: Choreographing Arabness in London', in *Becoming Arab in London: Performativity and the Undoing of Identity*, London, Pluto Press (Anthropology, Culture and Society Series).

Suggested list of readings on critical ethnography, ethnographic methods, autoethnography and sensory ethnography and the ethnographic turn in cultural studies:

- Armbrust, W. (2004). 'The Ethnography of Media'. *Anthropological Quarterly*. 77(4): 819-825.
- Born, G. (2010). 'Listening, Mediation, Event: Anthropological and Sociological Perspectives'. *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*. 135(1): 79-89.
- Chase, A. and Chase, D. (2016). 'Urbanism and Anthropogenic Landscapes'. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 45: 361-376.
- Desjarlais, R. and Throop, J. (2011). 'Phenomenological Approaches in Anthropology'. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 40: 87-102.
- Eipper, C. (1998). 'Anthropology and Cultural Studies: Difference, Ethnography and Theory'. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 9: 310-326.
- Faier, L. and Rofel, L. (2014). 'Ethnographies of Encounter'. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 43: 363-377.
- Gannon, S. (2006). 'The (Im)Possibilities of Writing the Self-Writing: French Poststructural Theory and Autoethnography'. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*. 6(4): 474-495.
- Grau, A. (1999). 'Fieldwork, Politics and Power'. In Buckland, T. (ed.), *Dance in the Field: Theory, Methods and Issues in Dance Ethnography*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ingold, T. (2017). 'Anthropology Contra Ethnography'. *HAU Journal of Ethnographic Theory*. 7(1): 21-26.
- Kaepler, A. (2000). 'Dance Ethnology and the Anthropology of Dance'. *Dance Research Journal*. 32(1): 116-125.
- Reed-Danahay, D. (1997). *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social*. London: Berg Publishers.
- Samuels, D. et al. (2010). 'Soundscapes: Toward a Sounded Anthropology'. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 39: 329-345.
- Porcello, T. et al. (2010). 'The Reorganization of the Sensory World'. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 39: 51-66.
- Van Loon, J. (2001). 'Ethnography: a critical turn in cultural studies'. In Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. (eds.), *Handbook of Ethnography*. London: SAGE Publications.

Registration:

Participation is open for advanced RMA students and PhD students interested in ethnographic methods within cultural studies research. PhD and RMA students will be awarded 1 ECTS for attending the Masterclass and the Doing Gender Lecture by Ramy Aly on 5 November 2018, 10.30 - 12.00 hrs (Utrecht, Drift 25, room 0.02).

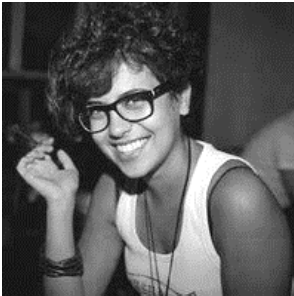
There is limited space (15 students) so please register before 31^h of October 2018 by sending a one-page motivation to: ramy.aly@aucegypt.edu and nisrine.chaer@gmail.com.

Biography lecturers:



Ramy Aly is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the American University in Cairo. Before coming to AUC he taught anthropology at the University of Sussex (UK) where he received his PhD in social anthropology in 2011. Ramy's research interests and publications engage with the anthropology of ethnicity, migration and diaspora; anthropology and media studies; militarism, cultural studies and youth cultures. He is the author of *Becoming Arab in London: Performativity and the Undoing of Identity* (2015 Pluto Press), the first ethnographic account of the gender, race and class practices among British-born and raised Arabs in London.

Ramy also holds a BA in Law with American Studies (University of Sussex, 1995), an MA in Middle East Politics (University of Exeter, 2000), and an MSc in Comparative and Cross-Cultural Research Methods (University of Sussex, 2011). He is a member of the Royal Anthropological Institute (UK) and The European Association of Social Anthropologist.



Nisrine Chaer is a researcher whose interests lie at the intersection of queer & gender studies, migration, Arab cultural studies, and anthropology. She graduated from the Gender & Ethnicity Master's at Utrecht University where she wrote her thesis on the queer community in Lebanon based on methodologies at the crossroads of cultural studies and ethnography. She currently works at Radboud University on an anthropological research on trauma, identity and meaning-making among Syrian refugee youths in the Netherlands. She has published peer-reviewed articles in *Women's Studies International Forum*, *Kohl Journal for Body and Gender Research*, and *Global Dialogue*, and three forthcoming chapters in edited volumes: *Young Arab Women: Beyond Boundaries and Borders* (McFarland Press), *Women Rising: Resistance, Revolution, and Reform in the Arab Spring and Beyond* (NYU Press), and *Global Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History* (Charles Scribner's Sons).