# Co-Teaching Postdigital Ethnography

**Simone Pfeifer\*, Suzana Jovicic⁺**

*\*University of Cologne, ⁺University of Vienna*

**Working Paper Series**
**Collaborative Research Center 1187 Media of Cooperation**

This Working Paper Series is edited by the Collaborative Research Center Media of Cooperation and serves as a platform to circulate work in progress or preprints in order to encourage the exchange of ideas. Please contact the authors if you have any questions or comments. Copyright remains with the authors.

The Working Papers are accessible online at:
https://www.mediacoop.uni-siegen.de/de/publikationen/working-papers-media-of-cooperation/

Print copies can be ordered by sending an email to:
workingpaperseries@sfb1187.uni-siegen.de

Cover image: Omid Armin via Unsplash (https://unsplash.com/de@omidarmin)
Layout: Anna K. Büdenbender

Universität Siegen
SFB 1187 Medien der Kooperation
Herrengarten 3
57072 Siegen, Germany
https://www.mediacoop.uni-siegen.de.sfb1187.uni-siegen.de
workingpaperseries@sfb1187.uni-siegen.de

# Co-Teaching Postdigital Ethnography

**Simone Pfeifer\*, Suzana Jovicic⁺**
*\*University of Cologne, ⁺University of Vienna*

**Abstract** Finding innovative, engaging, hierarchy-defying and, above all, precise descriptions of teaching exercises suitable for imparting complex theory and methodological approaches as multi-layered as postdigital ethnography is rare to find. Those that exist are mostly scattered across a few non-specific blogs and private Twitter feeds – finding them is a matter of an obscure combination of serendipity and algorithms. In this working paper we reflect on our co-teaching methods applied in a Masterclass on postdigital ethnography. Our aim is twofold: not only to reflect on teaching methods in postdigital ethnography, but also to present concrete examples of implementation in teaching and co-teaching constellations by means of teaching exercises.

**Keywords:** Postdigital, digital, ethnography, anthropology, teaching, co-teaching, methods

## Introduction

At the beginning of the third day of the Masterclass, Suzana introduced a social-media-related adaptation of the well-known energiser "The wind blows for everyone, … ". Standing in the middle of a circle of chairs with one chair short, one of the participants called out: "The wind blows for everyone who has already got a Mastodon account." After the buyout of Twitter by Elon Musk in October 2022, quite a few of the participants – masters, PhD students and postdocs alike – had followed the recent call to move to Twitter alternatives like Mastodon. These participants now slowly stood up from their chairs, and while looking for another seat and occasionally bumping into another person, they found their way to an empty chair. Another person was now left in the middle. She had not managed to find a seat in time and now called on everyone: "The wind is blowing for all those who do not have a Tinder account". The longer the game went on, the more difficult it became to keep coming up

with ideas relating to social media. Some of the participants became more ambitious, competing for the empty seats with funny ideas. In any case, the game became very jostling, joyful, and towards the end also physical - everyone wanted to grab a seat first, making their way and pushing other participants off their chairs even with playful physical effort. After about 15 minutes all participants were quite awake, laughing and we had even found out a bit more about the social media practices of the other participants.

With this brief scene from the "Cologne-Siegen Masterclass for Media Ethnography" on "(Post)Digital Ethnography: from Participant Observation to Collaborative Approaches" that took place from 24–26 November 2022 in Cologne, we would like to begin our reflections on teaching methods within social and cultural anthropology in general and postdigital ethnography in particular. The aim of the working paper is twofold: not only to reflect on teaching methods of postdigital ethnography, but also to present concrete examples of teaching exercises that can be imple-

mented in teaching and co-teaching constellations. Before outlining the exercises, however, we will first take a step back and examine why such endeavours are not only necessary, but also timely.

The field of postdigital ethnography, in particular, had to (re)invent ethnographic methods and to rely strongly on multimodality, different modes and experiences of various media beyond dualistic text/image distinctions in both research and research communication. With the notion of postdigital[1] ethnography, we highlight one of the fundamental insights of early media and digital anthropology: that the analytical or heuristic distinction between online and offline or purely virtual worlds that supposedly exist next to 'natural' human and social being is not meaningful or even wrong in most everyday situations (Gabriela Coleman in Coleman & Jandrić 2019: 546, see also Miller and Slater 2000, Boellstorff et al. 2012, Hine 2015). In a recent article, visual anthropologist Paolo Favero (2022: 7) elaborates further: "We transcend the distinction between what is digital and what is not digital in our concrete everyday lives. We are digitally connected almost all the time, even amidst the most 'analogue' of situations. And we are analogue bodies involved in material relations with the surrounding world even when we are online." While for media and digital anthropology this focus on the body and experiences is not a new insight, it has become a more pressing issue in recent years, stressing the normality of the digital as interwoven in everyday life (see also ter Laan 2023: 3). For a postdigital ethnography, this means surpassing these rigid categories without dismissing them entirely. It means to focus and reflect more on the particular instances in which these divides are made meaningful by the people we work with in our research and in consequence also in our teaching. In co-teaching postdigital ethnography, we built on these methodological insights. The practical, in-class explorations of new forms of mutual learning emerge from and expand on the development of digital technologies and their integration into everyday life. Supportive and non-hierarchical co-teaching of postdigital ethnography may challenge conventional power dynamics within the classroom, which are embedded in broader structures of power (inequality) within the academic and societal systems. Co-teaching in this sense is not only an integral part of the postdigital reality, but is also in line with recent calls for the decolonisation of academia and the anthropological discipline.

