

**Epistemology and Research Methods in Social and Cultural Anthropology**

Code: 101264  
ECTS Credits: 12

Degree	Type	Year	Semester
2500256 Social and Cultural Anthropology	OB	2	2

## Contact

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## Use of Languages

Principal working language: spanish (spa)  
Some groups entirely in English: No  
Some groups entirely in Catalan: No  
Some groups entirely in Spanish: No

## Teachers

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## Prerequisites

In order to be able to correctly study the subject, it is necessary to have to do previously Fieldwork Practicum I in Social and Cultural Anthropology.

## Objectives and Contextualisation

It is a subject that is part of a sequence of methodological-technical subjects that constitutes a model at the scale of ethnographic research in Anthropology: Fieldwork Practicum I (exploratory or prospective fieldwork), Epistemology and methods of study research (theoretical design), Research techniques (technical design), Instrumental resources for anthropological research (instrumental competences), Fieldwork Practicum II (to test of the hypotheses according to the previous methodological designs, data collection, analysis and conclusions), and Final Project (model at the scale of ethnographic research in Anthropology).

The subject of Epistemology and methods is part of the main Subject 11, Methods, techniques and instruments of research in Anthropology, and its contents refer to the phase of theoretical design of the research (formulation of the hypotheses, elaboration of the theoretical framework, tests of contrast, etc.) and to the epistemological assumptions underlying the sequence of methodological and technical subjects of the degree.

This subject is linked to Fieldwork Practicum I, and has the following objectives:

1. To understand the historical development of the different proposals of scientific and hermeneutical research methods and the different proposals for the analysis of scientific theories, with special emphasis on structural conception.
2. To make a first approximation to the methodological assumptions underlying the classical and contemporary works of Anthropology.

3. To reach conclusions about the debate on the application of scientific and interpretative methods in Anthropology and the role of hermeneutic structures in this discipline of the pre-understanding on one side and on the other the descriptions, the interpretative procedures and the explanations that account for diverse relationships between socio-cultural phenomena.

4. To reach awareness that anthropological knowledge, and in general, disciplinary knowledge, are cultural products typical of unequal societies, immersed in the shared worldviews and closely related to power relations, especially gender relations, which demands a critique Non-empirical of theories and concepts, which adds to epistemological methodological criticism.

5. To acquire the ability to develop and test an explanatory hypothesis of a sociocultural problem (formulated from an initial phase of fieldwork) taking into account its plausibility, its adequacy to the data and its relation with other alternative hypotheses.

## Competences

- Apprehending cultural diversity through ethnography and critically assessing ethnographic materials as knowledge of local contexts and as a proposal of theoretical models.
- Demonstrating they know and comprehend the epistemological and methodological debates in Anthropology and the main investigation techniques.
- Producing cultural diversity materials that could have a critical impact on the common sense conceptions.
- Respecting the diversity and plurality of ideas, people and situations.
- Students must be capable of applying their knowledge to their work or vocation in a professional way and they should have building arguments and problem resolution skills within their area of study.
- Students must be capable of collecting and interpreting relevant data (usually within their area of study) in order to make statements that reflect social, scientific or ethical relevant issues.
- Students must develop the necessary learning skills to undertake further training with a high degree of autonomy.
- Using the procedures, techniques and instrumental resources to the fulfilment of ethnographic fieldwork.

## Learning Outcomes

1. Adopting a holistic perspective to the research problem's statement and analysing human institutions within wider cultural configurations.
2. Analysing a contemporary fact from an anthropological perspective.
3. Analysing data critically from anthropological investigations and reports.
4. Applying the current ethical codes to the ethnographic fieldwork.
5. Applying the knowledge of cultural variability and its genesis to avoid ethnocentric projections.
6. Assessing critically the explicit and implicit theoretical models in the ethnographic materials.
7. Carrying out an individual work that specifies the work plan and timing of activities.
8. Critically assessing ethnographic materials as a proposal for theoretical models.
9. Engaging in debates about historical and contemporary facts and respecting the other participants' opinions.
10. Establishing reliable ethnological relationships with subjects that encourage the production and trustworthiness of data.
11. Explaining the work's results narratively in accordance with the critical standards of discipline and bearing in mind the different target audiences.
12. Knowing and assessing the difference between the epistemological and the methodological critique of concepts.
13. Knowing and assessing the methodological debate of social and cultural Anthropology.
14. Obtaining and recording ethnographic data by applying the different collection and analysis techniques, specially by using qualitative procedures and the practice of the participant observation.
15. Operationalizing theoretical concepts and testing explanations of the sociocultural phenomena.
16. Relating elements and factors involved in the development of scientific processes.
17. Solving problems autonomously.

