# Contemporary Art + Anthropology 2025

**Course Github Wiki | https://github.com/mrtayto/antart/wiki**

**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 practices and approaches that combine artistic and anthropological research methods.

You will learn how to design an *Atelier* — an innovative research project that is informed by anthropological research and contemporary artistic practice.

## Part One | Atelier Project

The first part of this course will introduce you to:

— the anthropological turn in artistic practice

— key research methods used in anthropology including ethnographic fieldwork

— artistic research methods that resonate with anthropological research methods

Classes will present a range of approaches to research design that are shared by artists and anthropologists including:

- site-specificity and fieldwork
- ethnography and visual and sensory methods
- fieldnotes and fieldnote devices, sketchbooks

These approaches provide a primer to support your own mini-ethnography of a 3x3m site in Edinburgh (identified using https://what3words.com

Your mini-ethnography, in turn, informs the design of your formative Atelier Project. This field project combines contemporary artistic and anthropological research methods, developing this in relation t your 3x3m site in Edinburgh.

## Part Two | Research Proposal

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.

## 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 Classes which can be viewed online and supporting materials which scaffold your learning.

## Q. What is the course wiki?

The course has an OER wiki that maps out keywords and disciplinary terms used in the course. The wiki is constantly

updated (you are invited to update it too…)

Github Wiki | https://github.com/mrtayto/antart/wiki

## 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. 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.

## 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?

## 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 you 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 Atelier Project and your individual Research Proposal).

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.