

Visual Ethnography in Social Science



SYLLABUS

VU Amsterdam Summer School

Course date: 3-14 July 2023



Any general questions for the Summer School support team? Contact amsterdamsummerschool@vu.nl.

Course Details

Title	Visual Ethnography in Social Science
Coordinator(s)	Dr. Lianne (A.L.) Cremers
Other lecturers	Drs. Cato Janssen
Study credits	3 ECTS
Form(s) of tuition	On campus lectures and practical sessions, self-study (group work)
Approximate contact hours	45 (including group work)
Approximate self-study hours	20

Teaching staff (in order of appearance)

Dr. Lianne (A.L.) Cremers & Drs. Cato Janssen

Course description

This course offers a theoretical and practical program in which we explore how the making of documentaries can enrich ethnographic research within a variety of social science disciplines. The genre of ethnographic filmmaking is central to the course, but additionally we will discuss the use of photography, arts-based engagement ethnography, and participatory action research. We will dive into the various ways of visualizing people, behaviour, and societies. The course provides a basic introduction to the history of visual ethnography and its broad usage across different disciplines. Additionally, there will be discussions about issues of visual ethnographic research ethics and reflexivity. There will also be the possibility for students to discuss how visual ethnography can be integrated in their own research.

This visual ethnography course will provide interesting literature suggestions combined with lectures, guest lectures, interactive working groups and group assignments. To get an idea of what visual ethnography entails, we will watch ethnographic films followed by reflection and discussion. Two assignments will be conducted in groups of three students and are graded with a pass/fail. Through these assignments the students will get acquainted with the practice of collecting visual data, montage of an ethnographic scene, and reflection on ethical and reflexive issues. The final assignments consists of a short ethnographic film based upon a short qualitative research and an accompanying short essay. It is important students already have some basic skills in conducting in-depth interviews, observation, and/or ethnographic fieldwork. For assignments, essay and final ethnographic film students

can choose a topic of their own interest. The final film is made in a group and has to be done on the days there are no lectures or working groups.

Learning objectives

During this course, students will:

- Receive an introduction to the history and theory of visual ethnography within social science research;
- learn about different visual research methodologies that can be embedded within ethnographic research across disciplines;
- Gain an understanding of the advantages and limitations of visual ethnography;
- Learn how to screen, analyse and discuss ethnographic films;
- Collect visual data and learn the basics to make an ethnographic film;
- Enhance their critical thinking of reflexive and ethical dilemmas around visual ethnographic research;
- Discuss how visual ethnography can be used within their own research.

Assignments & grading

The grade for this course will be based on three creative assignments during the duration of the course (pass/fail): montage of a practice (1min), a montage of a testimony (5min) based on a 20min in-depth interview. The course will end with the making of a short ethnographic film (grade 1/10) and the writing of a short essay (grade 1/10). All audio-visual data will be collected with students' smartphones, unless students want to use their own camera equipment. After a failed grade, students receive time for a repair film or essay, based on feedback by the instructor(s). Repairs are only possible for students who have taken part in the original examination or have submitted a film/essay at the original deadline. In case of extenuating circumstances the student can request the Examinations Board for an exception.

Since most of the course consists of group work, it is mandatory to attend all the days of the course. If there is a good reason why you can't be present, you have to inform the lecturer and explain why you cannot be there and how you will catch up with the (sub-)group in preparing for the next seminar. Moreover, you will be asked to record audio-visual material and do montage together with fellow students on the days there are no seminars scheduled, which is a crucial part of the course and therefore cannot be exempted.

Assignment 1. Montage of a practice (Fail/pass)

In groups of 3 students, you will choose one particular practice you want to record. We will give you some options during class, such as preparing a coffee, using the elevator, filling out forms, having lunch, reading in the library, drinking tea, parking your bike, etc. Start with observing and discuss what shots will be needed to make a good short video. Always ask the people you want to audio-video record for permission. Briefly explain what the student

assignment is about and what will happen with the film. Make sure you record the practice from different angles and varying distances. Also keep in mind that your individual shots are not too short and make sure you do not have more than 10 minutes of rushes in total. After recording the practice, you will make a short 1 minute montage.

Your assignment 1 'Montage of a practice' needs to be uploaded by all three students on Canvas. Save your assignment with the mentioning of assignment 1, all three student names and a title, e.g. Assignment1_Cremers_Jansen_vanDijk_coffeemaking.doc.

Assignment 2. Montage of an interview (Fail/pass)

In a group of 3 students, you will record an interview. Divide (and swab) jobs: interviewer, interviewee, camera (wo)man. Each member takes a share in logging and transcribing. Choose a topic of your liking and think of a handful open-ended questions to guide the semi-structured in-depth interview (max 20min). Make sure you record the interview from three different distances. After recording the interview, you will make a short 5-minute montage. You can include other footage, eg. photographs, videos found online, archive material, etc.

