Student presentations
· stimulating active student participation and learning

TLHE Project

Perle Møhl · June 30th, 2016

Contents

1 · Outline & purpose

In this paper, I will discuss different ways to engage students actively in course work. The discussion will be undertaken on the basis of own experience with organising student presentations for the course, *Visual Anthropology*. This course combines the analysis of visual media and film, written theoretical works and students' own viewing experiences and perceptions. The syllabus is thus composed of both written work - articles and book chapters - and a series of films and other types of online media, notably WebDoc. Despite the big weight on non-written work, I consider the insights to be transposable to other course types, because the course design combines written and multi-media sources much in the same way other courses may include the analysis of e.g. case studies, data resources or student materials.

The student presentations employed are designed to engage the students in the planning of both course contents and the actual class work. It responds to a personal long-felt-need to engage students more intensively in the course work, to include their own propositions for materials

and form, and to stimulate their motivation, active engagement and learning (Hunt, Chalmers & Macdonald 2006). These efforts relate to both the students making the presentation and to the rest of the class, as we shall see below. And finally, the particular forms of presentations I have developed, are also intended to provide new insights for my own understanding of the variety of sensitivities to and interpretations of different media forms. The student presentations are therefore also part of my own on-going and long-term teaching-based research[1] agenda.

2 · Course content & ILOs

The course, *Visual Anthropology,* is an optional, 7,5 ECTS course for Bachelor- and Master-students, and has been proposed twice a year. From autumn 2016, the course structure will change from 2 x 2 hours weekly over 7 weeks, to one 3 hour weekly class over 14 weeks. Hitherto, this largely theoretical course has been supplemented by a practical course in ethnographic film methods called *Visual Anthropology in Practice*. From autumn 2016, the practical elements will be integrated into the theoretical course, supplemented by a yearly practical summer course. The theoretical course has room for 30 students and there is usually a long list of students waiting for a free seat. The course is very popular, both among our Danish and our foreign students, and also attracts students from other departments and faculties.

With the *Visual Anthropology* course, I propose to analyse fundamental questions in the relationship between visual media and anthropology, with an emphasis on anthropological film. Through the analysis of a series of anthropological and other documentary film, the course explores the relationship between visuality and anthropology, between film and anthropological knowledge, between vision and the other senses (the "synaesthetic effect"), between images and sound, registration vs. observation, between the world and the signs and images we compose to convey it, trying to determine what is the part of the anthropological in the analysed films. WebDoc and online material also provide sources of interrogation.

The Learning Outcomes are stated as follows: By the end of the course the student should be able to:
  · *Identify and formulate central anthropological challenges to the field of visual anthropology.*
  · *Present the potential qualities of visual methods and forms to anthropology.*
  · *Critically analyse anthropological and other films on the basis of the concepts and theories identified during the course.*
  · *Reflect on the methodological, epistemological and ethical questions concerning the use of audio-visual media in anthropology, both as form of exploration and of publication.*

The course strongly relies, even depends, on the active participation of the students in the course work, the preparations and the interpretation of the viewed documents. This also means that the broader the recruitment of students of different levels and from dirfferent countries of origin and disciplines, the richer the discussions and the learning / research outcomes. And as a matter of fact, among the 30 students, around 50% are generally from other departments than

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[1] For a development of the notion of teaching-based research, see Blok, Skrydstrup & Wahlberg (2012), Chang (2005), Hansen (2006), Sandberg & Jul Nielsen (n.d.), and Rubow, Blok et.al. (in print).

the Dept. of Anthropology, UCPH. And they clearly bring along with them: other sensitivities, other professional habits and preoccupations, other ways of attending, and simply, another vocabulary. Likewise, the mixture of BA- and MA-students brings with it both a mixture of more mature and more fresh attentions, and also installs a form of "tutelage light" between students on different levels, enhancing the learning on both sides as well as my own insights. So rather than considering the diversity of the student group a problem to be overcome, I choose to use it as a further learning potential (Carroll 2015).

The course is to a large degree based on the analysis of audio-visual works and materials, which is in itself quite stimulating for both student motivation and engagement. The fact that is relies on their own viewing experiences also adds to the motivation and "fun factor": everyone has something to contribute, regardless of level and origins. I state very clearly that all comments are welcome and that we are often dealing with very direct and intuitive sensations that might even be difficult to word. So no one has to hold back their thoughts.