---

**1**   The notion of the 'postdigital' was first coined by Nicholas Negroponte (1998) in an article he published for Wired magazine, where he boldly claims: "Face it—the digital revolution is over [...] its literal form, the technology, is already beginning to be taken for granted, and its connotation will become tomorrow's commercial and cultural compost for new ideas. Like air and drinking water, being digital will be noticed only by its absence, not its presence". (Negroponte 1998).

## The Vagueness of Instructions

The tendency within social and cultural anthropology and related disciplines to emphasise complexity and contradictions of social realties without oversimplifying, while useful elsewhere, may not always have the best of influences when it comes to learning and teaching methods. There are valid reasons for the discipline's reluctance to adhere to recipe-like instructions in relation to ethnographic methodology in general, as the early postmodern critique of the striving for objectivity and validity through the language of the natural sciences and the appearance of working with precisely measurable social facts has long demonstrated (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Behar and Gordon 1995). The idealised notion of ethnography as a long-term, fully immersive, open-ended and somewhat intuitive process, by default seems to defy efforts of being entirely anticipated, captured and dissected into steps. This defiance appears especially challenging against the background of increasing institutional requirements to complete e.g., ethical and GDPR-related questionnaires specifying interview questions in advance. The slippery nature of ethnographic work may be one of the reasons why the arguably most precise contemporary methodological books are often written by sociologists (e.g., Flick et al. 2006, Breidenstein et al. 2013; Mayring 2016; for older anthropological work see e. g., Spradley 1979; 1980).

An anthropological reluctance to write precise methodological "cookbooks", however, might also be problematic. This reluctance concerns both traditional ethnographic techniques as well as newer collaborative, digital and decolonial ethnographic approaches. For instance, rapport, an essential ethnographic concept, has been shrouded with an air of mystique, often described more like an "intuitive" process than a teachable one throughout the discipline's history (Goebel 2021). The trouble with this obscure correlation between rapport and seemingly successful research is that building trust to convince our research participants to give us access to "better" data is rarely problematised. Moreover, once this illusive rapport seems to fail, so inevitably does one's research. Novice ethnographers are thus potentially left to despair (ibid.), while resulting affective disturbances appear as a hindrance to good research (Stodulka et al. 2019, Jovicic 2022). This seemingly intuitive, somewhat vague experience is further exacerbated through the myth of the lone, often male, White researcher (El Kotni et al. 2020, see also Rosaldo 1989: 30; Behar 1996) who researches all by himself, conquers the field in a series of events that seem to lead to increasingly growing rapport and immersion, and writes as the sole author drawing from personal insight, without necessarily acknowledging or giving due credit to others who have been involved in the co-production of knowledge and writing. Such methodological vagueness can lead to various oversights and ethical missteps, not the least reproducing selective or one-sided knowledge

production processes. Perhaps as a result of this historical reluctance, plenty of theoretically sound articles on various methodological and ethical issues may often be published as part of a particular thematic project, but rarely as a methodological and precise instructional contribution in its own right. This often leaves readers who are interested in practical methodological advice and ideas for its translation into their own practice empty-handed (for exceptions see e.g., Palmberger's description of the digital diary). This fuzziness comes back to haunt us especially when exploring new fields, such as postdigital environments, where we are forced to go back to the basics and re-examine them: for instance, what is rapport and how do we build it in a public, anonymous discussion forum, for instance?

Similar challenges in the general vagueness of instructions might be encountered by novice lecturers of social and cultural anthropology and related disciplines who look for concrete advice on teaching ethnographic methods. Precise descriptions of creative, innovative, multimodal, engaging, inspiring, hierarchy-defying and collaborative teaching exercises, which are suitable for teaching complex theory and a methodological approach as multi-layered as postdigital ethnography are rare and mostly scattered across a few non-specific blogs and private Twitter feeds – finding them is a matter of an obscure combination of serendipity and algorithms. And again, while some researchers and educators present interesting ideas to support their teaching of such methods and draw intriguing theoretical conclusions, it is rare to find precise guidance and practical considerations (see e.g., Caitlin E. Lawson's exercise on exploring online fields, Teaching Anthropology Journal, Society for Cultural Anthropology "Teaching Tools", Teaching Culture Blog).