Your assignment 2 'Montage of an interview' needs to be uploaded on Canvas. Save your assignment with the mentioning of assignment 2, all three student names and a title, e.g. Assignment2_Cremers_Jansen_vanDijk_coffeemaking.doc.

Assignment 3. Ethnographic film (marked with score 1/10)

In groups of 3, students will shoot an event pre-arranged by themselves. The topic can be decided by students. Students should decide on a topic, a research question and a short topic-list for in-depth interviewing. During this event, students combine their knowledge of visual ethnography with their newly gained skills of recording practices and interviews. Always ask the people you want to audio-video record for permission. Briefly explain what the student assignment is about and what will happen with the film. Maximum rushes – 4 hours. Please check your kits well before leaving. The team will be on call for advice and other issues associated with research and filming. Afterwards, you will make a short ethnographic film of 5 minutes. You can include other footage. See below assessment form.

Your assignment 3 'Ethnographic film' needs to be uploaded on Canvas. Save your assignment with the mentioning of assignment 3, all three student names and a title, e.g. Assignment3_Cremers_Jansen_vanDijk_coffeemaking.doc.

Assignment 4. Essay (marked with score 1/10)

The essay should be an in-depth reflection on some aspect of visual ethnography, which engages (some of) the literature offered during this winter course. For example, more general: what influence has the camera on conducting your research? Or: How can we use

collaboration or co-creation in visual research projects? Or: How does reflexivity make ethnographic films more ethical? Or more specifically: how can visual anthropology contribute to empowering tuberculosis patients in South Africa? Discuss a certain topic that emerged from the making of the ethnographic film you have made for this course. Make sure you engage with a broader body of literature / debates in visual anthropology. The essay should be 1000 words. See below assessment form.

Your assignment 4 'Essay' needs to be uploaded on Canvas. Save your assignment with the mentioning of assignment 4, your name and a title, e.g. Assignment4_Cremers_coffeemaking.doc.

Course Schedule

Session 1.	3 July Monday, 10-3pm	Introduction, lectures & film screening.
Session 2.	4 July Tuesday, <i>morning</i> 3-5pm	<i>Self-study: assignment 1</i> Montage & Reflection.
Session 3.	5 July Wednesday 10-12am <i>Afternoon</i>	Lectures. <i>Self-study: idea final</i> <i>assignment 3 & essay topic.</i>
Session 4.	6 July Thursday, 10-5pm	Lectures, tutorial, montage & discussion.
No class	<i>7, 10 July Friday, Monday</i>	<i>Self-study: shoot an event pre-arranged</i> <i>by students.</i>
Session 5.	11 July Tuesday, 10-4pm	Lectures, film screening & discussion.
No class.	<i>12, 13 July Wednesday, Thursday</i>	<i>Self-study: final assignment 3 & essay.</i>
Session 6.	14 July Friday, 10-3pm	Student film presentations, discussion & final reflections.

Provisional reading list

- *These are the reading materials that will be discussed during the lectures, ordered by the day in which they are included in the schedule. We strongly recommend that all participants read these materials before the lecture!*

Pink, S. (2020). *Doing visual ethnography*. Sage.

Cremers, A.L., Gerrets, R.P., and Grobusch, M.P. (2016) Visual ethnography: bridging anthropology and public health. TB truths Patients' experience with tuberculosis and healthcare in sub-Saharan Africa: p. 81.

Cremers, A. L., Gerrets, R., Colvin, C. J., Maqogi, M., & Grobusch, M. P. (2018). Tuberculosis patients and resilience: A visual ethnographic health study in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. *Social science & medicine*, 209, 145-151.

Cremers, A.L. & Janssen, C. (2023) COVID-19-related Trauma and the Need for Organizational Healing in a Dutch Nursing Home. *Social science & medicine*, *in press*.

Wiles, R., et al. (2008) Visual ethics: Ethical issues in visual research.

Hockings, P., Tomaselli, K. G., Ruby, J., MacDougall, D., Williams, D., Piette, A., ... & Carta, S. (2014). Where is the theory in visual anthropology?. *Visual Anthropology*, 27(5), 436-456.

- *Extra suggested reading materials ordered by topic.*

Observational film-making

Grimshaw, A. (2001) *The Ethnographers Eye. Ways of Seeing in Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Introduction: 1-15.

MacDougall, D. (2005) *The Corporeal Image. Film, Ethnography and the Senses*. Princeton University Press. Introduction: Meaning and Being. Pp. 1-9

Collaborative film-making

Faye Ginsburg, 1991, 'Indigenous Media: Faustian Contract or Global Village'. *Cultural Anthropology* 6(1): 92-112.

Gruber, M. (2016). Participatory ethnographic filmmaking: Transcultural collaboration in research and filmmaking. *Visual Ethnography*, 5(1), 15-44.

Essay film

Rascaroli, L. (2008) The essay film: Problems, definitions, textual commitments. *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* 49.2: 24-47.