So now the setting is laid out for the students to actively participate, as individuals and as groups.

3 · Student presentations

The goals with student presentations

The overall goal of organising students presentations is as noted, to create an active learning environment and, more specifically, to engage students more directly in the design and organisation of the class room work. The point is, for one, to give them certain teaching responsibilities and thereby encourage them to work more thoroughly with particular themes, and, secondly, to draw on their different geographic and scholarly origins to introduce more variety in working methods in the class room, encouraging general better learning. Thirdly, presenting obviously also in itself has pedagogical objectives in that the students are required to read and view materials very thoroughly, make relevant selections and make an oral presentation in English before the whole class, all this, as a group. And finally, there is a reflexive pedagogical aim in that the class as a whole is encouraged to reflect on the different types of presentations and methods of their peers, notably for preparing their own presentations. (Biggs & Tang 2007; Bonwell & Eison 1991)

The course syllabus is composed of both theoretical and descriptive written work and of audiovisual material, and I have opted for a clear and stimulating work distribution: the students prepare presentations, exercises and discussions mainly of the *audiovisual material*s, with relation to the written work, whereas I give short lectures and present the main lines of the written work.

Organising and preparing student presentations

Before course start, a complete – but alterable – course plan is presented to the students online (Absalon) and they are requested to sign up for a presentation directly in the course plan, after the first-to-mill principle (see Appendix 2). Number of presentations: 11 (of 14 course days in

all). Group size: 2-4 students. The students tend to form groups according to interests rather than personal affinities, so the groups are generally quite mixed. The students are told that they will be focussing on audiovisual materials rather than the texts, but that they have to organise their presentation and choices in relation to the written syllabus.

Each group is invited to a _preparation meeting_ with me approximately 3-5 days before their presentation. The students are asked to read the texts before the meeting. During the meeting I explain the purpose of the particular topic, the texts and the class session, we discuss approaches and I propose film and audio-visual material that I have at disposal (much audio-visual and film material is publicly unavailable, e.g. online) and that relates to the topic literature, either by contrast, association, regionally or in another way, and that can encourage reflection on the topic and provide a basis for good discussions and innovative insights – i.e. good learning. The students borrow the material and are also encouraged to propose other audio-visual sources that they think can be productive for class reflection, and we discuss their ideas if they come up during the meeting. We then discuss how we organise the work between the group and myself, and how we can try out new methods in class, pulling on both their and my experiences. The meeting lasts about 30 min. The students are invited to contact me if they have questions or doubts.

The students will then watch the audio-visual material and find other audio-visual ressources, and they will usually meet some days before class to prepare their presentation. They will not have further contact with me before the class, unless they encounter problems (finding material, absent group members, doubts, etc.)

4 · An example

A typical student presentation will take up about half of the 2-hour course. The course will usually be introduced by myself, with a short, 20-minute lecture on the theme of the day, linking it to former and coming course work. I will then resume some of the main points in the texts. Then the student presentation will run for 45-60 minutes, usually including whole-class discussions, and I will round up with general questions and practical matters. In that sense, the student presentations and discussions come to form a very important part of the course work, also in terms of allotted time.

A typical student presentation could run as follows:

The group members, 2-3 students, introduce themselves; they then
- present a PowerPoint or a Prezi, where they have noted some points in the texts that they would like to discuss;
- present one or two film excerpts or other audio-visual material of varying length, usually 8-10 min. in total;
- organise a group discussion of the mentioned theoretical points in relation to the film excerpts, dividing the class into three smaller groups and posing them each a specific question. If we take the example of the session, _"Collaboration, participative filmmaking, ethnofiction, mise-en-scène"_ (see Appendix 2, 15/04/16), this could be: "_In relation to J. Rouch's concepts of_

Ciné-eye and filmic intervention, where and how do we sense the catalytic effects of the filming process in the film excerpt?" The question could also be broader, e.g. "Is this fiction or ethnography?", relating also to earlier texts.