However, we need to talk about the opacity of teaching methods too. In a world where continuous tectonic shifts seem to be taking place in terms of questioning practices of people in positions of power, we cannot afford to teach ethical principles in theory without first understanding and then questioning how power and hierarchy are embedded in specific teaching methods and constellations. The concern may not be new, but it is nonetheless pressing. After all, anthropologists, like other academics particularly in German-speaking contexts, if at all, often only receive (mandatory) general training in didactics and rarely with a particular focus on anthropological teaching or co-teaching. This approach may have worked in the past, but it will not be able to resist new generations of students who expect a different level of pedagogical reflection from their teachers in terms of issues of power, racist or sexist language and practices in the classroom. Additionally, a growing number of students seem to expect different, more engaging, accessible and embodied formats of learning. To take a deeper look at classroom practices, we first need to understand what we are working with and, as a next step, reflect on the wide range of new possibilities that various media and tools offer to better engage students on eye level. This does not mean a technology-positive adoption of digital tools in the classroom as an act of technological solutionism and gamification, but instead a closer look at which inspirations and lessons can be drawn from those tools, and how they can be critically adopted in academic teaching contexts.

It is no coincidence that some of the most exciting ethnographic teaching projects are multimodal or deal with digital topics (e.g., the MA student project "Curating the Digital in Everyday Life" (2019/20), curated by Christoph Bareither) or that the pandemic led to a lively exchange on novel modes of hybrid teaching. Earlier examples of such influences are especially present within visual anthropology, the anthropology of games as well as in design anthropology perhaps due to the more playful, inevitably participatory and collaborative dimensions of such research. Learning through film was a central concern of the pioneers of visual anthropology, as can be discerned in platforms such as the Documentary Educational Ressources. Following their comparative project "Why We Post: the Anthropology of Social Media", Daniel Miller et al. (2016), for instance, have created a free online course on the anthropology of social media, meant to communicate research results to the general public, along with other accessible open source materials. Some of the most innovative experiments in teaching with participatory methods come from researchers studying games and game design (e.g., https://anthropologycon.org/games/ initiative, the Kula Games Collective, Alexandra Supper's exercise on playing UNO to practise participant observation, Petridis 2021, etc.). These influences are also noticeable in the increasingly participatory and collaborative research designs within anthropology, although it is yet to have a profound and visible impact on teaching (i.e., beyond singular experiments by committed scholars).

Inspired by such projects and eager to incorporate similar aspects into our teaching practice in general, we tried to implement the above outlined understanding of postdigital ethnography and co-teaching in the practical exercises that were part of the Masterclass. While co-teaching has long since become a common practice within anthropology and has been also used as a method for decolonising the university[2], particularly in interdisciplinary courses, again, there has been little written reflection on what co-teaching in Anthropology might actually entail or how it varies in different contexts - from sharing, planning, organising, and delivering to assessing together (for an exception see Najera 2021 et al.). Not only digital tools like co-working on the same documents in real time made this way of co-teaching the Masterclass for 2 ½ days at the University of Cologne possible, but also regular engagements in video calls to structure, prepare and later assess the

[2] https://decolonizing-academia.uni-koeln.de/en/working-groups.

course. Yet, it was not the tools, but the co-creation of a shared learning atmosphere by all involved participants, students of varying positions in their graduate education, post-docs and one former professor, that made this collaborative teaching experience as a form of co-learning possible.

## Co-Teaching: Examples from the Cologne-Siegen Masterclass

The energising exercise "The wind blows for everyone, who…" mentioned in the introductory vignette was one of many formats utilised to create an atmosphere of playful co-learning. The following section presents a selection of the teaching methods used during the (Post)Digital Ethnography Cologne-Siegen Masterclass, which was conceived by the authors and attended by 16 participants. As it lies beyond the scope of this working paper to go into detail about all of the methods used, we include only a selection of teaching methods as concrete examples for instruction and focus on the practical issues rather than their theoretical examination. Most of these methods were not entirely invented by us, but adapted to the specific context of the class. Although the class was conducted face-to-face, we used a range of media, such as boards and posters to prepare the presentations, and digital tools such as a Word-Cloud created from participants' abstracts to point out similarities and differences, or QR codes to effortlessly direct participants to collaborative platforms such as Padlet. We also encouraged participants to use online resources. The class included didactic settings ranging from short input presentations to plenary discussions, group work such as a methods café, silent work such as freewriting to reflect on the new information, or exercises meant to activate, such as energiser games, speed dating to discuss views on relevant topics, or a walk & talk session in pairs, in which the participants reflected on ethical dilemmas and challenges experienced in fieldwork. The learning experiences included a multimodal setup that combined bodily, affective and informal exercises along with more standard learning scenarios. Our main role in this context was not to act as experts, but as facilitators, enabling exchange between participants, who all came with different levels of experience and a fascinating range of projects, disciplines and research settings, and were able to give each other valuable feedback and share their ideas and lessons learned. In the following, we will highlight three teaching methods we used: Creating a personal social media profile, engaging in an online focus group and playing Cards Against Digital Anthropology.

