

SENSORY ETHNOGRAPHY IN THE HIMALAYAS

This course will take the senses as its main object and instrument of inquiry. The very foundation of our experience of reality, the senses mediate our relationships with the environment, society, objects and all else. In the last few decades, the sensorial turn in anthropology (which has since impacted other disciplines) has shown that the senses, far from being just the neutral fruit of cognitive processes or neurological mechanisms, are constructed historically, culturally and politically. A first goal of this course, then, is to explore the particular ways with which individuals in Himalayan cultures relate to their realities through the senses. Its second major goal is to expand the boundaries of experience through the “re-sensualization” of the body of the “ethnographer-in-training.” By stretching the limits of participant observation, this course aims to instill a fuller sensorial experience.

Having the ethnographic literature pertaining to this region as its basis, the course will explore the theoretical insights of sensorial anthropology by directly applying them to fieldwork experiences, which will include excursions to religious rituals and festivals, pilgrimage, and other explorations of the Kathmandu valley’s urban and rural life. The course will also promote mini-workshops in which local artists and professionals will introduce students to basic notions of thangka painting, Nepali music, and culinary arts, among other expressive forms. The intention of these workshops is to offer students the opportunity to bodily participate in some of the artistic and practical activities of the Himalayan peoples. Throughout the course, students will be guided to consider how each cultural expression connects with its particular physical setting and the valley’s wider natural environment. Assignments will include an experimental presentation that can be defined as an aesthetic appropriation of the sensible world through multiple media (40%), and a final theoretical essay about this presentation (60%). Students will be encouraged to select topics that will contribute to their final integrative projects.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK #1 (Sept 1-6) *The Body and the Senses*

1. TUESDAY (9/1/2015)

Readings

Required readings:

- Howes, David (2003) “Sensual Turn in Anthropological Understanding,” in *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Culture and Social Theory*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.

Optional Further Readings:

- Jütte, Robert (2005) *A History of the Senses: From Antiquity to Cyberspace*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Serres, Michel (2008) *The Five Senses: a Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*. London and New York: Continuum.

2. THURSDAY (9/3/2015)

Readings

Required readings:

- Pink, Sarah (2009) *Doing Sensory Ethnography*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, selections.

Optional Further Readings:

- Classen, Contance (1993) *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the senses in history and across cultures*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Duranti Alessandro (2010) “Husserl, intersubjectivity, and anthropology.” *Anthropological Theory*, vol. 10, issue 1, pp. 1–20.

WEEK #2 (Sept 7-13)
Sensing the Body in Death

1. TUESDAY (9/8/2015)

Readings

Required readings:

- Childs, Geoff (2004) *Tibetan diary: from birth to death and beyond in a Himalayan valley of Nepal*. Berkeley, London: University of California Press, selections.

- Desjarlais, Robert R. (2000) "Echoes of a Yolmo Buddhist's life in death." *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 260-293.

Optional Further Readings:

- Zivkovic, Tanya (2013) *Death and Reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism: In-Between Bodies*. London and New York: Routledge.

1. THURSDAY (9/10/2015)

PASHUPATINATH

Readings

Required readings:

- Parry, Jonathan (1982) "Sacrificial Death and the necrophagous ascetic," in Bloch, M. and Parry, J. *Death and the Regeneration of Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 74-110.
- Michaels, Axel (2008) *Siva in trouble: festivals and rituals at the Pasupatinatha Temple of Deopatan (Nepal)*. New York [u.a.]: Oxford University Press, selections.

Optional Further Readings:

- Parry, Jonathan (1985) "Death and Digestion: The symbolism of food and eating in North Indian Mortuary Rites." *Man*, vol. 20, no. 4 (December), pp. 612-630.
- Pradhan, Rajendra (1996) "Sacrifice, Regeneration and Gifts: Mortuary rituals among Hindu Newars of Kathmandu." *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, vol. 23, no.1 (January), 159-194.

WEEK #3 (Sept 14-20)

The Body and the Cosmos in Sensing and Organizing Urban Space

1. TUESDAY (9/15/2015)

LALITPUR

Readings

Required readings:

- Toffin, Gérard (2012) “A Vaishnava Theatrical Performance in Nepal: The *Kāttī-pyākhā* of Lalitpur City.” *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 29, no. 1 (Spring), pp. 126-163.

Optional Further Readings:

- Shankar, Pratyush (2009) “Patan: reading urban form in cultural landscape.” *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* vol. 36, no. 2: 239-258.

2. THURSDAY (9/17/2015)

BHAKTAPUR

Required readings:

- Levy, Robert I (1992) “The Symbolic Organization of Space,” in *Mesocosm: Hinduism and the Organization of a Traditional Newar City in Nepal*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, pp. 150-199.
- Gutschow, Niels (1980) “Functions of squares in Bhaktapur,” in Pieper, Jan (ed.), *Ritual space in India: studies in architectural anthropology*. London: pp. 57-64.

