



Social and Cultural Anthropology (MSc)

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen - M Social and Cultural Anthropology - 2016-2017

The Master's in Social and Cultural Anthropology provides theoretical concepts and research skills for analyzing the social and cultural complexity of human communities, like local neighbourhoods, various kinds of organizations or transnational networks of migrants in the context of a globalizing world. The theoretical training is focused on the idea and concept of human security, which is critically unpacked and used as a prism. By doing so students discover the physical and existential dimensions of human security, and their interaction. A core principle of the programme is the interdependency between social transformations and the meaning that people give to these changes. The programme offers two profiles. The Development and Social Transformations profile focuses on poverty, sustainable development and politics; the Constructing Identities and Notions of Belonging profile addresses issues of nationality, ethnicity, gender and religion. Research skills are extensively trained by designing and implementing a three months qualitative field research and linking the findings with theoretical perspectives in the final Master's thesis.

Over the past years the Master's in SCA has proven to be highly successful, in terms of the quality assessment by the accreditation organisation for higher education in the Netherlands, NVAO; in terms of success rate of students; and by intake of students. Graduates find jobs in a large variety of positions and fields.

[Objective and attainment levels](#)

[Year schedule](#)

Inhoudsopgave

Master Social and Cultural Anthropology	1
Vak: Field Research (Periode 3+4)	1
Vak: Field Research Design (Periode 1+2)	2
Vak: Master's Thesis in Social and Cultural Anthropology (Ac. Jaar (september))	3
Vak: Theoretical Orient. on Mobility 1 (Periode 1)	4
Vak: Theoretical Orient. on Mobility 2 (Periode 2)	6

Master Social and Cultural Anthropology

Vakken:

Naam	Periode	Credits	Code
Field Research	Periode 3+4	18.0	S_FR
Field Research Design	Periode 1+2	12.0	S_FRD
Master's Thesis in Social and Cultural Anthropology	Ac. Jaar (september)	18.0	S_MTsca
Theoretical Orient. on Mobility 1	Periode 1	6.0	S_TOM1
Theoretical Orient. on Mobility 2	Periode 2	6.0	S_TOM2

Field Research

Vakcode	S_FR ()
Periode	Periode 3+4
Credits	18.0
Voertaal	Engels
Faculteit	Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen
Coördinator	dr. L.A. Brouwer
Examinator	dr. L.A. Brouwer
Lesmethode(n)	Hoorcollege
Niveau	500

Doel vak

Students gain experience with doing anthropological field research, which will form the empirical base of their Master's thesis.

Inhoud vak

Anthropologists distinguish themselves from other social scientists through their emphasis on field research as the most important method of data collection. During their field research, students collect the empirical data that will form the core of their Master's thesis. They will experiment with various techniques of data collection such as participant observation, interviews, and locally available data sets. Being away from their 'normal', daily lives and environments, students also gain experience with different life- and communication styles, ways of dealing with local authorities and bureaucracies, culture shock, moral dilemmas, et cetera. During their field research, they regularly report to their supervisors, keep good records of their experiences in the form of research notes and a diary. A strict deadline for the return is maintained in order to ensure that sufficient time is left for writing up the Master's thesis.

Onderwijsvorm

Practical. Individual supervisor will comment on progress reports of the field research by way of the best possible communication means. If possible, a local supervisor will be appointed for face-to-face guidance

and feedback.

Toetsvorm

Final field research report

Literatuur

None

Vereiste voorkennis

Theoretical Orientation on Mobility part 1 (S_TOM1) passed, participation in Theoretical Orientation on Mobility part 2 (S_TOM2).

Doelgroep

Obligatory course for students in the Master's in Social and Cultural Anthropology.

Overige informatie

Completion of the field research and of a field report is a requirement for participation in the course Master's Thesis in Social and Cultural Anthropology.

Field Research Design

Vakcode	S_FRD ()
Periode	Periode 1+2
Credits	12.0
Voertaal	Engels
Faculteit	Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen
Coördinator	dr. G. Sinatti
Docent(en)	dr. L.S. Nencel, prof. dr. M.P.J. van de Port, dr. G. Sinatti, dr. Y. Saramifar
Lesmethode(n)	Werkgroep, Hoorcollege
Niveau	400

Doel vak

During this course, students receive practical training to enhance their knowledge and skills in qualitative data collecting methods and prepare a portfolio of methodological assignments. They also develop their own research topic in relation to the anthropology of mobility, diversity and development as central themes of the Master's program. Students write a full-fledged research plan and make practical arrangements ahead of conducting field research.

