Biography and Ethnography
Graduate Seminar
Fall 2011
Professor: Professor D. Goldstein
Wednesdays: 12-2:30 in the Seminar Room

Class Meets: Wednesdays: 12-2:30

General Information:
Professor Goldstein’s Office and Office Hours:
Hale 445 on Tuesdays 12:30—2:30 p.m.
(Please use sign-up sheet on office door; walk-ins possible if empty slots)

Email: Donna.Goldstein@Colorado.EDU
Tel.: (303) 492-5484

In Case of Emergency, Anthropology Department Front Desk: 492-2547

Note 1: Disabilities accommodations
If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me
a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs can be
addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented
disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Center for Community N200, and
http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices.

If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see guidelines at
http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/go.cgi?select=temporary.html

Disability Services' letters for students with disabilities indicate legally
mandated reasonable accommodations. The syllabus statements and answers to
Frequently Asked Questions can be found at http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices

Note 2: Policy regarding religious observances
Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every
effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of
religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or
required attendance. In this class, {{insert your procedures here}}
See full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

Note 3: Classroom behavior and courtesy
Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate
learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may
be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially
important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of
race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual
orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability,
and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the
student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an
alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in
the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at
http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html and at
Note 4: Discrimination and Harassment
The University of Colorado at Boulder Discrimination and Harassment Policy and
Procedures, the University of Colorado Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures,
and the University of Colorado Conflict of Interest in Cases of Amorous
Relationships policy apply to all students, staff, and faculty. Any student, staff,
or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of sexual
harassment or discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national
origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran
status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at
303-492-2127 or the Office of Student Conduct (OSC) at 303-492-5550.
Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies, and the campus
resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or
harassment can be obtained at http://www.colorado.edu/odh

Note 5: The Boulder Campus student Honor Code
All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for
knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution.
Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic
dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All
incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council
(honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation
of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions
from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited
to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the
Honor Code can be found at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and at
http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/

WHAT YOU WILL NEED: These books were ordered through the University bookstore and should be
there in time for our class.

1) Required Books:
Barbin, Herculine, and Michel Foucault. 1980. *Herculine Barbin: being the recently discovered memoirs
California Press.
Kroeber, Theodora. 1969. *Ishi in two worlds: a biography of the last wild Indian in North America:*
University of California Press.
A. Knopf.
Menchú, Rigoberta, and Elisabeth Burgos-Debray. 1984. *I, Rigoberta Menchú: an Indian woman in
Guatemala*: Verso.
London: Scribner.
Course Description:
This class is a bit of an experiment. At the end of one seminar two years ago, the thought was raised that perhaps we needed to think through the biographical genre more deeply and consciously than usual. In particular, João Biehl’s *Vita* and its revitalization of biography inspired many of us to pursue these questions further. I hope we can think through some of these issues of narrative, biography, autobiography, contextualization, methods, etc. in the context of reading a good number of books both inside and outside of Anthropology in order to gain some hybrid strength.

Goals and Expectations:
I ask that you read carefully, find your passion, and contribute respectfully as a citizen in this class. During the first class, we will make some changes to the syllabus in order to reflect the interests of the class. After that, we will add journal articles/book chapters as needed.

Papers: There is one final paper in this class and 4 critical response papers. The final paper assignment should be started during the first two weeks of class, so that there is time to write a thoughtful and insightful paper. Its final form is to be 10 pages double-spaced, maximum. In the first two weeks, you need to choose the “main biography” (either person, book, autobiography, memoir, etc.) that you will use as your seminal text. Then you are to read from that text in all directions in order to write a critical review of that work or of the genre of books about that person, etc. In other words, the project is to be about biography and the process of writing, and you are to consider what factors have worked for you in evaluating the work. Finally, the idea is to ask, “what can anthropology/the ethnographic process” do for biography and “what can the biographical method, etc. do for ethnography”? Are these forms still vital and compatible?

Grading: You will be evaluated on the basis of your class participation, 4 critical reaction papers, and final presentation and paper.

Class Participation, including presentations: 20%
4 Critical Reaction papers: 20%
Final Presentation: 10%
Final Paper: 50%

1) Critical Reaction Papers
Every other week a “one-to-two page” critical reaction paper discussing the week’s readings is required. These critical reaction papers can be anywhere from one double-spaced to two double-spaced pages. If you agree, the class will be divided into 2 groups—A and B— during the first week’s class, and the grouping you choose to belong to determines when you write your papers. Four critical reaction papers are due for each individual student over the course of the semester. (That means you can skip one week. Just make sure that you write four of them ON TIME during the course of the semester). Please hand me 2 copies of your paper at the end of class. One copy will be returned to you and one will be kept on file.

These short papers should be interesting and engaging and should explore one idea (but possibly more) from the readings in detail. A good way to think about these assignments is to imagine yourself as a book or article review writer, addressing both a broad intellectual audience as well as an anthropological audience. If you disagree with an author’s methods or conclusions, then explain why and give an alternative argument (and source) that explains your point. Try to be as thorough, precise, and as specific as possible.

