



The Ethnography and Social Theory colloquium presents

The Interpretation of Text Messages: Boundaries and the Interpretive Labor of Fieldwork Relationships

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4 – 5:30 PM

Room 105, 10 Sachem Street

Ethnography has been described as “the interpretation of cultures.” That work — making interpretive arguments about culture — is built out of interpersonal relationships. In the wake of critiques of anthropological involvement in colonialism and insufficient attention to power, communion with one’s interlocutors has become an implicit ideal for those interpersonal relationships, with depictions of close friendship used to bolster ethnographic credibility. However, much of the labor of fieldwork, perhaps especially for women working among men, consists of interpreting another’s advances, especially those in which there is a *latent*, *nascent*, *possible*, but not *necessary* sexual element. In this talk I use the interpretation of advances to explore the negative effects of the communion model of fieldwork and the benefits of instead recognizing the essential role that boundaries play in all ethnographic encounters.

