Course Description

What is empathy? Does it aid or complicate activism? Does it influence scholarly activities such as ethnography? Working among communities, whether as scholars, journalists, human rights workers, or health care practitioners, requires grappling with positions or persons one may find sympathetic—or not. Either perspective is multidimensional, complicated because such work requires spending extended time with interlocutors. Fieldworkers must generate rapport, empathy, and intimacy with their subjects—but without losing objectivity. The ethics of such encounters hinge both on doing no harm and on doing good—through advocacy, opposition, or expressions that are not so straightforward. Doing no harm is a clear-cut ethical imperative. But do empathy, intimacy, and approval fall within the same categorical imperative? What happens when boundaries break down between researcher and subject, sympathy and ambivalence, rapport and incompatibility? This Colloquium explores exemplary cases from across the globe, giving particular attention to the production of knowledge—as text and as “activism” that engages the ambiguities and conventions that structure our societies and lived experience.

Learning Aims and Outcomes

a) To clarify the historically shifting category of “Islam” and “Muslim” in relationship to historical contexts, social formations and ideologies, and the relationships between doctrine and the vernacular.
b) To assess conventional assumptions about “identity” and the groups and individuals who embody different expressions of it.
c) To critically assess the theoretical and empirical research on Islam and Muslims from theoretical and ethnographic perspectives.
d) To demonstrate and refine students’ research skills by conducting a research project, where they will each prepare a case study, with the oversight of the instructor.
e) Reflect in written and oral expression the themes and issues covered in the class, and gain the confidence and expertise to articulate independent, informed opinions.
f) Evaluate, respond to, and critique given texts in clear prose, while learning to accept constructive criticism and to rewrite drafts based on suggestions.
Teaching and Learning Methodologies

This course consists of a seminar format that requires students to participate actively in class discussions. Considerable class time will be spent discussing different kinds of texts—historical, theoretical, and ethnographic—which will be placed in their relevant contexts through short lectures given by the instructor at the beginning of each seminar in order to introduce the material for discussion and analysis by the students. The class will seek refinement of student learning through guided research projects, training in oral and written reflection in class topics which will include leading discussions and peer review.

Assignments
1. Students will submit online (NYU Classes) to the entire class a written, 1-2 paragraph reading response to class readings by 12:00pm prior to each class meeting. The goal of reading responses is to help you refine your thoughts, stimulate classroom discussion, and establish an archive that you can consult in the future. Each must include (a) a question about, or critique of the author’s argument, (b) your answer to your question or your own point of view related to your critique. Reading responses are not in lieu of attending class and will not be counted if you are absent. The total number of responses is 10 (worth up to 2 points each, 50% of final grade).

2. Students will complete a final essay of 5 double-spaced pages. Students will workshop their topics in consultation with the instructor, and guidelines will be handed out and discussed at the mid-way point of the semester (40% of final grade).

3. Final essays will be peer-reviewed by another student in the class. The peer-review process is a required component of the drafting of the final essay. Each student will review a partner student’s draft and provide critical commentary on the argument and writing style. This will count as work done outside of class time. Students will select peer review partners, exchange draft essays, and return them with typed comments no less than three days before our last class meeting. The goal of this assignment is to increase your analytical and communication skills (10% of final grade). Guidelines will be handed out and discussed at the mid-way point of the semester.

Grading Policy: Assessment Method
1. Response essays 50%
2. Research project: 40%
3. Peer-review of essay: 10%
Assignment numbers will be totaled and given a letter grade according to an overall grading scale (below).

Grading scale
100-95=A, 94-90=A-, 89-85=B+, 84-80=B, 79-75=B-, 74-70=C+, 69-65=C, 64-60=C-59-50=D, 49-0=F
Attendance and Submission Policies

1. All assignments must be submitted by their respective due dates, unless you have consulted with me beforehand. Otherwise, a one grade level per assignment per day (e.g., from A to A-) will be deducted. Reading responses will not be accepted past their due dates.
2. Attendance is mandatory. Each student may miss one class meeting for any reason (it will be counted as a “free” absence). No absences with verifiable documentation of emergency will be counted. Absence (beyond the one “free” absence) without verifiable documentation of emergency will result in your participation grade dropping by one grade level per class meeting (e.g., from A to A-).
3. Students are responsible for announcements made and materials distributed in class. If you miss a class, please contact a classmate for missed announcements and content.