2) Leading class discussion with brief presentation
Students are expected to give 1-2 informal 10-15 minute long presentations on one or more of the week’s readings over the course of the semester. Participants should organize their presentations on the assumption that everyone has already done the readings in question, and therefore only a short amount of time is needed to summarize the readings.

The bulk of the presentation should focus on addressing the key issues raised in the readings, the apparent agendas (theoretical and otherwise of its author(s)), critiques of the reading (i.e., strengths, weaknesses, whether or not the argument, data, or analysis is convincing), and what significance the selection(s) has in the grand scheme of anthropological (or some other interesting disciplinary discourse) theory. Close your presentation by suggesting some aspects of the readings that you feel are interesting areas for further class discussion, particularly those aspects which you may not have had time to address during your presentation. Do a practice run of your presentation beforehand in order to make sure that you do not exceed the time limit of 30 minutes.

3) Class Culture and Class Participation
There are a number of interesting ways in which we can think about this particular experience together. First, I would suggest that we think of this class as not only a seminar on a set of themes, but also a kind of intellectual workshop. While I will certainly take responsibility as director of this endeavor, the quality of the discussion will depend on how deeply and seriously you take the readings.

I hope the organization of this class will encourage it to be more of a “salon” atmosphere where ideas are exchanged and differing perspectives are respected. I am hoping that the combination of good readings and a highly motivated group of participants (as presenters and as critical reaction paper writers) will help to make this seminar not only intellectually stimulating, but also a pleasant place to be. I ask that participants be courteous and respectful to others. In other words, I would like to stimulate intellectual exchange and the ability to discuss and disagree with one another and to understand that we can do this in a friendly, civilized, and respectful manner.

We will conduct the course as a weekly seminar. Therefore, all students are expected to have completed the assigned required readings prior to each class and be prepared to engage in class discussion. This is extremely important for the success of the course. Be prepared with reactions, comments, critiques and/or questions in response to the readings for each class. Regular attendance is expected of all students. This class is strictly limited to 15 students and advanced graduate students in anthropology will be given preference of entry.

4) Final Paper and Annotated Bibliography: One 10-page final paper with bibliography and footnotes plus one annotated bibliography with 20 citations (including 5 from the class) having to do with some aspect of biography and ethnography is due for the course. Your paper represents an opportunity for you to explore a topic of interest in depth. You will be expected to make your annotated bibliography and final paper available to everyone in the class.
August 24  Week 1. Class Syllabus and Discussion
Required Readings:
None
Sign up please for one group. Then choose weeks to present and food.

Group A (Weeks 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16) Magda, Mirna, Ben, Dani, Levi, Lindsay, Meryleen

Group B (Weeks 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13) Lena, Morgan, Malinda, Michelle

August 31   Week 2. Autobiography, Ethnography, Life History
Required Readings:

Assignment #1: Track down one critical article (no longer than 40 pages in either a journal or section of a book) that you believe would be an important document to consider in the context of this class. It can focus on narrative, biography, interviewing, methods, reflexivity, memoir, etc. Read the article and write a one-paragraph argument for including the reading in the course. You may work in pairs on this if you like.

Food: Lindsay and Mirna

Presentation Levi and Morgan

September 7 Week 3: A Time of Innocence

Required Readings:

Food: Morgan and Lena

Presentation: Mirna and Michelle

September 14: Week 4. Anthropology’s Burden

Required Readings:

Food: Magda and Mirna
Presenations: Lena and Levi

September 21 Week 5: Author, Folklorist, Anthropologist
Required Readings:

**Food:** Meryleen and Magda

**Presentation:** Michelle and Ben

September 28 Week 6: Perversions of Truth

**Required Readings:**

**Food:** Michelle and Ben
**Presentation:** Magda and Meryleen

October 5 Week 7. Historical Bandits

**Required Readings:**
To be announced.
**Guest Visitor:** Professor Anton Blok.

**Food:** Donna

**Introduction:** Donna

October 12 Week 8: Righteous Dopefiend

**Required Readings:**
Righteous Dopefiend

**Food:** Michelle and Meryleen
**Presentation:** Lena and Malinda

October 19 Week 9:

**Required Readings:**
*Claude Lévi-Strauss. Tristes Tropiques.*

**Food Levi and Dani

**Presentation:** Ben and Morgan

October 26 Week 10: Autobiography, Recording, Authenticity

**Required Readings:**
November 2  Week 11. Secrets, Lies, Confessions, Politics

**Required Readings:**

November 9  Week 12. Renewal of biographic process

**Required Readings:**

November 16 Week 13: CLASS CANCELLED AAA MEETINGS IN MONTREAL

**Required Readings:**
Work on your own reading and papers


NO CLASS

November 23 Week 14: Fall Break and Thanksgiving Holiday Class Cancelled

**Required Readings:**


Work on your own reading and papers.

NO CLASS

November 30 Week 15: American Prometheus

**Required Readings:**
Work on your own reading and papers

**Required Readings:**

December 7 Week 16: Workshop your final paper. 10-minute presentations.
Food _______________________ and ___________________________

Everyone is presenting.

The Final Paper is Due: December 14, 2011