Inhoud vak

During this course students become acquainted with doing ethnography. This includes acquiring methodological skills, reflecting on epistemological and ethical aspects of ethnographic research methods, and developing an individual research project.

Students are trained in various qualitative data collection methods such as open interviews and participant observation; they take part in intensive workshops on writing field notes and on visual research methods; they are also sensitized to ethical and reflexive issues in doing fieldwork. This is done through hands-on assignments in which methods are applied in practice and that make up a 'methodological portfolio'.

Building on the theoretical basis gained during the parallel course Theoretical Orientation on Mobility Part 1, and the continuous thematic specialization of Theoretical Orientation on Mobility Part 2, students are also guided in developing an analytical research question, select a theme and topic for their individual research project, a geographical region, and conduct literature-based research. Course assignments facilitate the process of selecting a research subject through in-class exercises, peer review assignments and (group) discussions that support students in developing their ideas and learning from/inspiring each other. In order to optimize results students are also encouraged to participate in or link up with research projects and issues of staff members. Students also arrange practicalities for their field research. By the end of the course students will have written a research plan (8,000 words) containing a well-argued research problem; a critical discussion of relevant literature about the selected theme and region; an operationalization of the research question; a short description of the intended research methods; a brief reflection on research ethics pertaining to the intended research; a small report of practical preparations for the fieldwork. The plan is integrated with an annotated bibliography on the topic and geographic area consisting of twenty-five titles (five titles can be used from the course Theoretical Orientation on Mobility Part 2).

Onderwijsvorm

Practical

Toetsvorm

The final grade is based on the methodological portfolio (30%) and the research plan (70%). All weekly assignments during the course also need to be assessed with a pass.

Literatuur

Sunstein, B.S. & Chiseri-Strater, E. (2012, 4th edition). FieldWorking. Reading and Writing Research. Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's [the 2007 edition is accepted as well] (available at VU bookshop at € 30).

Additional elective literature depending on topic of research and theoretical approach.

Doelgroep

Obligatory course for students in the Master's in Social and Cultural Anthropology.

Overige informatie

- Students also need to participate in the course Theoretical Orientation on Mobility part 1.
- Completion of this course is an entry requirement for Field Research.

Master's Thesis in Social and Cultural Anthropology

Vakcode	S_MTsca ()
Periode	Ac. Jaar (september)
Credits	18.0
Voertaal	Engels
Faculteit	Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen
Coördinator	dr. Y. Saramifar

Examinator	dr. Y. Saramifar
Docent(en)	dr. E.W. Bal, dr. Y. Saramifar
Lesmethode(n)	Werkgroep, Practicum
Niveau	600

Doel vak

Students demonstrate that they can analyze field research data in relation with a theoretical perspective and report on this in a Master's thesis. They show their knowledge of anthropological approaches, their skills to organize and interpret fieldwork data and their capacity to writing up ethnography and complete the task within given time limits. In doing so they prove their final qualification as a Master in anthropology.

Inhoud vak

Students work individually, supported by a personal supervisor with whom they discuss the field research report, the outline of the Master's thesis, some chapters of the thesis and a draft of the whole thesis in four meetings. Additional support is coming from weekly sessions of the graduate seminar in which students are provided with the tools to reflect on the transformation of fieldwork data into a written, academic text; to refine the writing skills of the students; and, to guide the students through the process of writing the Master's thesis. Topics include: fieldwork experience; linking ethnography and theory; ethical dilemmas of ethnographic writing; and rhetorical strategies. The seminar supplements the guidance by individual supervisors, but does not replace it. Working together in a seminar helps to keep spirits up on the lonely path of writing.

Onderwijsvorm

Practical and tutorial

Toetsvorm

Master's thesis (90%, graded by mark), and oral presentation of thesis draft in the last session – 'mini-conference' - of the graduate seminar (10%, graded by a pass). Attendance and participation in the graduate seminar is obligatory. In all parts a pass must be achieved.

