

**Department of Sociology**  
**Faculty of Social Sciences**  
**South Asian University - New Delhi**

***Being in the World: A discussion of themes in anthropology***

(Optional Course for MA)  
Total Credits: 4

**Objectives of the Course**

Tim Ingold writes 'Anthropology, in my view, is a sustained and disciplined inquiry into the conditions and potentials of human life.' This course seeks to engage with this approach to anthropology and sociology by locating the two disciplines as attempts to understand how humans inhabit this world. Being in the world is already an important aspect of philosophical knowledge and ontology, addressing all aspects of human life. For this course we shall look at the confluence of anthropology and philosophy by focusing on particular themes that address how humans inhabit the world, either by exploring particular fields or engaging with themes that reveal the limits of human existence.

**Unit 1: Introduction-Being in the world**

This unit will introduce the course by taking students through a set of foundational readings from Anthropology, Sociology and Philosophy that address questions of being in the world and ontology.

Ingold, Tim. (2011). *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. London: Routledge, London

Heidegger, Martin. (1978). *Basic Writings*. London: Routledge

Sartre, Jean-Paul. [2007(1946)]. *Existentialism is a Humanism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press

Jackson, Michael. 2005. *Existential Anthropology*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press

Guru, Gopal, and Sundar Sarukkai. (2012) *The Cracked Mirror: An Indian debate on experience and Theory*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press

Astuti, Rita, Charles Stafford and Jonathan Parry. (2007). *Questions of Anthropology*, Oxford: Berg

Chowdhury, Manosh. 2020. *Khuchro Sangskirti, MicroEthnographic Jibon Japon*. See translation <https://www.sabedoripolitica.com.br/news/beauty-parlour-salao-de-beleza/>

## **Unit 2: Birth, Life and Death**

Two fundamental facts of life: birth and death. How do they shape our understandings of the emergence and end of life? What does it mean when the only thing we can take for granted according to Heidegger is our finitude? Are there cross-cultural differences when we address birth and death? Are they just biological events? And what happens in between when we craft life? How do we make life and how does this shape who we are?

Gottlieb, Alma (1998) 'Do Infants Have Religion? The Spiritual Lives of Beng Babies' *American Anthropologist* 100 1 1998, p. 122-135

Majumdar, Anindita. (2015) 'Waiting for the Womb: Representing Assisted Reproduction in the infertility clinic waiting room' *IIC Quarterly* 42(2): 87-97

Hertz, Robert. (1960). *Death and the Right Hand*. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press,

Dow, Katie. (2016). 'What Gets Left Behind for Future Generations? Reproduction and the Environment in Spey Bay, Scotland', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 22(3): 653-669

## **Unit 3: Place and Movement**

In the Social Sciences, human beings are either seen as being rooted to place or to be caught in movement. Here we shall look at how these processes are intertwined and are critical to see how humans locate themselves in the world.

Casey, Edward. (1996). How to get from space to place in a fairly short stretch of time: Phenomenological Prolegomena. In Keith Basso and Steve Feld (eds) *Senses of Place*. Pp 13-52. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press

Santayana, George. (1968). *The Birth of reason and other essays*. New York: Columbia University Press

Malkki, Liisa. (1992). 'National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity Among Scholars and Refugees' *Cultural Anthropology* 7(1) 24-44.

Spencer, Jonathan. (2014) 'Anthropology, Politics, and Place in Sri Lanka: South Asian Reflections from an Island Adrift.' *Samaj: South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*. 10, Ideas of South Asia <https://journals.openedition.org/samaj/3812>

Ingold, T. (2010). 'Footprints through the weather-world: walking, breathing, knowing'. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 16(s1): S121-S139.

Turton, David. (2005). 'The Meaning of Place in a World of Movement: Lessons from Long-term Field Research in Southern Ethiopia', *Journal of Refugee Studies* 18(3): 258-280

#### **Unit 4: Sensing the World**

How do we sense the world? Do we take our sensory experience for granted? How does it shape our scholarship?

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. (2008) *The World of Perception*, New Delhi: Routledge

Feld, Steven. (1984) Sound structure as social structure. *Ethnomusicology* 28(3): 383-409

Stoller, Paul. (1997) *Sensuous Scholarship*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press

Seremataki, Nadia. (2019) *Sensing the everyday: dialogues from austerity Greece*. New York: Routledge

#### **Unit 5: Feeling the World**

What does it mean to feel? What is the distinction between emotion and affect? How are affect and emotion understood as points to understand an individual in relation to socio-cultural processes?

Stewart, Kathleen. (2007) *Ordinary Affect*. Durham: Duke University Press

Ahmed, Sara. (2004). Affective Economies. *Social Text* 22(2): 117-139

Beatty, Andrew. (2010) 'How did it feel for you: Emotion, narrative, and the limits of ethnography'. *American Anthropologist*, 112 (3): 430 – 443

Myers, Fred. (1988). 'The logic and meaning of anger among Pintupi Aborigines', *Man, New Series* 23(4): 589-610

Berlant, Lauren. (2011). *Cruel Optimism*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press

#### **Unit 6: Human Limits: Violence**

Violence is a ubiquitous part of human history. It defines our past and present. This unit will consider violence as an anthropological phenomenon and how it addresses or pushes our understanding of human existence and wellbeing.

Gandhi, M.K. (2009). *Hind Swaraj*. New Delhi: Vaibhav

Das, Veena. (2007). *Life and Words: Violence and the descent into the Ordinary*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Vajpeyi, Ananya. (2007). *Prolegomena to the Study of People and Places in Violent India*. New Delhi: WISCOMP

Ambedkar, B.R. (2013) . *Annihilation of Caste*. New Delhi: SamyakPrakashan

## **Unit 7: Humans, Other Humans and Others**

The other has been a critical component in anthropology, venerated by some and criticised by others. In this unit we will explore otherness as a process we deal with on an everyday basis, i.e. those not like us. Readings here will also try to see how we relate to the non-human-animals, spirits and technology and other modes of thought.

Sundar Sarukkai. 1997. The Other in Anthropology and Philosophy. *Economic and Political Weekly* 32(24): 1406-1409

Kohn, Eduardo. (2013). *How Forests Think: Towards an Anthropology Beyond the Human*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Khan, Naveeda. (2006). 'Of Children and Jinns: An Inquiry into an Unexpected Friendship During Uncertain Times' *Cultural Anthropology* 21(6) : 234-264.

Ramanujan, A.K. (1989) 'Is There an Indian Way of Thinking? An. Informal Essay' *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 23/1. (1989), pp. 41-58

Salmond, A. (2012) 'Ontological Quarrels: Indigeneity, Exclusion and Citizenship in a Relational World' *Anthropological Theory*, 12 (2), 115-141