Organising class discussions: With the latter question, the group would be encouraged to divide the class into two large groups and ask them to take one or the other stance and to argue for it, ending with a confrontation between the arguments of the two groups. This could be considered a form of role-playing in that the students are asked to take a position they do not necessarily hold themselves, searching for the relevant sources and statements to uphold their argument (Frederick 2002). Another form I would encourage would be to ask the students to position themselves physically in the classroom along a line with each stance being opposites. The students will then be asked to argue for their physical position somewhere on the scale between fiction and documentary, leading to a broader whole-class debate on the questions and positions.

The presentation group then proceeds, much in the same way, to some other points in the texts that they wish to discuss and analyse, presenting other audio-visual excerpts, and employing other methods for producing useful discussions either two-and-two, in groups, whole-class debates, or a mixture. Sometimes the audio-visual screenings precede the list of proposed analytical points of discussion, so as to leave the viewers readings and perceptions more open, less guided by theory.

The student presentation usually ends with a broader whole-class debate on the general questions or other points arising during the discussions.

The preferred assessment form for the courses has been portfolios, with hand-ins after each module/theme, five hand-ins in all during the course, each one having at least three different questions to responds to and develop on. The purpose of this assessment form is to even out the workload for the students over the course of the seven weeks so most of the written exam is ready at the end of the course. The five independent portfolio exercises thus constitute the final exam. This form leaves room for feedback sessions along the way, both with the teacher and in peer-groups, permitting the students to rewrite their portfolios before handing them in at the end of the course. Another advantage of this continuous assessment form is that the students are required to engage actively in the course work not only when they make their presentations, but all through the course, and the students themselves see a clear advantage in this form of "nudging", and consider it by far preferable to other continuous assessment forms used at the department, e.g. "cold calls", where students must be prepared to present for every class.

5 · What students think about student presentations

Before relating student evaluations of how this particular form of student presentations worked, let me note that I have been surprised by the enthusiasm of the students regarding both their own and especially the other groups' presentations. I have always been convinced that student presentations are a very valuable tool in T&L, but also worried that the students themselves might find them less rewarding or outright boring. And there are of course variations, and more

or less successful and effective student presentations. But the overall attitude of students, both before, during and after the work, is very enthusiastic. They sign up happily and go to the work with zeal. They generally respect each others' work and they participate in the group work. And they subsequently evaluate the principle of student presentations as very positive. I have not had any negative comments to the general principle, only to particular parts and forms, as well as to the fact that getting hold of audio-visual materials can be a challenge.

I will shortly sum up some of the student comments to student presentations:

A: "Student presentations can be frightening, but it is very efficient. And the way it's done in the visual course works great. You're forced to get a good grasp on the readings and to be able to convey it. I can read texts and take a lot of notes, and yet not be entirely sure what it is I have read – if I say it loud, I integrate it better. Taking notes does not prevent one from being confused during the course. Right now I have a course where we have what they call "cold call", where we actually have to be prepared to present in each class, and I honestly think that's too much. It is very effective, but it's a little like a brandished whip. - Teachers have to trust that the students prepare sufficiently…"

B: "Seeing the other groups' presentations is a way to get to know what they see as important and not just my own ideas. Because they are also students like me, and don't have the overview of the teacher. It makes me reflect more on the material and see different angles. I also think about how I would make a presentation, what kinds of materials I would use, what works and what doesn't. And that's very useful for preparing our own presentations."

C: "Student presentations are maybe a good idea, but I'm not used to them from our department. Maybe we should do it. But it's necessary to create a culture for it. You have to perform more, it's really great, but you have to pull yourself together. In my department, they just ask "who wants to?" and then no one does it or only one person. Here, we have to do it together. You don't have to say the wisest things in the world, the teacher doesn't grade it. And we don't have to come up with a great total analysis, there's room for saying simple things like "I really liked the sound of those leaves", it's part of the work to just listen and look. It's also nice that we are part of the explorative work, finding the right form, coding what to do and what to notice instead of the texts where it's all laid out. I think the teacher maybe should have interfered more, sometimes it went off track."

D: "I liked the way different groups did it in different ways, and that you could feel that the teacher was interested in hearing about our experiences from other courses. But it was really difficult to find material, so we just used the film the teacher gave us. I also would have liked to be able to see more than just the excerpts when other groups were presenting. But I liked that in my group we sat and watched the two films together."