Van de Port, M. (2018) In Love with my Footage. Desirous Undercurrents in the Making of an Essay Film on Candomblé, *Visual Anthropology Review* 34 (2): 136-146.

Experimental film

Pasqualino, C. & Schneider, A. (eds.), (2014) *Experimental Film and Anthropology*. London: Bloomsbury. Introduction.

Sensorial film

Castaing-Taylor, L. (1996) Iconophobia, How Anthropology Lost it at the Movies. *Transition* 69: 64-88.

Pavsek, C. (2015). Leviathan and the Experience of Sensory Ethnography. *Visual Anthropology Review*, 31(1), 4-11.

Visual anthropology contributing to theory

Pantenburg, V. (2015) *Farocki/Godart, Film as Theory*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Suhr, C. & Willerslev, R. (2012) Can film show the invisible? The work of Montage in Ethnographic Filmmaking. *Current Anthropology* vol. 53 (3): 282-301.

The practicalities of camera based research

Møhl, P. (2011) Mise en scène, Knowledge and Participation: Considerations of a Filming Anthropologist, *Visual Anthropology*, 24:3, 227-245

Rouch, J. (1975) *The Camera and Man*. (Fragment over camera) *Principles of visual anthropology* 1 (1975).

Sound

Henley, P. (2007). Seeing, hearing, feeling: Sound and the despotism of the eye in “visual” anthropology. *Visual Anthropology Review*, 23(1), 54-63.

Samuels, D. W., Meintjes, L., Ochoa, A. M., & Porcello, T. (2010). Soundscapes: Toward a sounded anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 39, 329-345.

Arts-based engagement ethnography

Degarrod, L.N. (2013) Making the unfamiliar personal: arts-based ethnographies as public-engaged ethnographies. *Qualitative Research*. 13(4): p. 402-413.

Goopy, S. & Kassan, A. (2019) Arts-based engagement ethnography: An approach for making research engaging and knowledge transferable when working with harder-to-reach communities. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*. 18: p. 1609406918820424.

Visual anthropology & photography

Lynteris, C., & Prince, R. J. (2016). Anthropology and medical photography: Ethnographic, critical and comparative perspectives. *Visual Anthropology*, 29(2), 101-117.

Visual thinking strategies

Moeller, M., et al., *Visual Thinking Strategies = Creative and Critical Thinking*. Phi Delta Kappan, 2013. 95(3): p. 56-60

Ethics and visual anthropology

Holliday, R., We've been framed: visualising methodology. *The sociological review*, 2000. 48(4): p. 503-521.

Other books

Alfonso, A. I., Kurti, L., & Pink, S. (2004). *Working images: Visual research and representation in ethnography*. Routledge.

Gillian, R., *Visual methodologies: An introduction to the interpretation of visual materials*. 2001: Sage.

Heider, K. G. (2009). *Ethnographic film: Revised edition*. University of Texas Press.

MacDougall, D. (2005). The corporeal image. In *The Corporeal Image. Film, Ethnography and the Senses*. Princeton University Press. Introduction: Meaning and Being. Pp. 1-9

Pink, S. (2020). *Doing visual ethnography*. Sage.

Prosser, J., The status of image-based research. *Image-based research: A sourcebook for qualitative researchers*, 1998: p. 97-112.

Other

Bloustien, G. (2003). Introduction: Envisioning Ethnography—Exploring the Meanings of the Visual in Research. *Social Analysis*, 47(3), 1-7.

Harrison, B. (2002). Seeing health and illness worlds—using visual methodologies in a sociology of health and illness: a methodological review. *Sociology of health & illness*, 24(6), 856-872.

Pink, S. (2003) Interdisciplinary agendas in visual research: re-situating visual anthropology. *Visual studies*. 18(2): p. 179-192.

Assessment form Assignment 3 Final film

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Student names and student numbers:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Criteria	Remarks / suggestions
Length of film 5 minutes (10% margin)	
Introduction of field & problem / problem definition/ central question Central interest: what is the trigger, why important Context of field and research area	
Research methods (minimal 1 interview and 1 practice) Reflexivity Ethics, carefully think about the ethical implications of conducting visual research	
Structure: Beginning - middle – end Montage sound Montage visuals *we will take available equipment into account	
General feedback: Is the film convincing, independent, critical, layered, creative, original, well planned, well-reasoned and in line with students' capabilities?	
Final Grade	

Assessment form Assignment 4 Essay

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Student name

Student number:

Title essay:

Criteria	Remarks / suggestions
1000 words (10% margin)	
Introduction of field & problem / problem definition/ central question Central interest: what is the trigger, why important Context of field and research area Topic's relevance, relationship between theory and practice Contextualized question Scope of question (and sub questions if needed), relevance for research	
Academic writing: Structure and language (spelling, grammar, style, etc.) Referencing in APA style, tables, appendices, etc.	
General feedback: Is the essay convincing, independent, critical, layered, creative, original, well planned, well-reasoned and in line with students' capabilities?	
Final Grade	

