**Syllabus**

**Feminizing the Canon:**

**Classics in Anthropology from the Perspective of Female Authors**

PhD Ana Gretel Echazú Böschemeier, PPGSCol/UFRN (Brazil)[[1]](#endnote-1)

PhD Izis Morais Lopes dos Reis, MPDFT/DF (Brazil)[[2]](#endnote-2)

PhD Natalia Cabanillas, PPGS, FAFICH/UFMG (Brazil)[[3]](#endnote-3)

PhD Olga Rodríguez-Sierra, ICe/UFRN (Brazil)[[4]](#endnote-4)

MgSc Maria José Villares Barral Villas Boas, UnB (Brazil)[[5]](#endnote-5)

PhD Lucrecia Greco, UBA/ICS (Argentina)[[6]](#endnote-6)

The history of anthropology is imbued in colonial enterprises that have to be considered when designing a course. Here, we propose a corpus of readings that link female authors from various locations and periods that are bound together by the same quest: *who we are?* As the North American activist and ex-slave Sojourner Truth asked, in front of a white audience of men and women, ‘*Ain´t I a woman?’.* Female writers in anthropology have been asking themselves comparable questions: if they are women and writers, then, how to inscribe the dilemmas of their own existence in a masculine, white and Western/Europeanized canon?

This seven-week course is intended for students from all over the world, especially for those coming from the political South, and particularly for Brazilian scholars. We believe that there is an enormous theoretical and methodological potential into bringing female authors to the discussions about the “classics” in anthropology. The syllabus is also directed to students interested in enriching their core education and embracing multiple viewpoints inherently engraved in the ethnographies and anthropological theories.

**Course objectives**

Our primary objective is to bring into discussion past and present anthropological inquiries from the perspective of female authors. The authors are not necessarily anthropologists in their academic formation, but they work and write guided by sensitive ethnographic approaches and in-depth anthropological inquiries. Our secondary objective is to bring the contributions of female anthropologists inside the classrooms, and thereby, contributing to the genderization and decolonization of the discipline and the teaching practice.

**Pre-Requirements**

The course has been designed for bachelor students belonging to the area of the Social Sciences.

**A Note on Open Sources**

Our collective aims to inspire new questions and bring back up the interest on a critical reading of the classics in anthropology. The idea and materials can be freely adapted by other educators to recreate a new proposal.

**Week 1**

**Asking Questions**

The first week is going to be dedicated to a preliminary discussion about how “classics” are assimilated into the aristocracy of texts. Specifically, we will take a close look at how this process takes place in anthropology. We will discuss some reasons for the prominence of the classics in Europe and North America, a situation that ends up “provincializing” authors outside those territories. By understanding the similar circumstantial conditions of the classics, we hope to divest their self-attributed “universality”.

We will bring up considerations about power struggles in the field of anthropological writing and the silencing of the subaltern voices. Finally, we will problematize the introduction of the concept of gender in the discipline and how it disrupted old assumptions, allowing new connections between classic anthropological interests and new fields of inquiry.

* Problematizing the canon/provincializing the classics.
* Why are so few texts written by female authors recognized as classics?
* How gender perspective influenced anthropology?

**Suggested readings**

Corrêa, Mariza (1995), ‘A natureza imaginária do gênero na história da antropologia’ [*The imaginary nature of gender in the history of anthropology*], *Cadernos Pagu*, (5): 109-130, Available at: <<http://periodicos.sbu.unicamp.br/ojs/index.php/cadpagu/article/view/1776/1831>>.

Haraway, Donna (1988), ‘Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective’, *Feminist Studies*,14(3): 575-599.

Mukherjee, Ankhi (2013), *What Is a Classic? Postcolonial Rewriting and Invention of the Canon*, California: Stanford University Press.

Peirano, Mariza (1997), ‘Onde está a antropologia?’ [*Where is anthropology?*], *Mana*, (3), 2:67-102. Available at: <http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci\_arttext&pid=S0104-93131997000200003&lng=en&nrm=iso>.