6 · Considerations on the learning impact of student presentations

I have had to evaluate mainly two issues concerning student presentations: for one, do they work? Do they actually enhance learning? And secondly, am I giving over too much of the workload to the students? As for the latter question, it might seem surprising to leave so much

of the class time, quantitatively speaking, to the responsibility of the students, and there could even be a case of actually lessening the workload for the teacher. But that is obviously not the case. Laying the ground for student presentations, meeting with the students to prepare them, and setting the standards, is somewhat time-consuming. Not beyond reason, but all in all, it neither increases nor reduces the time consumption of running a course. And mainly, with regards to the profits for the overall learning, I absolutely think it is worth shifting ones energy around and using it differently.

The student presentations are always different. It is always palpable when students are used to the exercise, and when they are engaging in it for the first time. There are also language difficulties, some students speak a better English and some simply perform better. But there is always something to be learned from the student presentations for everyone, and on different levels, i.e. both concerning the content, the form, and the pedagogical aspects.

My overall assessment of the principles I have developed, employed and refined over the last 4 years can be summed up as follows:

Including the students in the planning of the content of the course is extremely valuable for them, and certainly motivates them to be more engaged in the course work. Their ideas and experiences are taken seriously and put directly to use. This goes for both the content – making their own analysis of the texts, and finding and selecting relevant materials to put in play with the texts not only amuses them, but also teaches them a great deal about the relationship between the professional standards and other types of media than those habitually employed in academia. And letting them try out or even invent methods is enlightening, also for myself – I have learned a great deal over the years from the student presentations about different ways to put the material in play and, not the least, which forms are more suited than others for diversified student groups and for the particular subject matter. Including students in the work like this is therefore extremely productive both for the presenters, the rest of the class and for myself. But it is important to set the standards and develop a common structure for the student presentations from the start, and to provide strong guidance. At the same time, letting the standards evolve is also important, both to accommodate shifting groups, shifting experiences and to move along with shifting syllabuses and overall shifting research themes in the discipline.

As already mentioned, also in the student evaluations, student presentations is also a way to assure that at least a certain number of students have actually read the texts thoroughly and reflected upon them, and are able to relate them in pertinent ways to the film and audio-visual materials of the syllabus. This is also a way to teach them, in practice, how to engage with the syllabus also when they listen to other groups' presentations. So the performative aspect also works laterally, over time.

Class discussions: I have not directly addressed the question of the value of class discussions here, but it is no secret that they are a prioritised method and understood to be of great value in my approach to teaching & learning. They need to be closely guided, but also have to be able to move according to the different inputs, if they are not to seem like simple gadgets, hollow forms, to the students. The points raised by the students must be taken seriously and given

priority, even if commented on or even rectified by the teacher. Stimulating free associations and semi-structured discussions is certainly a valid method for group and class work, and such discussion methods are according to Bligh more effective in stimulating thought, personal and social adjustment and changing attitudes than didactic methods like lectures, and just as valid for transmitting information (2000). And I believe those objectives and with the use of discussion methods go hand in hand with the principles of student presentations described here.

As a last point, I would like to address the question of how student presentations contribute not only to the work in class and to student learning, but also how they may contribute extremely valuable research material and insights to the teacher. First of all, as already noted, the student presentations and the discussions they produce give a great input for varying teaching methods and for the pedagogical value and learning outcomes of different methods. As such, student presentations open the range of the possible. Secondly, in line with the above mentioned contributions to teaching-based research, I have developed a strategy for employing the discussions in class for my on-going research on visual anthropology and specifically for the sensory aspects of using visual methods and conveying anthropology through non-literary forms like film and other multi-media constellations. One question I have asked in relation to class work has thus concerned the audio-visual forms anthropological analysis can take to be conveyed with sufficient sensory intelligibility. In other words, how can non-literary media be used to convey anthropological analysis, through presentations of various forms of direct social interaction, space, rhythm, movement, gesture, speech, colour, and all the social aesthetics that go into building and living in sensory environments? How is that analysis formed and produced through sound and image, and how is it decoded? These have been recurring themes in the course work. Another related research question I have sought to illuminate through class viewings and discussions – a question that is an on-going issue in visual anthropology – is the question of varying interpretations of audio-visual semiotic signs, dependent on viewer knowledge, preconceptions and disciplinary training. In class, I have been able to get a sense notably of some of the varieties in the interpretive work of students of very different regional and disciplinary backgrounds, and this has helped consolidate my understandings of how knowledge backgrounds of viewers play a role in grasping the intentions of the anthropologist filmmakers and the analysis they seek to convey. As such, student presentations have been a valuable source for my research and the students have engaged readily in the interpretive work and also in the reflections on their differing interpretations. And besides being a resource, the variety of student presentations – bringing in new perspectives and methods, and thus participating to the on-going renewal of the course plans and contents – have created an extremely lively teaching environment and strongly intensified my own engagement in the course work and, not unimportantly, added to the pleasure of teaching.