## Content

The contents of the course are the following:

1. Presentation of the course: structure, content, evaluation. Preliminary definitions and basic assumptions. Epistemology, methods, research techniques / Gnoseology, epistemology, methodology. The "folk" concept of science: supposed objectivity, supposed truths. Criticisms from Philosophy, History, Sociology and Anthropology of science. Dimensions of the current epistemological critique: cultural, social, gender, political, transcultural

### *1st part*

2. Historicity of the scientific method proposals. From certainty to conjecture. The inductive-hypothetical-verificationist method.

3. The beginning of the scientific methodology in Anthropology: The inductivist methodological models of Tylor and Radcliffe-Brown.

4. Popper's falsificationism. Criticism of inductivism. Falsability as a demarcation criterion between science and non-science. Falsification and corroboration.

5. Synthesis of the methodological proposals of the first part of S. XX in Hempel. Classical methodological concepts: hypothesis, contrasting implication, falsification / verification, theoretical support and empirical support, logical probability, nomological-deductive explanation. The limits of the logical comparison of theories.

6. The influence of falsificationism in Anthropology. Marwick and the matrilineal obstetric thesis.

### *2nd part*

7. History and Sociology of science. Kuhn: paradigms, normal science, scientific revolutions. The limits of the comparison of theories

8. The Lakatos research program concept. Development of research programs and concept formation

9. Kuhn: disciplinary matrix and exemplary

10. A conceptual scheme for the approach to anthropological knowledge.

11. Feyerabend: methodological and epistemological critique.

### *3rd part*

12 Ontological hermeneutics and interpretation procedures. Ricoeur Interpretation of culture understood as text. Agar: the interpretation as bust resolution. The testing of interpretations.

13. The structural analysis of scientific theories.

14. Interpretation and explanation in Anthropology. Ethnographies as structure predicates.

15. Giddens and the double hermeneutics of the Social Sciences

16. Perspective and power in knowledge processes. The programs of Critical Theory. The non-empirical critique of concepts. The criticism of the androcentrism of the cultures of the anthropologists and the cultures studied. The cross-cultural criticism from the epistemologies of the South.

## Methodology

The course consists of 12 ECTS: 4 of individualized classes and tutorials and 8 of works and readings.

Preliminary understanding of subjects is achieved through classes and compulsory readings.

Deeper understanding is achieved through the theoretical work and essays based on the course mandatory readings and through the development of a tutored practical work that is being developed in several stages as advances in the learning of the theoretical-methodological contents.

The practical component includes several mandatory sessions with the whole class, to explain of the guides for the development of the Practice.

## Activities

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Preparation of theoretical work and essays	30	1.2	3, 1, 8, 6, 13, 12, 16
Selection of a work hypothesis and application of the theoretical concepts basic to the hypothesis	45	1.8	3, 5, 1, 8, 6, 13, 12, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16
Theoretical classes and discussion of theoretical readings	25	1	2, 4, 15, 17
Type: Supervised			
Carrying out a methodological design and developing an hypotheses	5	0.2	2, 4, 1, 7, 10, 14, 15, 17
Individual Tutorials	45	1.8	2, 4, 15, 17
Type: Autonomous			
Reading and commenting on compulsory readings	75	3	2, 4, 7, 15, 9, 17
Successive and cumulative work developing the hypothesis	75	3	3, 5, 8, 11, 9, 16

## Assessment

The follow-up of the theoretical course (periodical submission of reports drawn from theoretical readings, attendance to class, discussions of submitted essays, and preparation of a work and two essays) will represent 50% of the grade of the course. The other (50%) corresponds to the theoretical research design based on the hypothesis. The submission of essays and attendance to the discussions will represent 20% of the qualification, and the elaboration of the theoretical work and the essays 30%. Plagiarism will be penalized with 0 points and the possibility of failing the course.

The students must submit their essays and attend to tutorials on the stipulated dates.

At the time of carrying out each evaluation, the teacher will inform the students about the procedure and the date to review their qualifications. To be able to be re-evaluated, students must have been evaluated in relation to submitted work and have achieved a minimum score of 3.5 points. Submission of essays and attending in-class discussions and tutorials cannot be re-evaluated.

The reassessment of the practical work will be its exhaustive correction and carrying out a final examination.

*Students who engage in misconduct (plagiarism, etc.) in an assessment activity will receive a mark of "0" for the activity in question. In the case of misconduct in more than one assessment activity, the students involved will be given a final mark of "0" for the subject.*

## Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Submission of reports drawn from theoretical readings, discussions of submitted essays, and preparation of a work and two essays)	50%	0	0	2, 4, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 9, 17
Supervised development of a methodological desig	50%	0	0	3, 5, 1, 8, 6, 13, 12, 11, 16

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