## 1. Exercise: Create your social media profile

⚑ Goals: Reflection of digital positionality and creating your own social media profile

📱 Materials: 1 digital device per person, materials for creating posters

🕐 Duration: Ca. 60 minutes (30 min. group work; 20-30 min. presentation)

👥 Group size & setup: 3-4 people per group, seated around a table

*Context and goals*

Digital ethnographers only rarely reflect on how the research profiles they used, created, or adapted on social media or messenger services affect their research and relationships in the field. These profiles can help to enter the field, to stay in touch with research participants, to build rapport in the field, and they can also be used for a more reciprocal, participatory or collaborative approach. Whether these profiles are personal profiles, research-only, thematic or team profiles (see Pfeifer 2021), and how they evolve over time, has an effect on the research relationships we build over the course of our research and on the positionalities with which we interact in the field. How we design and develop these profiles depends highly on the fields we are researching in and the participants we are researching with. The profiles not only serve to get access, build a network, present ourselves, post and interact with others (Przybylski 2020: 59), they also allow for reflections on the "immersive cohabitation" (Bluteau 2021) as an observing participant within our postdigital fields. This kind of participation enables us to be transparent about our research and develop eye-to-eye research. The goal of this exercise is to intensively reflect on our own digital positionalities and how we use digital profiles to engage with people. Our profiles can also be used as an invitation to critically respond to us as researchers, a platform not only to co-produce knowledge but also for transfer and dissemination of knowledge.

*Preparation and sequence*

Teaching Preparations:
· Invite all participants to bring a device like a smartphone, tablet or laptop to the course.
· Bring materials to create posters to the course, such as cards in different colours and sizes, markers and pens, large poster papers, pins, tape.

In this exercise, participants are asked to create or further develop their own research profiles for their individual research projects. Each participant should focus on one social media or messenger platform and be as precise as possible. First, students should research the optional categories and affordances of the platform of their choosing. Ideally, the design process and the discussion should refer to concrete details, like what kind of images one wants to use, what kind of information
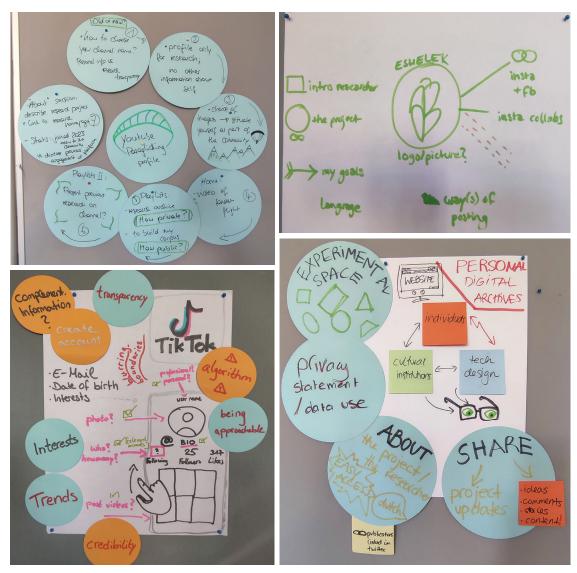
Figure 1: Examples of posters for social media profiles that were created during the Masterclass.
With kind permission by the participants in order of images from top left to bottom right: Karina Kirsten, Annette Steffny, Corinna Koch, Marije Miedema.

can be placed into which category of the platform, what should be highlighted in order to be transparent about the research or which kinds of postings one would like to post in the future. After discussing each of the participants' ideas within a small group of three people, the group should visualise each profile (sketch or draw) and record the related discussions in a poster that will be subsequently presented to the entire group. The group can also decide to just focus on one of the participants' profiles.

*Alternatives*

1. Students learning about key anthropological concepts can be asked to create a profile for a famous historical figure (e.g., anthropologists like Bronislaw Malinowski, Margaret Mead or Zora Neil Hurston) on a social media platform of their choosing. They can be advised to reflect on how this person

would present themselves online and what opinions on current issues they would be likely to share (what kind of posts, comments etc.).
2. Students working on a research project or a term paper during a semester can be asked to create a social media profile to present the outcomes of their term papers to general audiences in simple, engaging, and multimodal ways.

*Debrief and Reflexion*

All posters and key discussion points should be presented to the plenary (fig. 1). Participants are also invited to share their experience of the exercise. Everyone will be given the opportunity to give feedback and to discuss open questions about the posters and profiles. The poster presentation discussions are particularly well suited to discuss questions about digital positionalities and relationalities, but also about ethical issues

of research in postdigital contexts. Usually, the detailed work on one's own project and profile has a direct impact on the next phases of one's research, in how one creates a digital persona and relates with others. It can also be fun to think about possible ways to present oneself and one's project in this way, including all kinds of audio-visual storytelling and how best to use the chosen platform.