7 · Concluding

The principles of student presentations presented and discussed here are of course embedded in a personal teaching curriculum and adapted along the way for specific syllabuses and research purposes. But I nevertheless believe both the actual work with the student presentations and the reflections on their utility and learning potentials discussed her may be useful for other teachers and also for researchers who wish to integrate the potential of teaching and student discussions in their research. Apart from the obvious potentials I have observed for learning and for aligning with the Learning Objectives, I have been positively surprised by the interest students have demonstrated in engaging in the work and by their largely positive assessments of both doing presentations themselves and of listening to the other student groups' presentations. And if student presentations are not widely used across university teaching, I can only recommend that they start being so, in line with my students' comments as well as my own findings and experiences. Again, pulling on the students' contributions of new perspectives, new ideas, and forms only adds to the quality of the teaching and learning, and thus to the pleasure of engaging in the work, for all involved.

8 · Bibliography

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APPENDIX 1

Course description on course catalog (http://kurser.ku.dk/course/aanb05090u/2016-2017):

Kurser

Velkommen til Københavns Universitets kursuskatalog

AANB05090U Visual Anthropology   2016/2017

Permalink

Content

The course proposes to analyze fundamental questions in the relationship between visual media and anthropology, with an emphasis on anthropological film and indigenous filmmaking practices.

Through the analysis of a series of anthropological film - both classics and "outsiders" - the course explores the relationship between visuality and anthropology, between film and anthropological knowledge, between vision and the other senses (the "synaesthetic effect"), between images and sound, registration vs. observation, between the world and the signs and images we compose to convey it, trying to determine what is the part of the anthropological in the analyzed films. Web/online-material will also provide sources of interrogation.

During the course, we will also explore the methodological and epistemological implications of a visual approach to the field, an approach that creates particular fieldwork conditions and offers distinct insights, and we will look closer at observation as a multi-sensuous practice.

A part of the course will be concerned with the analysis of indigenous peoples' use of audio-visual and interactive media (Amazonas & Australien).

Learning Outcome

By the end of the course the student should be able to:

• Identify and formulate central anthropological challenges to the field of visual anthropology.

• Present the potential qualities of visual methods and form to anthropology.

• Critically analyze anthropological and other films on the basis of the concepts and theories identified during the course.

• Reflect on the methodological, epistemological and ethical questions concerning the use of audiovisual media in anthropology, both as form of exploration and of publication.

Literature

BSc-, Credit-, Open Education and all international students: 500 pages obligatory literature.
MSc students: 500 pages obligatory literature + 200 pages of literature chosen by students.

Course literature will be available in Absalon on the course website.

Teaching and learning methods

Lectures combined with analysis in studygroups

Sign up

Self Service at KUnet
International- and credit students; read about application here: International students/Credit students

Deadline: June 1st for autumn.

Exam (Essay)

Credit	7,5 ECTS
Type of assessment	Written assignment

Essay.
Length: Min. 21.600 - max. 26.400 keystrokes for an individual essay. For group exams plus an additional min. 6.750 - max. 8.250 keystrokes per extra group member.

The essay/portfolio assignments can be written individually or in groups of max. 4 people. Read more about the rules for group examinations in the curriculum.

The examination essay must address a relevant topic from the course and must include literature from the course syllabus.

