

SOSANT4400

v/ Wenzel Geissler

Ethnographies of an uncertain present – the anthropology of neoliberalism

Mondays 10.15-12.15 and 14.15-16.00

(se semestersiden for mer informasjon om antall møter og varighet)

In the beginning of the new millennium, the concept of ‘neoliberalism’ and its synonyms – ‘late capitalism’, ‘millennial capitalism’ etc. have featured, often centrally, in ethnographic studies by leading anthropologists working across the five continents. These studies, which all share a renewed interest in political economy, as well as in questions of government, statehood, sovereignty and citizenship, in conjunction with thorough cultural and social analyses, try to make sense of the world at this particular historical juncture. Some of them could be described as post-post-socialist, in that they combine in their work the lessons of cultural studies and postmodernism with new readings of Marx and other modern theorists – and with thorough ethnography. They all search for new concepts that match the radically new social, cultural, economic and political forms that in the aftermath of ‘1989’ have arisen in Borneo as well as Ukraine, Denmark and Irak, Zambia and Brasil. Indeed, it is one of the characteristics of these new forms, that they seem to occur between different places, through wide ranging networks, which is why they sometimes are referred to as ‘globalisation’. Yet, they are assembled in new shapes and to different effects in different localities. In this course we will read four recent monographs by leading anthropologists, which all deal ethnographically with ‘neoliberalism’, as it unfolds in four very different parts of the world. Our aim will be twofold: to share their concepts and analyses in order to inform our own ethnographic research; and to examine these ethnographies as texts, attending to writing styles and structure, to find inspiration for our own ongoing work. Presentations and discussion will aim to draw lines between the texts and the concepts they introduce, and the participants’ research projects in different parts of the world.

Form of the course:

3 sessions @ 4 hours

We will read together four monographs. Participants are requested to have a thorough look at all the books (available at the library and at Akademika) before the beginning of the course. In the first session we will distribute the tasks. Each participant will be asked to prepare a very short presentation and less than one-page discussion point for each session. Accordingly, all participants will be expected to read all the texts.

The first session will consist of an introduction to the subject and agreement on workplan and distribution of tasks. Then we will discuss the texts of the day and view a film. The second and third session will consist of two parts, each dealing with one monograph.

Seminar 1.1: Introduction

Seminar 1.2: Neoliberalism and its cultures

1. Excerpts of :Harvey, D. (2006). *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* Oxford, Oxford UP.
2. Collier, S. J. and A. Ong (2005). Chapter 1: Global assemblages, anthropological problems. *Global Assemblages. Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*. S. J. Collier. Oxford, Blackwell: 3-21.
3. Introductory chapter of: Comaroff, J. and J. Comaroff (2001). *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism*. Durham, NY, Duke UP.

Seminar 2.1: Ferguson, J. (2006). *Global Shadows. Africa in the Neoliberal World Order.* Durham, Duke University Press.

Seminar 2.2: Caldeira, T. P. R. (2001). *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo* Berkeley, University of California Press.

Seminar 3.1: Ong, A. (2006). *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* Durham, Duke.

Seminar 3.2: Tsing, A. L. (2004). *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* Princeton, Princeton UP