Dance/Theater Ethnography
Institut für Theaterwissenschaft, Universität Bern
BA-Seminar Dance/Theater Ethnography (Montag 16–18 Uhr) Herbstsemester 2023 Dr. Elizabeth Waterhouse

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Course Description

Differently than scholars who value studying performance from a singular reading as a spectator—dance and theater ethnographers take extensive time to observe in the 'field' of their research topic, while participating in activities and caring for ongoing relationships. They theorize *with* artistic practice. This course introduces ethnographic practices and discourses for the purpose of dance/theater studies, providing an orientation to the extensive scholarship, varied terminology, diverse approaches and hot debates. To gain our footing in this broad landscape, we will read provocative texts from a variety of academic disciplines, languages (English/German) and cultural positions; we will also look at recent scholarly reviews on the state of the art of dance/theater ethnography to gain an overview. There will be an excursion leaving the classroom setting to practice 'participant observation' in a dance context. Lastly, students will benefit from four guest speakers, each providing insight into their particular fieldwork contexts, theoretical backgrounds and research practices. Our discussions will offer ample room for individual questions and respectful debate. Ideally the seminar will produce—like ethnographic practice itself—a contingent learning-with and learning-together, reflexively and empathetically across differences.

While ethnographic inquiry has contributed substantially to the English and French discourses of dance/theater studies (with regard to the topics of global dance/theater, identity, gender, bodies, labor, rehearsal studies, performance practice, postcolonialism, etc.) this approach is still notably absent in the German-speaking scholarship. Methodological training can help close this gap. Fieldwork is typically both challenging and personally transformative; moreover, conventions of academic writing and existing theories may not rigorously grasp these experiences. Since the turn of *Writing Culture* (1986), theorizing and writing anthropology have been thoroughly reviewed. The refined observation and writing skills practiced in ethnography may support scholars studying dance/theater 'at home'—fostering new research into Swiss/European performances contexts. In particular, we will discuss questions in regard to embodiment, relations, ethics, authorship, inscription, 'data' and rigor. Through reading, discussions and exercises trying out fieldwork, students will leave the course feeling prepared to start an ethnographic project—ready for "deep hanging out"!

Course Goals

Develop knowledge of the history and diversity of ethnographic practices; identify and explain key positions and debates in ethnographic research

Describe how ethnographic methodology has been used in dance/theater studies and learn about innovative new projects in the current research landscape

Gain confidence in ethnographic methods through 'learning by doing' (i.e. participating in fieldwork and writing exercises, both inside and outside the classroom)

Articulate individual interests at the interface of dance/theater studies and ethnography

¹ Renato Rosaldo quoted by James Clifford. See: Clifford, James. "Anthropology and/as Travel." *Etnofoor* 9, no. 2 (1996): 5–15. Here p. 5.

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Semester Plan

Topic/Thema Literature, Assignments/Hausaufgabe

	Topic/ Thema	Enterature/Enterature, Assignments/Trausaurgabe
18.9.	Introduction	
(1)		
25.9.	Ethnography as a method for dance and theater	WATERHOUSE: Ethnografische Ansätze
(2)	studies?	*TINIUS: Die Ethnografie als Methode der Theater-
		wissenchaft?
2.10.	"Grasp the native's point of view" ²	O'REILLY: Ethnographic Methodology, pp. 10–20
(3)	-Malinowski (1922)	*ERICKSON: A History of Qualitative Inquiry in Social
	`	and Educational Research
9.10.	"Speaking nearby"	MINH-HA: Outside In Inside Out
(4)	-Minh-Ha (1991)	*CHEN/MINH-HA: "Speaking Nearby"
16.10.	Guest Lecture	LEACH: Making Knowledge from Movement
(5)	Ethnography ⇔Anthropology	*LEACH: Modes of Creativity
	Ethnographic Work in Papua New Guinea	
	Prof. Dr. James Leach, Anthropologist, Université	
	d'Aix-Marseille	
22.10		De la company de
23.10.	Guest Lecture	BREIDENSTEIN ET AL.: Ethnographie, Chapter 1
(6)	Ethnography ⇔ Sociology ⇔ Dance Studies	
	Habita in Mation/Mation in Habita	
	Habits in Motion/Motion in Habits	
	Guast: Pania Pämmalt MA Student ITW Uni	
	Guest: Ronja Römmelt, MA Student, ITW, University of Bern	
	versity of Delli	
30.10.	Writing Culture (1986)	CLIFFORD/MARCUS: Writing Culture, Preface/Chap-
(7)	,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,	ter 1
		Reading Response Paper due on 3.11.
		Transmit Transportation Taper and Oil 2.111.
6.11.	Reading Week, No Seminar	
(8)		