Course information

Language	English
Credit	7,5 ECTS
Level	Bachelor Bachelor choice Full Degree Master Full Degree Master choice
Duration	1 semester
Placement Schedule	Autumn And Autumn See timetable
Study board	Department of Anthropology, Study Council

Contracting department
• Department of Anthropology

Course responsible
• Perle Møhl

Lecturers
Perle Møhl

Saved on the 28-04-2016

Se skema

16E-;AANB05090U;;Visual Anthropology

Aid	All aids allowed
Marking scale	7-point grading scale
Censorship form	No external censorship
	There is appointed a second internal assessor to assist with the assessment when the first assessor finds this necessary.
Re-exam	1. re-exam:

A new essay with a revised problem statement must be submitted at the announced date. The students are automatically registered for the 1. re-exam. Please note that the re-exam is an essay even for courses, where the ordinary exam is a portfolio exam.

2. re-exam:

A new essay with a revised problem statement must be submitted at the announced date next semester. The students must sign up for the 2. re-exam.

Criteria for exam assesment
See description of learning outcome. Formalities for Written Works must be fulfilled, read more: BA students (in Danish)/ exchange, credit students

Workload

Category	Hours
Lectures	28
Course Preparation	100
Study Groups	32
Exam	50
Total	210

Support: 353 22700 / it-service@adm.ku.dk
Hvis du har spørgsmål til kurset, skal du skrive til studieadministrationen.

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APPENDIX 2

Course plan, Visual Anthropology in Practice, Spring 2016

The course plan is edited as a "Note" in Absalon and made editable by the students; on the date of course start, 8 students out of 30 have registered; the rest register during the first class.

date	theme	litt	film/excerpt propositions	student pres.
1) The origins of visual anthropology				
05/04/16	Course presentation: goals, structure, student presentations, syllabus, exam, etc.	Flaherty 1922 MacDougall 2006 (intro)		
08/04/16	- Introduction to Visual Anthropology - Nanook, the precurser	Grimshaw 2001 ch. 3, Sherwood 1923	excerpts/Nanook of the North	
12/04/16	What is anthropological / ethnographic film?	MacDougall 1998 ch. 2, Banks 1992, Ruby 1975	Under the Men's Tree excerpts/	
15/04/16	Collaboration, participative filmmaking, ethnofiction, mise-en-scène	Møhl 2011 Rouch 2003 (in Feld) Stoller 1992	excerpts/Jaguar /Confluences Tourou et Bitti	AAA BBB CCC
3) Forest of Bliss controversy				
19/04/16	Screening of "Forest of Bliss"		Forest of Bliss	
22/04/16	The FoB controversy	Loizos, Ruby, Gardner, Sinha, Kapur, etc.	excerpts/Forest of Bliss	
4) Observational Cinema & Social Aesthetics				
26/04/16	Observation: Looking vs. seeing / presence vs. distant gaze	Grimshaw & Ravetz 2009 (article) Okely 2001, Grasseni 2011	excerpts/Sweet Salty Laos /Eux et Moi /Enet Yapai	DDD,
29/04/16	Social aesthetics and detail	Grimshaw & Ravetz 2009a ch.4, MacDougall 1999	excerpts/Doon School Chronicles	EEE, FFF, GGG
5) Indigenous media - N. & S. America				
03/05/16	North America/Canada	Ginsburg 2002, Prins 2002, Soukup 2005	excerpts/Atanarjuat etc. Isuma Prods	
10/05/16	South America/Amazonas	Carelli 1995, Folkerts 2012, Turner 2002	excerpts/Video nas Aldeias	
6) Indigenous media - Australia				
13/05/16	Australia	Deger 2006 (intro + ch. 5)	excerpts/net	
17/05/16	Internet (Australia/Canada)	Christie & Verran 2013 Wachowich & Scobie 2010	excerpts/net	
7) New formats - new possibilities - new meanings?				
20/05/16	WebDoc / iDoc - interactice, web-based documentary	Favero 2013, Nash 2012	excerpts/Out of my Window, Prison Valley, Shelter from the Storm, Ritual Rhythms, etc.	HHH,
24/05/16	Summing up, student projects, evaluation, etc.	MacDougall 2006 ch. 10	Ringtone	

Exam date: June 6, 2016