Strathern, Marilyn (1987), ‘An Awkward Relationship: The Case of Feminism and Anthropology’, *Signs*.12:(2): 276-292.

**Week 2**

**Brazilian Contributions: Becoming Visible**

Contemporary Brazil stands out as an important global center for the production of Anthropology. However, female anthropologists - as well as naturalists, medical doctors and novelists who wrote with an anthropological perspective - are little known. During this week, we will discuss some Brazilian intellectual contributions of female writers along a timeline, with three main objectives: a) localizing their discourse into a wider political scenario, identifying anti-abolitionist, indigenist, suffragist, and feminist contemplations in their texts; b) analyzing the reasons for their strapping invisibility, and c) identifying inverse ethnographies and dialogues with intellectual traditions from Europe and North America.

* Much more than tropical: female Brazilian anthropologists.
* Written from furtive places: voices from the past.
* Fighting for space: contemporary voices.

**Suggested Readings**

Floresta, Nísia ([1856] 1982), *Itinerário de uma viagem à Alemanha* [Itinerary of a trip to Germany],Florianópolis: Editora Mulheres.

Grossi, Miriam Pillar (2010), *Antropólogas no século XX: uma história invisível* [Female Anthropologists in the XXth century: an invisible history], *Diálogos Transversais em Antropologia* [Tranversal Dialogues in Antropology] Florianópolis. Available at: <http://miriamgrossi.paginas.ufsc.br/disciplinas-2/conferencias-2/>

Landes, Ruth (2002), *A Cidade das Mulheres* [City of Women], Rio de Janeiro: Editora da UFRJ.

Machado, Lia Zanotta (2000), ‘Sexo, Estupro e Purificação’ [*Sex, Rape and Purification*], Série Antropologia, 286: 1-38. DAN, Universidade de Brasília. Available at: http://www.dan.unb.br/images/doc/Serie286empdf.pdf

Sanjad, Nelson *et al* (2013), ‘Emília Snethlage (1868-1929): um inédito relato de viagem ao rio Tocantins e o obituário de Emil-Heinrich Snethlage’, *Boletim do Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi en Ciências Humanas*, 8(1): 195-221.

Schwarcz, Lilia Moritz (2012), *Nem Branco, Nem Preto, Muito pelo Contrário: cor e raça na sociabilidade brasileira* [Neither white, nor black, just the opposite: color and race in Brazilian sociability], São Paulo: Claro Enigma.

Snethlage, Emilie (1917), ‘Nature and Man in Eastern Pará, Brazil’, *The Geographical Review*, vol. IV: 41-50. New York: The American Geographical Society.

**Week 3**

**North-American Female Authors Writing at the Intersections**

Early anthropological writing from non-white, North-American women reveals not only the feminine self as a gendered ethnographic subject but also as a defiant subject who is not satisfied with the methodology of “participant observation” prescribed by mainstream anthropology. Their contributions engage us with issues related to fieldwork partnerships, the self-recognition as part of the African or Indigenous ancestrality, and the interest in the connection between gender, race, ethnicity, and class as pragmatic standpoints for existence. More contemporary writers started destabilizing identity politics in their academic practices, the Chicana writers in the field are a significant example.

* Pioneering female anthropologists and the courage for involvement.
* Introducing new topics: Afro and indigenous (North)American voices.
* Female authors in anthropology from the perspective of the intersections.

**Suggested Readings**

Deloria, Ela (1944), Speaking of Indians, New York: Friendship Press.

Fletcher, Alice (2003), *‘*I Plead for Them: A 1882 Letter from Alice Cunningham Fletcher to Senator Henry Dawes’, *Nebraska History*, 84: 36-41. Available at: http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH2003Fletcher.pdf

Hurston, Zora Neale (1935), *Mules and Men*, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott.