Optional Further Readings:

- Feld, Steve and Basso, Keith (eds) (1996) *Senses of Place*. Santa Fe, New Mexico: School of American Research Advanced Seminar Series.
- Korvald, Tordis (1994) “The Dancing Gods of Bhaktapur and Their Audience,” in Michael Allen (ed.) *Anthropology of Nepal: Peoples, Problems and Processes*. Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, pp. 405-415.

WEEK #4 (Sept 21-Sept 27)

The Body and the Cosmos in Sensing and Organizing Domestic Space

1. TUESDAY (9/22/2015):

Readings

Required readings:

- Gray, John (2006) “Introduction,” and “The Sacred House: Domestic as Mandala,” in *Domestic Mandala: Architecture of Lifeworlds in Nepal*. Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, pp. 1-36.

Optional Further Readings:

- Bourdieu, Pierre (1990) “The Kabyle house or the world reversed,” in *The Logic of Practice*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, pp. 271-283

2. THURSDAY (9/24/2015)

Required readings:

- Gray, John (2006) “The Constructed House: Ritual Creation of Domestic Space,” in *Domestic Mandala: Architecture of Lifeworlds in Nepal*. Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, pp. 69-90.

Optional Further Readings:

- Jackson, Michael (1995) *At Home in the World*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.

WEEK #5 (Sept 28-Oct 4)
Knowing the World through the Body

1. TUESDAY (9/29/2015):

Readings

Required readings:

- Jackson, Michael (1983) “Knowledge of the Body.” *Man*, New Series, vol. 18, no. 2 (June), pp. 327-45.

Optional Further Readings:

- Csordas T. (1990) “Embodiment as a paradigm for anthropology.” *Ethos*, vol. 18, no. 1 (March), pp. 5-47.

2. THURSDAY (10/01/2015)

Required readings:

- Samuel, Geoffrey (2008) “Subtle bodies, longevity and internal alchemy,” In *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra: Indic Religions to the Thirteenth Century*. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, pp. 271-290.

Optional Further Readings:

- Mauss, Marcel (1973) “Techniques of the Body.” *Economy and Society*, vol. 2, issue 1, pp. 70-88.

WEEK #6 (Oct 5-Oct 11)

Healing the Body: Senses, Emotion and Possession

1. TUESDAY (10/07/2015)

Readings

Required readings:

- Desjarlais, Robert R. (1994) *Body and Emotion: The Aesthetics of Illness and Healing in the Nepal Himalayas*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, selections.

Optional Further Readings:

- Kleinman Arthur (1999) “Experience and its moral modes: culture, human conditions, and disorder.” In *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, vol. 20, ed. GB Peterson. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, pp. 357–420
- Desjarlais, Robert R. (1989) Healing through Images: The Magical Flight and Healing Geography of Nepali shamans. *Ethos*, vol. 17, issue 3, pp. 289-307.

1. THURSDAY (10/09/2015)

Readings

Required readings:

- Gellner, David N. (1994) "Priests, Healers, Mediums and Witches: The Context of Possession in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal." *Man*, New Series, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 27-48.

Optional Further Readings:

- Levine, Nancy E. 1989. "Spirit Possession and Ethnic Politics in Nepal's Northwest." *Himalayan Research Bulletin* vol. 9, issue 1, pp. 11-20

WEEK #7 AND #8 (Oct 12-25) (Trip to Yolmo) *Sensing Yolmo Lives*

Readings

Required readings:

- Desjarlais, Robert R. (2003) *Sensory Biographies: Lives and Deaths Among Nepal's Yolmo Buddhists*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

WEEK #9 (Oct 26-Nov 1) *Sight*

1. TUESDAY (10/27/2015)

Readings

Required readings:

- Eck, Diana L. (1985) *Darśan: Seeing the Divine Image in Hinduism*. New York: Columbia University Press, selections.

Optional Further Readings:

- Davis, Richard (1997) *Lives of Indian Images*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

2. THURSDAY (10/29/2015)

Readings

Required readings:

- Jackson, David and Janice Jackson (1988). *Tibetan Thangka Painting: Methods and Materials*. Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Press, selections.

Optional Further Readings:

- Beer, Robert (2004) *The Encyclopedia of Tibetan Symbols and Motifs*. Chicago: Serindia Publications.
- Meulenbeld, Ben (2001) *Buddhist Symbolism in Tibetan Thangkas*. Havelte, Holland: Binkey Kok Publications.

Workshop I – Thangka Painting

WEEK #10 (Nov 2-Nov 8) *Hearing*

1. TUESDAY (11/03/2015)

Readings

Required readings:

- Greene, Paul (2002) “Sounding the Body in Buddhist Nepal: Neku Horns, Himalayan Shamanism, and the Transmigration of the Disembodied Spirit.” *The World of Music*, vol. 44, no. 2, pp. 93-114.