## 2. Exercise: Online focus group

⚑ Goals: Learn to facilitate focus group discussions online; reflect on the documentation and the different roles within the focus group

🗎 Materials: 1 digital device per person, cards in different colours and sizes, pens, tape or pins, two boards with posters

🕐 Duration: Ca. 60-80 minutes (40-50 min. group work - preparing, conductin, analysing); 20-30 min. presentation

👥 Group size & setup: 4-5 people per group, dispersed in different rooms/halls/outside

*Context and goals*

Focus group discussions are often an appropriate choice of method to get a number of participants into informal conversations. Often people start to ask each other questions, learn, influence or disagree with one another on a given topic. It is also possible to stimulate discussion through images, videos or prompting questions. In ethnographic contexts, participants of a focus group often know each other beforehand. The usage of digital applications for focus group discussions brings its own set of ethical challenges, e. g. regarding privacy and transparency, but the digital setup also allows to facilitate certain kinds of discussion bringing people together across geographic locations with reduced costs for travel and mobility (Colom 2022). The aim of this exercise is first to sensitise learning participants for their choice of technology and for modes of operation that differ between different kinds of platforms and tools. Choosing which digital tool to use in what contexts, e.g. WhatsApp or Zoom, often depends on what researchers and research participants are used to in a particular field and can easily access in their everyday life from different kinds of devices. Second, the exercise aims to encourage participants to reflect on possible questions and the different roles that are part of a focus group discussion. A third aim is to give participants ideas how to analyse and interpret the material they collected.

*Preparation and sequence*

Teaching Preparations:
· Ask participants to bring a device like a smartphone, tablet or laptop to the course.
· Prepare two boards for the final discussion, one board with the heading "Challenges" and another with the heading "Themes". ▶

· Bring cards in different colours and sizes, markers and pens, large poster papers, pins, and tape to the course and distribute them to the groups.
· Divide the participants in groups of 4-5 persons.

In a first step participants are introduced to a given theme of the focus group discussion. One of the possible questions could be: "procrastination and social media in your everyday life."
In the first preparatory sessions, participants are asked to think about the topic in their group and prepare 5-6 possible questions for the focus group discussion. Then the group should decide together how and on which platform they would like to conduct the discussion and how to record it.

This decision also depends on whether everyone in the group has equal access to the platform, a sound Internet connection and also agrees to the recording of the discussion. The recording can take the form of a written protocol (see template in the appendix), an audio or a video recording, depending what the participants in the group agree to and what seems ethically sound. The preparation concludes with the decision within the group on who will take on the role of moderator, interviewer, interviewee and who is responsible for which type of recording. In the second phase, the group discussion takes place online. All participants of the group have to act in different roles and are asked to spread out in the room or in the surrounding area and find a quiet place to participate in the online group discussion. The discussion should not last longer than 30 minutes. All participants are asked to reflect on their own experiences. The third part of the digital focus group is dedicated to listening to the recordings again or to reviewing the written transcript (selecting a sample of the whole recording, manuscript). Through that, participants should come up with first attempts to analyse and interpret the focus group recordings and suggest main themes and ways of collaboration in the interpretation of the recording within the group. The group prepares key words on cards to present their main challenges and the main topics of their discussion to the whole group.

*Debrief and Reflexion*

The last part of the exercise is to reflect on the whole exercise and bring together the different results. One group starts by sticking their first cards/keywords on the boards, the other groups add their own themes and reflections to the cards until all the cards are grouped on two boards, one for thematic questions, another for the challenges and reflections of the exercise. After each thematic/reflective card or key word, facilitators can ask the other groups/participants if they have noted any related keywords and put them next to the others. Through these relationships it is possible to reflect on the findings and experiences of the different groups in a nuanced way and also to establish relationships between different keywords. Overall, this exercise allows

for reflection not only on how focus group discussions can be conducted online, but also sensitises for difficulties participants may have with their devices or in finding a quiet place to participate in the exercise. Re-listening or looking at the notes and recordings as well as finding key themes and arguments of the conversation, gives participants of the exercise an insight into how interpretation and analysis can be conducted as a collaborative work within a group in research situations of postdigital ethnography. Including different skills and experiences in a group also facilitates mutual learning within the group.

## 3. Cards Against Digital Anthropology

⚑ **Goals:**  Playful discussion of ambiguous fieldwork scenarios

▯▧ **Materials:**  Card game (one per group); Instructions (optional)

⏱ **Duration:**  30-60 minutes

👥 **Group size & setup:**  4-7 people per group, seated around a table

*Context and goals*
The increase of research in the area of digital anthropology has led to a reinvigorated interest in the ethics of online research specifically (franzke et al. and AoIR 2020). The availability of large amounts of publicly visible data, for instance, might open up entirely new possibilities of research on the one hand. On the other hand, however, it might feel tempting to use that data without explicit consent, especially when consent is difficult or impossible to obtain, such as in large group chats. Given the often-disembodied presence of online researchers and the potentially endless online feeds and timelines, it is not always clear where fieldwork begins and where it ends, and if what the researcher observes online might or might not turn into research material. Witnessing ethically questionable practices, such as extreme speech, on the other hand, may place the researcher in a moral dilemma. For such reasons, one of our explicit aims was to stimulate discussions on ethical issues throughout the course. One of the first activities we undertook was thus an adaptation of the "Cards Against Anthropology", created by Matthew Durington's students in a game design class, in which they developed various games for teaching anthropology (Shelton, 2016).