Anzaldúa, Gloria (1987), *Borderlands/La frontera: the New Mestiza,* San Francisco: Aunt Luke Books.

**Week 4**

**Emerging Voices from African Legacies**

This week focuses on discussions opened by Black and African women in the anthropological field. The decolonization of the African continent (1957-1994) and the emergence of African Feminisms (in the 1980’s) unlocked new spaces and opportunities for African female writers and anthropologists. We will review specific national cases, such as African female anthropologists from Nigeria who provided a new frame for the reinterpretation of family structures and clan organization in their own society. This movement contested not only the traditional ways of doing anthropology in Africa but also the core of feminist social sciences: the gender concept. Also, we will examine some contributions from black South African women writing anthropology while dealing with body politics as gendered racialized beings in the landscape of apartheid/post-apartheid South Africa.

* Decentering the canon: she is no longer the “native informer”.
* The construction of a situated feminine self: emergences and polemics.
* Non-disciplinary voices at the crossroads between age, gender, race, and sexuality.

**Suggested Readings**

Amadiume, Ifi (1987), *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*, London: Zed Press.

Bakare Yusuf, Bibi (2003), ‘Yorubas don’t do Gender. A Critical Review of Oyeronke Oyegumi - The invention of African Women. Making a Sense of Western Gender Discourses’, *African Identities.* 1(1): 121-142.

Oyegumi, Oyeronke (1997), *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses,* University of Minnesota Press: USA.

Ramphele, Mamphela (1993), *A bed called home. Life migrant Labour Hostels of Cape Town*, Cape Town: David Philip.

Salo, Elaine (2004), *Respectable Mothers, Tough Men and Good Daughters: Producing Persons in Manenberg Township*. Unpublished PhD dissertation: Emory University.

**Week 5**

**Latin American Embodied Dialogues**

Latin American women have written copiously as an answer to the expected obedience to their families and society. We will discuss issues such as women approaching their territory, the collective of beings living around them, and their own self-identity in broad and diverse landscapes. The material will cover topics about: a) theoretical and epistemological aspects as related to the ontological existence and agency of plants, animals, ancient mountains, and fluids; b) the different flows of the *mestizaje* in diverse national contexts; c) the pervasive violence of *machismo* and racism in their cultures; and d) the multiple dimensions performed by their embodied existence. The material presented for this week shows a vibrant and passionate corpus of knowledge rooted in a historical ground of resistance, being the product of women struggling for visibility in their own societies as well as in the rest of the world.

* Latin American female writers: building alternative views from the South.
* Building a female body: *mestizaje, machismo,* and other forms of violence.
* Ontologies of being and writing inside Latin communities and cities.

**Sugested Readings**

Belaúnde, Luisa Elvira (2006), ‘A força dos pensamentos, o fedor do sangue: hematologia e gênero na Amazônia’ [*The strength of thoughts, the strength of blood: Gender and hematology in the Amazon*], *Revista de Antropologia*, 49(1): 205-243. Available at: https://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0034-77012006000100007

Citro, Silvia (2009), *Cuerpos significantes. Travesias de una etnografía dialéctica* [Meaningful Bodies. A journey through dialectic etnography], Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos.

De la Cadena, Marisol (2010), ‘Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections Beyond Politics’. *Cultural Anthropology*, 25(2): 334-370.

Levins Morales, Aurora (2001), ‘Certified Organic Intellectual’, in A. Levins Morales *et.al* (eds.), *The Latina Feminist Group*, *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios*. Durham/London: Duke University Press. 27-32.

Segato, Rita Laura (2003) ‘*Las estructuras elementales de la violencia. Ensayos sobre género, entre la antropología, el psicoanálisis y los derechos humanos’* [Elementary structures of violence. Essays on gender between antropology, psychoanalysis and human rights], Bernal: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes.