^{*} Text that is supplemental/nicht verpflichtend

² Malinowski, Bronislaw. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. London: Routledge, 2002/1922.

13.11.	Guest Lecture	RITTERSHAUS: Digitale Diagrammatologie des
(9)	Ethnography of Rehearsal I	Tanzes? * INGOLD: That's Enough About Ethnography
	Digital Ethnography in the Field. Documenting and Researching Choreographic Process	
	Guest: David Rittershaus, Director Motion Bank, Mainz University of Applied Sciences, Doctoral Student, University of Giessen	
20.11. (10)	Ethnography of Rehearsal II	MCAULEY: Towards an Ethnography of Rehearsal *ROSELT: Probe als Aufführung
27.11. (11)	Ethnography of Rehearsal III Excursion	EMERSON ET AL.: Participant Observation and Fieldnotes
	Rehearsal, Ballett Bern New Work by Caroline Finn	
4.12. (12)	Ethnography of Rehearsal IV Fieldwork Notes / Canceled due to illness	Fieldwork Notes Assignment due on 30.11. and 4.12.
11.12. (13)	Guest Lecture Anthropology ⇔ Dance Studies	VIONNET: Dance knowledge through the body * Links on Ilias
	Dance knowledge through the body: Gender politics within Contact Improvisation	
	Guest: Dr. Claire Vionnet, Anthropologist and Dance Scholar, Associated Fellow WBK Kolleg, University of Bern	
18.12.	Closing Meeting	O'REILLY: Ethnographic Methodology, Chapter 2
(14)		Final Papers due on 22.01.

^{*} Text that is supplemental text/nicht verpflichtend

Events/Extra:

16.11.2023 – Open Rehearsal

18h–20h Ballett Bern, Vidmar Ballettsal

NB: ticket required

21.11.2023 - Lecture

12-14h, ITW, Mittelstrasse 124

Research Presentation by E. Waterhouse in C. Thurner's Vorlesung *Selbst-Performance und Tanzhistoriografie*

Grading

Presence

- no more than three missed sessions
- respectful engagement with other students and the lecturer
- prompt/on time

Quality of Participation in Class Activities (50%)

- engagement in class discussions
- close readings of assigned texts
- respectful engagement in 'participant observation' outside the classroom
- demonstrated comprehension of reading and lecture content
- asking questions no question is too simple!
- imagination and self-positioning constructive and critical engagement with class materials and exercises, bringing in outside expertise or coursework as relevant

Reading Response Paper (15%)

Fieldwork Notes Assignment (10%)

Final Project Proposal (25%)

Assignments

1. Reading Response Paper: due on Friday 3.11.2023 17h

Text:

Clifford and Marcus, Preface to *Writing Culture*, pp. xxiii–xxv Clifford, Introduction to *Writing Culture*, pp. 1–26

Based upon close reading of the assigned texts, write a short response paper of one to two pages (600–700 words, excluding footnotes/bibliography) using the current ITW standards of academic writing. You may complete the writing assignment in either German or English. No title page is required.

Submit your document as a Microsoft Word file via email (elizabeth.waterhouse@unibe.ch).

Your response paper should involve the following reflection:

1. Summarize

Your paper should introduce key arguments and debates presented in the reading. What are the authors' central arguments about ethnographic practice and writing? When and why is this text written? In which academic discipline? What turn is it proposing? What terms is it advancing?

2. Close Reading of 1–2 Passages

Include one or two quotes in your paper. Explain what you find important about each quotation and what you understand about the authors' arguments. Please clearly differentiate in your writing the difference between: a) what the authors wrote b) your interpretation and paraphrasing, written in *your own words* and c) your own ideas, reactions, arguments or theses.