Rules on Electronic Devices

Please do not use cell phones or laptop computers during class since they distract from class discussion. If you require a computer for note-taking, please see me during my offices hours so that we can make alternative arrangements. PDFs for each week’s class will have to be printed out and brought to class. Disregarding the rules about device use in class may result in a lowered grade: after the first warning it is at the instructor’s discretion to deduct up to three points out of 100 for the final grade.

Writing

I urge you to schedule appointments with the Writing Center on campus.

Citing Sources

When listing references at the end of the paper, follow this format: Author (e.g., Doe, Jane), Date of Publication (e.g., 2018), Title (On a Clear Day You Can See Forever), Page Number (e.g., Pp.13-37), Publisher Location and Press (e.g., New York: New York University Press).

For in-text citations, please do the following: (Author’s Last Name Date of Publication: Page Number), e.g., (Doe 2018: 13). You may use any other standard, if consistent. If you have any questions about how to acknowledge sources or whether your use of sources is proper, please come see me during my office hours.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism occurs when you present the ideas and writings of others, including material found online, as your own. Anyone caught plagiarizing will fail the assignment, if not the course, and may encounter further disciplinary action through the university.

Students with Documented Disabilities

All NYU programs and curricula are bound by the Americans with Disabilities Act as well as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which require University classes to ensure that students of diverse abilities have equal access and opportunity. If this might apply to you, please contact Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at mosescsd@nyu.edu or +1-212-998-4980 to ensure that you have reasonable accommodation.
Email Policy

I am available on email, but reserve a 24-hour period for responses. Students may inquire about meeting with me at times other than my office hours if those conflict with students’ class schedules. We will find a mutually possible date and time to meet.

Schedule of reading and assignments

PART I: The Challenge and the Issues

Week 1 Introduction, overviews

Week 2 Introduction, overviews

Week 3 Challenges and Issues from the Arts

PART II: Case Studies in Ambiguity

Week 4 Case study: the U.S. Abortion Debate
Reading: Faye Ginsburg, 1998, Contested Lives, Part 1 (pp. 43-60), Part II (pp. 61-93)

Week 5 The U.S. Abortion Debate continued
Reading: Ginsburg, Part II (pp.94-132), Part III (pp.133-200)

Week 6 Case Study, Race: Apartheid in South Africa
Reading: Vincent Crapanzano, 1985, Waiting: The Whites of South Africa, Introduction (pp.xiii-xxiv), chapter 2 (pp.16-47)

Week 7 Apartheid continued
Reading: Crapanzano, chapter 6 (pp. 116-132), chapter 9 (pp.240-275)

Week 8 Case Study, Race: The Far Right and White Supremacy in Germany
Reading: Cynthia Miller-Idriss, 2018, The Extreme Gone Mainstream, Introduction (pp. 1-23), chapter 1 (pp.24-50), chapter 2 (pp. 51-81) (Bobcat e-book)
**Week 9** The Far Right and White Supremacy in Germany (continued)
*Reading:* Miller-Idriss, chapter 3 (pp. 82-106), chapter 4 (pp.107-130), chapter 5 (pp.131-161), chapter 6 (pp.162-180), Conclusion (pp.181-194)

**Week 10** Case Study, “Undesirables”: U.S. Drug Culture
*Reading:* Philippe Bourgois and Jeff Schonberg, 2009, *Righteous Dopefiend*, Introduction (pp. 1-24), chapter 1 (pp. 25-46), chapter 2 (pp.47-78), chapter 3 (pp.79-116)

**Week 11** U.S Drug Culture continued
*Reading:* Bourgois and Schonberg, chapter 4 (pp. 117-141), chapter 5 (pp.142-182), chapter 6 (pp.183-208), chapter 7 (pp.209-240), Conclusion (pp. 297-320).

**PART III: Emic and Etic Voices**

**Week 12** Case Study, The Perils of Gender and Sexuality: Sub-Saharan Africa

**Week 13** Case Study: Guilt and Memories of Disaster: Bhopal, India

**Week 14** Critique and the Search for New Directions
Class discussion: Mini-Symposium presentations and peer reviews.

**Final essay due—University final exam week, date tba.**