

# Contemporary Art + Anthropology 2024

This experimental course explores and develops the convergence of the anthropological turn in contemporary art practices with the visual, material and practice turns in social anthropology with the aim of fostering a new art+anthropology interdiscipline.

The course will engage you with the anthropological and ethnographic turns in artistic practice and the practice-turn in social and visual anthropology, foregrounding 20th and 21st century case studies wherein art+anthropology have become enmeshed.

You will participate in collaborative practices and approaches that combine artistic and anthropological research methods.

You will learn how to work on an innovative research project that is informed by anthropological research and contemporary artistic practice.

This unique course invites artists and anthropologists to learn and work together. In its explicit support for practice-as-research (immediation); this course leads a collaborative approach that is rapidly growing in significance across the humanities and social sciences internationally.

The first part of this course will introduce you to the anthropological turn in artistic practice. Seminars will

engage you with approaches that are shared by artists and anthropologists such as: practice-theory/theories of practice, collaborative ethnography, participatory visual methods, sites, fieldwork, fieldnotes/sketchbooks, social practice, activism, action research, surrealism, weirding, vitalism, carpentry, ecomaterialism and neomaterialism. This will provide a primer to support a short collaborative project (Atelier) that will combine contemporary artistic and anthropological research methods.

In the second part of the course you will develop and propose your own research project under the supervision of staff from the School of Art.

Your project will equally combine contemporary artistic and anthropological research methods.

Based in ECA's School of Art, this course is aimed at art students keen to cultivate work informed by emerging approaches in Anthropology. It is, equally, aimed at social science students who wish to pursue visual and material research practices responding to the latest developments in contemporary art. As such, the course is equally suitable for artists or anthropologists interested in working collaboratively to share and develop innovative interdisciplinary contemporary research practices. Students on the course will contribute to the University of Edinburgh's research network: 'Atelier: Making Research Material in the Arts & Social Sciences.'

## **Q. Where is the course handbook?**

### **A. *In Learn Ultra (link)***

The rationale and context of each of the Deadlines, Assignments & Assessment Details is supported by the course handbook – all resources are either there or link from there.

Here you will find flipped learning resources in advance of

the Seminars which can be viewed online and supporting materials which scaffold your role as a supportive peer.

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## **This course is a learning experiment, *of sorts*.**

Some of the approaches we will take are partly based on research conducted by the course organiser Neil Mulholland and by Richard Baxstrom, Professor of Social Anthropology, Deputy Head of the School of Social and Political Science. The research comes under the banner of the **Atelier** network. Many of the research themes and methods that you will follow on this course emerge from those that have been play-tested within **Atelier** or that are part of **Atelier**'s research activities for 2023. So, while this *particular* course is new, and the present blended approach is also relatively new, the way that the course is organised has been carefully tested, reviewed and calibrated over a long period of time.

This year, Frances Davis brings her considerable expertise as a curator and arts programmer to bear upon the course design and content. Frances' doctoral research on the contemporary art and anthropology is pivotal to the learning style and research ambitions of this course.

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## **Anthropology of Art, Anthropology-as-Art, Art-as-Anthropology**

What the course is concerned with primarily is how we might combine the distinct disciplines of contemporary art and anthropology to create a hybrid of both – an *interdiscipline*.

The course will begin by encouraging you to raise questions about each discipline by focusing on 'exchange' and 'aquisition'.

## **Disciplinary Exchange:**

What might anthropologists learn *from* art?

What might contemporary art learn *from* anthropology?

Art-as-Anthropology: How might art be considered to be a form of 'anthropology'?

Anthropology-as-Art: How might anthropology be considered to be a form of 'artistic practice'?

## **Disciplinary Acquisition:**

How do people learn to become artists?

How do people learn to become anthropologists?

How, when and where do these two forms of disciplinary acquisition overlap?

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## **Art-as-Anthropology-as-Art-as-Anthropology-as-Art-as-Anthropology-as-Art...**

The course does not seek to answer these questions definitively; rather, it asks you to work alongside your peers to engage with and develop new ways of working that *you* think are important. This is what we will call 'experimental learning'; learning about *and testing* different ways of learning. You will do this in an artistic context (of your own making). As such, what you do will form a continuum that moves back and forth between two closely related domains.

### ***How? Not What?***

What you might learn, in a sense, will be up to you

(especially in relation to your individual research proposal) and your Basho.

Remember that this course is concerned with practice-as-research. *What* you learn is, ultimately, of less importance than *how* you *approach* learning and *how* you *reflect* upon how you have learned.

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