**Week 6**

**Visual Anthropology: Watching Through a Feminine Lens**

A spirited space of resistance to the white/masculine/heterosexual canon exists at the theoretical and political intersection between feminisms, visual anthropology, and post-colonialism. From this standpoint, the prior element to the hegemonic representations is a ubiquitous construction of the Other as a mirror. In the audiovisual material selected for this week, the intricated process and different strategies for making an ideology will be discussed. Sexuality, race, and ethnicity appear as diacritics performed by bodies, eyes, and sights from a particular location in the structures of society. We are going to study a visual anthropology made by feminist women, allowing the emergence of novel female representations and subjectivities.

* Theoretical contributions to an inverse qualitative research.
* Methodological contributions of a viewpoint located at the intersections.
* Female bodies, female sexualities, and the politics of representation.

**Suggested Visual Material**

O Olhar Estrangeiro [*The foreign eye*] (2005), directed by Lúcia Murat, Brazil, 70’.

Rough Aunties (2008), directed by Kim Longinotto, South Africa/UK, 85’.

Sisters in Law (2005), directed by Kim Longinotto and Florence Ayisi, Cameroon/UK,104’.

**Suggested Readings**

Mead, Margaret (2003), ‘Visual anthropology in a discipline of words.’, in P. Hockings and W. Gruyeter (eds.) *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, pp. 3-10. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110290691.3>

Kiener, Wilma & Meiss, Eva (2001), ‘Women pioneers: an interview with four founding figures of ethnographic film’, *Visual Anthropology Review*, 17 (1): 60-67. Available at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1525/var.2001.17.1.60/epdf?r3_referer=wol&tracking_action=preview_click&show_checkout=1&purchase_referrer=www.google.com.br&purchase_site_license=LICENSE_DENIED>

Lamphere, Louise (1977), ‘Women in Film: An Introduction’, *American Anthropologist*, 79: 192-193. Available at: http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1525/aa.1977.79.1.02a00690/epdf

Riviera Cusicanqui, Silvia (2015), *Sociologia de la imagen. Miradas Ch´ixi desde la historia andina* [Sociology of images. *Ch´ixi* looks from Andean History], Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón. Available at: https://sentipensaresfem.files.wordpress.com/2016/09/rivera\_cusicanqui\_sociologia\_de\_la\_imagen2015.pdf

**Week 7**

**The Canon of Classics in Anthropology:**

**Rewriting It or Abandoning It?**

During this last week of the course, we will discuss some key articles concerning the importance of concepts and perspectives in the politics of knowledge. Therefore, this topic is introduced through considerations about an anthropology made from a native’s point of view aimed to debase the hegemonic voices and create the necessary space for an authoritative female space to do research and write. Regarding concepts as ‘family’, ‘culture’ and the canon of classics itself, the facilitators will keep a single open question during all the activities of the week: ‘*rewriting the canon or abandoning it*?’

* The Canon of Classics in Anthropology: between reforms and revolutions.
* Old concepts: should they be discarded?
* Reframing ‘being native’.

**Suggested Readings**

Abu Lughoud, Lila (1991), ‘Writing against culture’, in Richard Fox (ed.), *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*, Santa Fe: School of American Research Press. 137-54.

Favret-Saada, Jeanne (2005), ‘Ser afetado’ [*Being affected]*, *Cadernos de Campo/USP*, (13), 155-161.

Kirin, Narayan (1993), ‘How native is Native Anthropology?’, *American anthropologist*, New Series, 95(3): 671-686.

Oldfield, Sophie; Salo, Elaine (2009), ‘Nurturing researchers, building local knowledge, the body politics project’, *Feminist Africa*, (13): 87-94.

Spivak, Gayatri (1995), ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, in D. Landry and G. Maclean (eds.), *The Spivak Reader*, New York: Routledge.

1. gretigre@gmail.com [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. izis.mlopes@gmail.com [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. nataliacabanillas@gmail.com [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. rodriguezsierra.olga@gmail.com [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. zezabarral@gmail.com [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. lucreciagreco@gmail.com [↑](#endnote-ref-6)