Optional Further Readings:

- Beck, Guy L. (1993) *Sonic Theology: Hinduism and Sacred Sound*. Columbia, South Carolina: South Carolina Press.

2. THURSDAY (11/05/2015)

Readings

Required readings:

- Henderson, David (1996) “Emotion and Devotion, Lingering and Longing in Some Nepali Songs.” *Ethnomusicology*, vol. 40, no. 3 (Fall), pp. 440-468.
- Roche, David (2000) “Music and Trance,” in Arnold, A. *South Asia: the Indian subcontinent* (The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music – Volume 5). New York and London: Routledge, pp. 288-295.

Optional Further Readings:

- Grandin, Ingemar (1994) “Nepalese Urbanism: a Musical Exploration,” in Michael Allen (ed.), *Anthropology of Nepal: Peoples, Problems and Processes*. Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, pp. 160-175.

Workshop II – Traditional Music of Nepal

WEEK #11 (Nov 9-15)

Smell

1. TUESDAY (11/10/2015)

Readings

Required readings:

- McHugh, James (2012) *Sandalwood and Carrion: Smell in Indian Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, selections.

Optional Further Readings:

- Classen, Constance; Howes, David and Synnott, Anthony (1994) *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*. New York: Routledge.

2. THURSDAY (11/12/2015)

Readings

Required readings:

- Bazin, Nathalie (2013) “Fragrant Ritual Offerings in the Art of Tibetan Buddhism.” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 23, issue 1 (January), pp. 31-38.

Optional Further Readings:

- Drobnick, Jim (ed.) (2006) *The Smell Culture Reader*. Oxford and New York: Berg.

Workshop III – Tibetan Incense Making

WEEK #12 (Nov 16-Nov 22)

*Pilgrimage, **Touch** (Contact) and the Creation of Place*

1. TUESDAY (11/17/2015)

Readings

Required readings:

- Huber, Toni (1994) “Putting the Gnas Back Into Gnas-Skor: Rethinking Tibetan Buddhist Pilgrimage Practice.” *The Tibet Journal*. Special Edition: *Powerful Places and Spaces in Tibetan Religious Culture*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 23-60.

Optional Further Readings:

- Blondeau, Anne-Marie and Ernst Steinkellner (eds) (1996) *Reflections of the Mountain*. Edited by. Wien : Verlag de Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

- Huber, Toni (1999) *Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain: Popular Pilgrimage and Visionary Landscape in Southeast Tibet*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Macdonald, A.W. (ed.) (1997) *Maṇḍala and Landscape*. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld.

2. THURSDAY (11/19/2015)

Readings

Required readings:

- Buffetrille, Katia (1994) *The Halase-Maratika Caves (Eastern Tibet), A Sacred Place Claimed by both Hindus and Buddhists*. Pondichéry, Institut Français de Pondichéry (Pondy Papers in Social Sciences, 16), selections.

Optional Further Readings:

- Buffetrille, Katia (1992) "Preliminary Remarks on a Sherpa Pilgrimage: The Pilgrimage to the Milk Lake in the District of Solu (Nepal)." In: Gérard Toffin (ed.), *The Anthropology of Nepal: From Tradition to Modernity*. Paris: CNRS, pp. 97-111.
- Huber, Toni (2009) *The Holy Land Reborn: Pilgrimage & The Tibetan Reinvention of Buddhist India*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

WEEK #13 AND #14 (Nov 23-Dec 6): *Trip to Solokhumbu Sensing Sherpa Lives through the Mani Rimdu Ritual*

Readings

Required readings:

- Kohn, Richard (2001) *Lord of the Dance: the Mani Rimdu festival in Tibet and Nepal*.

Optional Further Readings:

- Ortner, Sherry (1989) *High Religion: A Cultural and Political History of Sherpa Buddhism*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

WEEK #15 (Dec 7-Dec 13)

Taste

1. TUESDAY (12/08/2015)

Readings

Required readings:

- Löwdin, Per (1998) *Food, Ritual, and Society: A Study of Social Structure and Food Symbolism Among the Newars*. Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, selections.

Optional Further Readings:

- Korsmeyer, Carolyn (2005) *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*. Oxford and New York: Berg.

2. THURSDAY (12/10/2015)

Readings

Required readings:

- Ardussi, John A. (1977) "Brewing and Drinking the Beer of Enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism: the *Dohā* tradition in Tibet." *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 97, pp. 115-124.

Optional Further Readings:

- Stone, Linda (1983) "Hierarchy and food in Nepalese healing rituals." *Social Science & Medicine*, vol. 17, issue 14, pp. 971-978.

Workshop IV – Nepali Cuisine (including Farewell Feast!)