



Social and Cultural Anthropology (MSc)

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen - M Social and Cultural Anthropology - 2013-2014

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 Orientation on Human Security part 1 (Periode 1)	4
Vak: Theoretical Orientation on Human Security part 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 Orientation on Human Security part 1	Periode 1	6.0	S_TOHS1
Theoretical Orientation on Human Security part 2	Periode 2	6.0	S_TOHS2

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
Docent(en)	dr. E.W. Bal
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

Participation in Theoretical Orientation on Human Security part 1 (S_TOHS1), Theoretical Orientation on Human Security part 2 (S_TOHS2) and Field Research Design (S_FRD).

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. E.W. Bal
Docent(en)	dr. E.W. Bal
Lesmethode(n)	Werkgroep
Niveau	400

Doel vak

Students write a full-fledged research plan and make the practical arrangements for their field research. Students will develop a research topic of their own in relation to anthropology and human security as the central theme of the Master's program. Students will also increase their knowledge and skills in qualitative data collecting methods.

Inhoud vak

During the first part of the course students work on the so-called explorative paper (6,000 words). They select their theme and topic of research, a geographical region, and conduct literature research. The weekly assignments will facilitate the process of selecting a research subject and of narrowing down their focus. In-class exercises, peer review assignments and (group) discussions will further help students develop their ideas and to learn from/inspire each other. In order to optimize results students are encouraged to participate in or link up with research projects and issues of staff members. In the second part of the course students develop an analytical research question, informed

by their previous and continuing literature search and by the literature of the selected profile of the parallel course Theoretical Orientation on Human Security Part 2. They also arrange practicalities for their field research. Additionally students are informed about various qualitative data collection methods such as open interview, participant observation and photo-elicitation; are trained in writing down field notes; and are sensitized to ethical and reflexive issues in doing fieldwork. Various practical exercises will students help to do so. At 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 will be expanded 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 Human Security Part 2).

Onderwijsvorm

Lectures, seminar and tutorial. In the second part of the course an individual supervisor will support the student to write the research plan in three (advised number) personal meetings.

Toetsvorm

The final grade is based on the explorative paper (30%) and the research plan. A 'fail' for the explorative paper may be compensated. All other assignments during the course need to be assessed with a pass.

Literatuur

Sunstein, B.S. & Chiseri-Strater, E. (2007, 3rd edition). FieldWorking. Reading and Writing Research. Boston and New York: Bedford/St. Martin's [the 2006 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 Human Security 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. M.E.M. de Theije
Docent(en)	dr. M.E.M. de Theije
Lesmethode(n)	Hoorcollege, Werkgroep

Niveau	600
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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 and the culture shock; the use of theoretical literature beyond mere lip-service; 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

Lecture and discussion group in the weekly seminar sessions; individual supervision.

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 Human Security part 1 (S_TOHS1) and Theoretical Orientation on Human Security part 2 (S_TOHS2) have to be completed (24 EC).

Aanbevolen voorkennis

Participation in Field Research (S_FR)

Doelgroep

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

Theoretical Orientation on Human Security part 1

Vakcode	S_TOHS1 ()
Periode	Periode 1

Credits	6.0
Voertaal	Engels
Faculteit	Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen
Coördinator	dr. F. Colombijn
Docent(en)	dr. F. Colombijn
Lesmethode(n)	Hoorcollege, Werkgroep
Niveau	400

Doel vak

Students are familiarized with theoretical traditions, approaches and concepts relevant to understand how anthropologists can use 'human security' as a theoretical lens, conceptual perspective or analytical tool. Students can explain the research potentials and limitations of the human-security-'window' in anthropological research. Students are also trained in writing assignments and oral presentations.

Inhoud vak

During the last decade the concept of human security has become a rallying point for the re-conceptualization of (human) development in the face of perceived threats to stability and security. This course delves into the conceptual and theoretical aspects and possible limitations in the way that the United Nations have coined the concept as 'freedom from fear and freedom from want'. We will provide a broader focus in which aspects of social and physical well-being are systematically connected to specific culturally informed ways of coping with risk and uncertainty. The basic principle of the course is that social and cultural dimensions of human security - and therefore social and cultural approaches in anthropology - are not only equally relevant, but also interconnected. Physical, economic and political aspects of (in)security should be studied in relation to existential, religious and emotional elements. We will elaborate on this theme by discussing various concrete examples of people's individual and collective perceptions and strategies from all over the world; these can be local but will also be constituted by global processes.

Onderwijsvorm

Lectures and group seminars

Toetsvorm

Written assignments (80%) and oral presentations (20%). Attendance and participation is obligatory. In all parts a pass must be achieved.

Literatuur

Eriksen, Th.H., Bal, E., & Saleminck, O. (eds.) (2010). A World of Insecurity – Anthropological Perspectives on Human Security. London/New York: Pluto Press (about € 28 at VU-bookstore).

Further articles and book chapters, most of which will be available digitally.

Doelgroep

Students in the Master's in Social and Cultural Anthropology plus LPIS students.

Overige informatie

Five students of the Master's programme in Law and Politics of International Security are also admitted to participate in this course.

Except for these LPIS-students, participation in this course is obligatory for participation in the course Field Research Design. The FRD and TOHS1 courses are of a complementary nature, but each has its own objective, logic and rhythm, so students should be prepared to simultaneously fulfill requirements for both courses.

Theoretical Orientation on Human Security part 2

Vakcode	S_TOHS2 ()
Periode	Periode 2
Credits	6.0
Voertaal	Engels
Faculteit	Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen
Docent(en)	dr. S.J.T.M. Evers, dr. F. Colombijn
Lesmethode(n)	Werkgroep, Hoorcollege
Niveau	500

Doel vak

Students expand their knowledge of anthropological approaches to human security in one of the two profiles offered: Development and Social Transformations (DST) or Constructing Identities and Notions of Belonging (CINB). Students receive further training in writing assignments and oral presentations.

Inhoud vak

As a follow up of the course 'Theoretical Orientation on Human Security Part 1', this course elaborates in more depth on the social and cultural dimensions of human security as a theoretical lens and conceptual tool. Students choose for one of the two profiles offered. In the 'Development and Social Transformations' (DST) profile the starting point is at economic, physical and political aspects of the social dimension. A broad spectrum of issues will be touched on: poverty and sustainable development, political and legal dynamics, authoritarianism, equality and the rule of law, dispute resolution, gender issues, access to natural resources, forced migration (including slavery) and post conflict reconstruction. The profile of 'Constructing Identities and Notions of Belonging' (CINB) focuses on religious, existential, identity- and emotive aspects of the socio- cultural dimension, but will also touch upon politics, citizenship and state-society relations. Students explore the myriad ways in which people construct communities – imagined, ritual, or face-to-face – with reference to nation, state, rule-of-law, ethnicity and religion, and through these patterned practices hope to shield themselves from feelings of anxiety and fear, risk and threat, alienation and uprootedness by inclusion and/or exclusion strategies. In both profiles a holistic perspective that seeks to establish the interconnections between the social and cultural dimensions is central.

Onderwijsvorm

Lectures, guest lectures and seminar-meetings.

Toetsvorm

Written assignments (80%) and oral group presentations (20%). Attendance and participation are obligatory. In all parts a pass must be achieved.

Literatuur

To be announced at the start of the course and depending on the profile selected.

Vereiste voorkennis

Having participated in the course Theoretical Orientation on Human Security Part 1 (S_TOHS1).

Doelgroep

Students in the Master's in Social and Cultural Anthropology.