Cards Against Anthropology, in its original version, was an attempt to discuss frequent ethical dilemmas in fieldwork. The game concept was borrowed from the popular card game "Cards Against Humanity", in which players are presented with a scenario and must choose their response to the scenario from the cards available to them. The dealer, who selects the scenario and distributes the cards, then also decides which anonymously placed reaction/ response is the best from their perspective. The scenarios created for Cards

Against Anthropology (example: "You are conducting research on drug use and a parent of one of your informants asks if their teenager is using. You know they are. What do you do"?) were based on real examples of ethically ambiguous fieldwork situations collected by the AAA (American Anthropological Association). In the original Cards Against Humanity game, it is usually the funniest and most absurd reaction to the scenario that wins, but in more serious contexts, the possible scenarios and reactions can include both serious and funny/absurd ones. It is up to the game master which reaction they think is best. This ambiguity of possible reactions (examples: "Scream", "Don't do it", "Run away", "Invite them to dinner") is in fact rather useful as it further stimulates the subsequent discussion about the scenario among the players and encourages them to actively think about tricky fieldwork situations and how to creatively solve them.

The Cards Against Anthropology was adapted for the specifics of ethnographic research within digital settings and transformed by the authors into Cards Against *Digital* Anthropology. The original scenarios were either adapted (e.g., by transferring the onsite fieldwork to an online space) or recreated to include actual fieldwork-related scenarios that the authors witnessed or experienced during their research in the context of digital ethnography (example: "An interlocutor shares extremely racist memes on their feed, what do you do?"). This allowed us to facilitate small-group, and thus more intimate, conversations on various issues that might arise in the field and encourage participants to discuss different reactions and share their own experiences and solutions to similar problems.

*Preparation and sequence*

Teaching Preparations:

· Select possible scenarios and reactions. The original Cards Against Anthropology PDF can be obtained from Matthew Durington; the Cards Against Digital Anthropology are linked via QR code below in the appendix.
· Print these on hard paper and cut them.
· Combine them into game decks with a number of scenarios (depending on the time available for the game) and a larger number of reactions, so that players receive several cards with differing reactions in each round to ensure the playfulness and the element of surprise. In order to distinguish the two types of cards (scenario and reaction cards), it is best to ensure that they have different colours.

*Sequence*
The participants are divided into groups sitting around a table – the number of players can vary between four and seven. Then, the game rules are explained. Typically, there is one game master who draws a scenario card and distributes a certain number of cards to each player. For example, if there are 36 reaction cards, each

player in a group of four (excluding a game master) could get up to seven reaction cards, a group of five up to six, etc. Ideally, reaction cards should be left over so that players are not repeatedly dealt the same cards. After the scenario has been revealed, the players pick their reaction card and place it face-down in the middle of the table. Once everyone has placed a card, the game master looks at the cards, reads them out aloud and decides on the winner, who then reveals their identity and receives a point. Usually, at this point, discussion ensues (e.g., if there was an absurd reaction card, someone might ask "but what would you *really* do"), which should be explicitly encouraged. Subsequently the role of the game master is passed on to the next person, the reaction cards are collected, shuffled and dealt again by the new game master, who also proceeds to pick another scenario card and thus starts a new round. The time length can vary between 30-60 minutes.

*Debrief and Reflexion*
After the game, the cards are collected (to be reused) and participants are invited to share their feedback and open questions related to particularly challenging scenarios. Although the game may be of particular interest for students just beginning postdigital fieldwork, adaptations of the "Game Against Anthropology" can include specific scenarios that might be of interest to more senior researchers and provide an opportunity for exchange on practical issues, or be linked to debatable theoretical concepts. Usually, the humorous side of some scenarios or responses and the playful nature of these conversations can help to create a space of trust where discussions can take place at eye level, even among strangers with different career stages and experiences, and personal challenges can be more easily anticipated or addressed. Due to the exchangeability of scenarios and responses, and the low cost of production (printing the cards on a home printer), the original Cards Against Anthropology game can be easily adapted to any specific setting where certain ambiguous challenges are likely to arise. And, according to the feedback of those who played the game, it is not only useful, but also, simply and not trivially, fun.

## Concluding Remarks

The Masterclass was a brief although intense space of encounter between scholars at different stages of their careers and with a wealth of curricular and extra-curricular experiences – a space where collaborative teaching and learning can flourish. Inevitably, the creation of such spaces requires a significant investment of time and effort. For us, the key takeaways from the Masterclass were, first, that ethical and methodological challenges and pitfalls are important starting points for reflection and learning. Rather than being obstacles, these challenges serve as conduits for continu-

ous growth and learning. Secondly, the formulation of toolkits for effective pedagogical practice emerged as a cornerstone. These toolkits not only facilitate impactful learning experiences but can also be adapted to specific contexts and used to reflect on how to create a collaborative and embodied teaching and learning atmosphere. Finally, our engagement with emerging subfields within anthropology that are rethinking basic methodological premises has underscored the importance of constant learning and reflection as a core methodological and pedagogical goal. One important question we face now is how to ensure the best possible sustainability of the insights gained from such encounters.