Literatuur

Some mandatory literature will be announced at the start of the graduate seminar; other reading will be determined with the thesis supervisor.

Vereiste voorkennis

Field Research Design (S_FRD), Theoretical Orientation on Mobility part 1 (S_TOM1) and Theoretical Orientation on Mobility part 2 (S_TOM2) have to be completed (24 EC). Participated in Field Research (S_FR).

Aanbevolen voorkennis

Participation in Field Research (S_FR).

Doelgroep

Obligatory course for students in the Master's in Social and Cultural Anthropology.

Theoretical Orient. on Mobility 1

Vakcode	S_TOM1 ()
Periode	Periode 1
Credits	6.0
Voertaal	Engels
Faculteit	Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen
Coördinator	dr. F. Colombijn
Examinator	dr. F. Colombijn
Docent(en)	dr. F. Colombijn, dr. Y. Saramifar
Lesmethode(n)	Hoorcollege, Studiegroep
Niveau	400

Doel vak

The central objective of this course is to learn how to frame the research question of the upcoming individual research projects theoretically with the help of anthropological concepts centring around the key term 'mobility'.

In order to reach this objective, students review anthropological texts, recognize 'mobility' as an omnipresent aspect of human lives, and discriminate between the multifarious forms of 'mobility' discerned in the literature. Furthermore, students generate possible research topics that are into line with the term mobility, and appraise the potentials and limitations of assorted theoretical concepts applied to topical issues. They also learn to compose a clear and creative, theoretically grounded, oral or written argument incorporating the term mobility. As an additional objective, students can explain what is distinctively anthropological about their own argument, taking people's own interpretations of the world as starting point of the analysis and assessing the unequal agency various actors have to make the world in accordance with their own ideas and beliefs. Finally, students develop their critical and curious attitude, that is, an eagerness to question both accepted, scientific explanations and prevalent assumptions about phenomena that by some actors have been defined as 'societal problems'.

Inhoud vak

The content of this course is aligned with the research programme of the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, titled 'Mobilities, Belonging and Beliefs: Confronting Global Inequalities and Insecurities' (MOBB). We take up mobility in the broadest sense of the word as a conditioning and disciplining, but also a productive and enabling process. Mobility is about migration and exchange taking place on both a local and a global scale; it can lead to transnational lives and hybridization. The research programme is also about social mobility, life course mobility, and mobilities in terms of shifting societal stratification patterns. Concrete themes of this course could be, for instance: the flow of aspiring migrants, tourists, refugees, or popstars; the propagation of ideologies such as Human Rights and Islamic fundamentalism, the spread of contagious disease, and the circulation of iconic images, songs, brands, and goods; we will talk about routes and borders, car culture and flânerie, slow food and speed.

When so much is in motion, the question to whom one belongs becomes pertinent. Developing a sense of belonging inevitably rests on principles of inclusion and exclusion. Ethnicity, nationalism, and gender, through processes of (de)connecting are all manifestations of the twin processes of inclusion and exclusion.

Mobility and inequality are two processes that have a mutual impact.

Multi-layered mobility processes bring along that some agents are better equipped to profit from the global movement of people, goods, technologies, and ideas than others. Some groups of people are forcibly uprooted and others, conversely, get involuntarily stuck. Nonetheless, also less-powerful people analyse, navigate, create, adapt, resist, avoid, flee, plan, pray, hope, duck, assist others, and do much more. Mobility lays bare the resilience and inventiveness of people confronted with an ever changing world.

Furthermore, regardless of the outcome of the question whether one tends to profit or to lose from these global movements, most persons will face new insecurities emanating from this mix of inequality, questions of belonging, and the challenge of understanding a world that seems in constant flux. Mobility, in short, is a crucial condition in which people shape their life worlds, confronting inequalities and uncertainties.

Onderwijsvorm

Lectures and tutorial

Toetsvorm

Three written assignments (30% each), a correction of the first essay (5%), and an individual presentation (5%). Attendance at and active participation during all lectures and tutorials is mandatory.

