



# Faculté des sciences économiques, sociales et politiques

**ESPO**

SOC2442

**Political anthropology: the institution and transformation of groups**

[30h] 3.5 credits

This course is taught in the 2nd semester

**Teacher(s):** Pierre-Joseph Laurent  
**Language:** french  
**Level:** 2nd cycle course

## Aims

To enable students, on the basis of participative observation (ethnological survey), to understand the (material and symbolic) organisational heritage of groups and communities in the north and south situated between the poles of the family (kinship group) and the state (citizens).

## Main themes

First theme: Epistemological considerations. Conditions of observation, and the empirical bases of interpretation: exposition of the broad outline of conducting participative observation (ethnological surveys) and of the principles governing the writing of a monograph.

Second theme: On the basis of expositions of concrete situations relating to ethnographic domains: analysis of institution processes and of changes in groups.

Third theme: Expositions of the theories of the leading mainstream and contemporary writers on political anthropology.

## Content and teaching methods

First part: Epistemological considerations. Conditions of observation, and the empirical bases of interpretation.

1. Epistemological issues raised by participation and interpretation.
2. The organisation of ethnographical research.

Second part: The institution of groups.

1. The imaginary production of identity.
2. The organisation of a group: when the division of the world is the vision of the world.
3. The group and practical meaning: group sociality.

Third group: Groups facing up to change.

1. The group as a receptacle for identity slippage.
2. Migrations: trajectories, interactions and initiatives.
3. Conflicts and violence in groups: the question of 'autochthonous' minorities.
4. Towards a theory of cunning.

A lecture course based on a dialogue, itself based on students' experiences. The course relies on examples drawn from African and European ethnographical fields, and on visual supports (e.g. videos, transparencies and slides) that conceptualise the lectures.

**Other information (prerequisite, evaluation (assessment methods), course materials recommended readings, ...)**

Assessment will consist of 7 10 pages of written work. It will focus on the concrete observation of a group chosen personally by the student. This work will have to demonstrate an understanding of an ethnographical approach in a framework of group analysis. It will draw its inspiration from, or else criticise, ideas addressed during the course, and references to texts listed in the reading portfolio will aim to situate development in currents in contemporary thinking.

Reading portfolio.

Every year, the best ten pieces of work will be published in the unit's 'Ethnographie du quotidien' series.

**Other credits in programs**

<b>ANTR3DS</b>	Diplôme d'études spécialisées en anthropologie	(3.5 credits)
<b>SOC2M1/AN</b>	Master en sociologie et anthropologie (anthropologie)	(3.5 credits)