One way is through opportunities such as this working paper to share concrete teaching examples and "recipes" that can subsequently be further refined. Another strategy we employed was to continue the "reflection & resource board" we introduced in class: Every time someone had an "aha moment" or wanted to share a reference or a hint, they were encouraged to write it on a separate flipchart that was accessible (and advertised) throughout the course and digitally shared after the course, along with other materials and resources. While this worked exceptionally well in class, our attempt to create a collaborative Google document to continue this exchange and living collection of inspirations, ideas and tips was less successful than we had hoped as everyone dispersed to their own academic environments. Nevertheless, such experiences live on in unexpected, less linear ways, for example when one participant shared her results of the exercise on digital profiles on Twitter on her way home[3]. For longer courses, perhaps sharing students' work and ideas (with their consent) or co-writing reflections could also be a possibility to capture the creativity that emerges from such playful encounters. As our own experience of teaching in general and examples such as the work of students taught by Matthew Durington or Christoph Bareither demonstrate, interactive teaching spaces can benefit from student participation in co-designing the syllabi (see also Najera 2021 et al.) or making their work visible, whether through websites, tweets or blog posts. As we see every day in the classroom, new generations of students come with their own innovative views on current discourses, but also with ideas for outreach, learning, and communication that we may not yet have considered. Enabling mutual learning in this context can only be a beneficial situation for everyone involved.

---
**3**  https://twitter.com/miedemamarije/status/1596492883581976576

# References

Behar, Ruth. 2022. *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Behar, Ruth, and Deborah A. Gordon (eds.). 1995. *Women Writing Culture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bluteau, Joshua M. 2021. "Legitimising digital anthropology through immersive cohabitation: Becoming an observing participant in a blended digital landscape", *Ethnography* 22(2): 267–85. https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138119881165.

Boellstorff, Tom, Bonnie Nardi, Celia Pearce, and T. L. Taylor. 2012. *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method*. Princeton, NJ; Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press.

Breidenstein, Georg, Stefan Hirschauer, Herbert Kalthoff, and Boris Nieswand. 2013. *Ethnografie: Die Praxis der Feldforschung*. Konstanz; München: UTB GmbH.

Coleman, Gabriella, and Petar Jandrić. 2019. "Postdigital Anthropology: Hacks, Hackers, and the Human Condition", *Postdigital Science and Education* 1(2): 525–50. https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-019-00065-8.

Colom, Anna. 2022. "Using WhatsApp for focus group discussions: ecological validity, inclusion and deliberation", *Qualitative Research* 22(3): 452–67. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794120986074.

Clifford, James, and George E. Marcus (Eds.). 1986. *Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography: a School of American Research advanced seminar*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Curating the Digital. 2019/20. Eine digitale Ausstellung über Kuratierpraktiken in den sozialen Medien. https://www2.hu-berlin.de/curatingthedigital/. Last accessed 17/03/2023.

El Kotni, Mounia, Lydia Z. Dixon, and Veronica Miranda. 2020. "Introduction: Co-Authorship as Feminist Writing and Practice", *Society for Cultural Anthropology* (Feb. 6, 2020). https://culanth.org/fieldsights/introduction-co-authorship-as-feminist-writing-and-practice. Last accessed 17/03/2023.

Favero, Paolo SH. 2020. "Audio-Visual-Sensory Essays in Post-Digital Times", *Anthrovision. Vaneasa Online Journal* 8.2 (September). https://doi.org/10.4000/anthrovision.7934.

Flick, Uwe, Ernst von Kardorff, and Ines Steinke (Eds.). 2006. *Qualitative Forschung*. Sage Publications.

franzke, aline shakti, Anja Bechmann, Michael Zimmer, Charles Ess, and the Association of Internet Researchers (AiOR) (2020). *Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0*. https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf. Last accessed 08/07/2023.

Goebel, Zane (Ed.). 2021. *Reimagining Rapport*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Hine, Christine. 2015. *Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, Embodied and Everyday*. London, UK; New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Jovicic, Suzana. 2022. "The Affective Triad: Smartphone in the Ethnographic Encounter", *Media and Communication* 10(3): 225-235. https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v10i3.5331.

Lawson, Caitlin E. [@caitlinlawson89]. 2022, April 12. "Teaching your undergrads about #DigitalEthnography? I've got a fun, effective activity for you! It allows students to practice ethnographic skills and emphasizes how crucial sustained engagement with a digital community is for effective and ethical research" [Tweet]. *Twitter*. https://twitter.com/caitlinlawson89/status/1513941516665322243. Last accessed 17/03/2023.

Mayring, Philipp. 2016. *Einführung in die qualitative Sozialforschung: Eine Anleitung zu qualitativem Denken*, überarb. Aufl. 6. Weinheim; Basel: Beltz.

Miller, Daniel, Elisabetta Costa, Nell Haynes, Tom McDonald, Razvan Nicolescu, Jolynna Sinanan, Juliano Spyer, Shriram Venkatraman, and Xinyuan Wang. 2016. *How the world changed social media*. London, UK: UCL Press. https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781910634493.

Miller, Daniel, and Don Slater. 2000. *The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach*. Oxford, UK: Berg Publishers.