3. Respond

Please react to the reading analytically. What is your response to this text? Does this text reinforce your understanding of ethnography, or challenge your existing ideas or assumptions? What ideas in the text surprised, convinced or confused you? What questions do you have?

You may interweave aspects 1–3 in your writing or formulate them in three separate paragraphs.

2. Fieldwork Notes Assignment

due on Thursday 30.11.2023 12h

Based upon your excursion to make 'participant observation' of the rehearsal of Ballett Bern and reading of Emerson et al., *Participant Observation and Fieldnotes*, please type up your fieldwork notes.

Submit your document as a Microsoft Word file via email to E. Waterhouse (<u>elizabeth.waterhouse@unibe.ch</u>) *and* to your research partner(s).

due in class on Monday 4.12.2023

Read your research partner(s)' fieldwork notes and prepare for constructive dialogue during class.

3. Final Project Proposal: due on Monday 22.01.2024 17h

Inspired by your participation in this seminar, please write a project proposal (1000–1200 words, excluding footnotes/bibliography) using the current ITW standards of academic writing. You may complete the writing assignment in either German or English.

If you would like help, please come by or zoom into my office hours: 15.01.2024, 16-18h. Submit your document as a Microsoft Word file via email (<u>elizabeth.waterhouse@unibe.ch</u>).

Written Assignment:

Imagine that you are writing your MA Thesis at the University of Bern in Dance or Theater Studies. You would like to use the methodological training you sharpened in this course. Please draft an initial project proposal for your MA Thesis.

Ideas for "how to begin" are provided in the reading assigned on 18.12.: O'Reilly, *Ethnographic Methods*, Chapter 2. I recommended strongly that you re-read this text, to assist you with the assignment.

In your proposal you may wish to address some of the questions below:

- What is the title or provisional title of your research?
- What is your motivation for this research?
- Why is this topic important (whether personally, for dance or theatre studies, etc.)?
- Have any other scholars researched this topic before? If yes, what is the state of the art of the research about this topic? (N.B. This is generally a long section of a research report. For this assignment a paragraph is fine.)?
- What are your research questions?
- What approach to ethnography do you embark upon? What is *your* definition of ethnography?
- Do you plan to blend methods, for example also using performance analysis or archival study?
- Are there any other archival sources, interviews or other documents that are relevant for your research?
- What 'field' will you be researching? Where is it? Do you plan to live there, or to live at home?
- How do you understand your position in the field? Are you an 'insider' or 'outsider'?
- What will you do during your fieldwork? What is your approach to 'participant observation'?
- How long will your fieldwork take? Can you describe your research timeline?
- What are you uncertain of? Are there any obstacles to your research? What has to be figured out?
- Are there any ethical concerns that you must address?
- How do you plan to document your fieldwork?
- How do you plan to interpret and write up your findings?
- What existing theoretical writing (in ethnography or dance/theater studies) might you engage with in your theoretical analysis?
- Do you plan to return to the field to perform or get feedback from the persons you met during your fieldwork?

Key Words List

Alterity
Anthropology/Anthropologist
Armchair Anthropology
Authority
Authorship
Autoethnography

Coming Home/Going Native Culture

Data

Deductive/Inductive

Embodiment

Ethics

Ethnic Dance

Ethnodrama

Ethnography

Ethnographic Present

Ethnos

Field

Fieldwork

Fieldwork Note

Going Native/Coming Home

Indigenous
Inductive/Deductive
Informant
Interviews
Insider/Outsider

Method/Methodology Multi-Sited Ethnography

Native

Outsider/Insider

Partial/Partiality
Participant Observation/Observant Participation
Performance Ethnography
Poetics
Positivism/Positivist
Primitive

Reflexivity/Reflexive Rehearsal Research Design Research Narratives

Self/Other Sensory Ethnography Social Sociology/Sociologist

Thick Description

Visual Ethnography

Writing Culture Writing Down/Writing Up

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^{*}full-length ethnographies recommended for deepening course content

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