Literatuur

The list of readings will be announced on blackboard

Doelgroep

Students of the Master in Social and Cultural Anthropology

Theoretical Orient. on Mobility 2

Vakcode	S_TOM2 ()
Periode	Periode 2
Credits	6.0
Voertaal	Engels
Faculteit	Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen
Coördinator	dr. M. Matelski
Examinator	dr. M. Matelski
Docent(en)	dr. F. Colombijn, prof. dr. J.T. Sunier, prof. dr. D. Dalakoglou
Lesmethode(n)	Studiegroep
Niveau	500

Doel vak

As the main objective of this course, students develop further their skills of framing a research question theoretically, including making a well-informed assessment of the potentials and limitations of assorted theoretical concepts applied to topical issues. Students integrate theoretical concepts of this course into their respective research plans in the making (simultaneously written in the course Field Research Design). In order to integrate insights from this course as closely as possible with their research plan, students choose between one of three specialisations of TOM-2.

Students deepen their skill of composing a clear and creative,

theoretically grounded, oral or written argument. They sharpen their presentation skills and learn to cooperate in small teams when they take responsibility for giving a full lecture.

Finally, students expand their critical and curious attitude, that is, an eagerness to question both accepted, scientific explanations and prevalent assumptions about phenomena that by some actors have been defined as 'societal problems'.

Inhoud vak

The content of this course is aligned with the research programme of the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, titled 'Mobilities, Belonging and Beliefs: Confronting Global Inequalities and Insecurities' (MOBB). We take up mobility in the broadest sense of the word as a conditioning and disciplining, but also a productive and enabling process. Mobility is about migration and exchange taking place on both a local and a global scale; it can lead to transnational lives and hybridization. The research programme is also about social mobility, life course mobility, and mobilities in terms of shifting societal stratification patterns.

In order to enable the students to use as many of the theoretical notions of this course in their research plan, students can choose between three specialisations: Mobility and diversity; Development and sustainability; City, space and politics.

Mobility and diversity

Diversity has become a buzz word lately. It is often considered to be a core characteristic of modern society, and a direct consequence of globalization, mobility and the growth of urban landscapes. Diversity, be it cultural, ethnic, social or political, has been depicted as the key fundamental societal condition. In 2007 Vertovec published 'Super Diversity' in *Ethnic and Racial Studies* to denote contemporary migratory situations in the UK and elsewhere in Europe, but the term diversity has taken on a much more general meaning. During the course we will discuss the theoretical and societal implications of diversity. We will assess its complexity given the fact that diversity is at once an analytical concept, a preferred characteristic of society, and a practice.

Development and sustainability

Historical events such as colonialism and the development of industrial capitalist economies in Europe led to a current world-system of unequal global distribution of wealth that we often call the split between developed and underdeveloped world. This phenomenon leads to very explicit political, social and economic conditions that dominate the world today.

In this specialisation we approach critically the ideas of development and their historical roots in 19th century and especially in the period after World War II. We analyse and talk about current international development policies and current trends within the development industry, approaching interactions between (inter)national stakeholders and local populations. We approach in reference to development themes such as civil society and State, global commodity chains, NGOs and International Organisations, poverty, industrialisation, urbanisation, family and kinship, religion and globalisation, structural adjustments, fair trade and ethical capitalism, but also about resistance to development, de-growth, Commons or post-development theories, to mention just a few of the issues that we will discuss.

City, space and politics

Starting from Henri Lefebvre's fundamental insight that urban space (or

any space for that matter) is not a given, but a social product, we see a whole series of questions opening up: who is in control of a certain space, by what means, for what purpose, who is contesting or resisting the current use of urban space, what do these spaces mean to people, etcetera? The questions evolving around the key issue how urban space is socially produced, is very important, because urban space subsequently has an enormous impact on people's behavior, offering chances and forcing constraints upon them.

When we study urban space from a mobility perspective, topics that are particularly pertinent are, among others: flânerie and automobility, movement in and out of public spaces, making borders and boundaries, forcing people out of dwellings while others fence themselves in in gated communities, social mobility, and creative destruction.

Onderwijsvorm

Lectures and tutorials

Toetsvorm

Four written, individual assignments (80%); one group presentations (20%).

Literatuur

The reading list will be published on blackboard.

Vereiste voorkennis

Students who want to take this course must have followed Theoretical Orientation on Mobility part 1.

Doelgroep

Students of the Master in Social and Cultural Anthropology.