Najera, Johanna, Gabriela Ortiz, Shani Tra, and Jennifer L. Syvertsen. 2021. "Love and Collaboration in Practice: Perspectives on Co-Teaching a Graduate Seminar during a Pandemic", Teching Tools, *Fieldsights/Society for Cultural Anthropology* (Jun. 15, 2021). https://culanth.org/fieldsights/love-and-collaboration-in-practice-perspectives-on-co-teaching-a-graduate-seminar-during-a-pandemic.

Negroponte, Nicolas. 1998. "Beyond Digital", *Wired* (Dec. 12, 1998). https://web.media.mit.edu/~nicholas/Wired/WIRED6-12.html. Last accessed 17/03/2023.

Palmberger, Monika. 2021. "Digitale Medien und Methoden. Monika Palmberger über digitale Tagebücher als 'Media of Care' und Narrative der Flucht", *Open-Media-Studies-Blog* der *Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft* (Feb. 2021). https://zfmedienwissenschaft.de/online/open-media-studies-blog/digitale-medien-und-methoden-digitale-tagebuecher. Last accessed 17/03/2023.

Petridis, Petros. 2021. "Anthropological Role-playing Games as Multimodal Pedagogical Tools: Rhetoric, Simulation and Critique!", *entanglements* 4(1): 107-125.

Pfeifer, Simone. 2021. "How Can You Approach the Field Digitally? Reflections on Using Social Media Profiles in Ethnographic Research", *Digital Ethnography Initiative Blog* (Apr. 29, 2021). https://digitalethnography.at/2021/04/29/how-can-you-approach-the-field-digitally-reflections-on-using-social-media-profiles-in-ethnographic-research/. Last accessed 17/03/2023.

Przybylski, Liz. 2020. *Hybrid Ethnography: Online, Offline, and In Between*. Los Angeles, CA et.al.: SAGE.

Rosaldo, Renato. 1989. *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Shelton, Sam. 2016. "Towson students, professor develop 'Cards Against Anthropology'", *The Tower of light: Towson's campus and community news source*. https://thetowerlight.com/students-prof-develop-cards-against-anthropology/.

Spradley, James P. 1979. *The Ethnographic Interview*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Spradley, James P. 1980. *Participant Observation*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Supper, Alexandra. 2023. "Practising participant observation with a game of Uno", *Teaching Anthropology*. https://teachinganthropology.org/2023/01/23/practicing-participant-observation-with-a-game-of-uno/. Last accessed 17/03/2023.

Stodulka, Thomas, Samia Dinkelaker, and Ferdinand Thajib (Eds.). 2019. "Affective dimensions of fieldwork and ethnography", *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 23(1): 142-145. https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2021.2020890.

Ter Laan, Nina. 2023. "'Assalamu 'alaykum, Can We Add This Sister?' WhatsApp Group Chat as a Homemaking Practice among Dutch-Speaking Muhajirat in Morocco", *Religion and Gender* 13(2): 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1163/18785417-01302006.

**General Teaching Resources**

Society for Cultural Anthropology "Teaching Tools":
https://culanth.org/fieldsights/contributed-content/teaching-
    tools.
Journal for Teaching Anthropology (RAI): https://teachinglearnin-
    ganthro.org.
"Teaching Culture" Blog: http://www.utpteachingculture.com/
A sampling of games with themes related to anthropology: https://
    anthropologycon.org/games/.
Kula Games Collective: https://www.volkskunde.org/aktuelles/
    newsdetail?news_id=1641065260427.
Michael Wesch (YouTube): https://www.youtube.com/channel/
    UChaQjN6tViOSPvY9LLaq_Mg.
Why we post: the Anthropology of Media. Futurelearn Course in 8 lan-
    guages: https://extendstore.ucl.ac.uk/catalog?pagename=why-
    we-post.

## Appendix

### A: Observation Protocol for focus group discussions

*Template – adapt to your own topic and setting*
**Recorder:**
**Date and time:**
**Location:**
**Who is present** *(if applicable: please note only with first name/anonymised)***:**

| Themes | Arguments | Persons | Visual interaction (mimic, facial expressions, gestures, reactions) | Speech (audio) | Interactions with the group | Other remarks/ personal impressions |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |

### B: Cards Against Digital Anthropology



https://digitalethnography.at/cards-against-digital-anthropology.

## Acknowledgments

## Authors

**Simone Pfeifer** is a postdoctoral researcher in the RTG "connecting-excluding: Cultural Dynamics Beyond Globalized Networks" at the University of Cologne. Her work explores digital and visual media practices in post-migrant societies from a critical perspective. Her previous research focused on transnational social relationships between Senegal and Germany, securitization of Islam, political violence and ethical challenges in ethnographic research. Website: https://simone-pfeifer.de.

**Suzana Jovicic** is a lecturer and ESPRIT (FWF) Fellow at the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Vienna. She specialises in digital, design and psychological anthropology, as well as in participatory and interdisciplinary research. She is a co-convenor of the European Network for Psychological Anthropology and a co-founder of the Digital Ethnography Initiative. Website: https://ksa.univie.ac.at/institut/mitarbeiterinnen/post-docs/jovicic-suzana.