



Walking and Knowing Methods in Sensory Anthropology

Off the
Beaten
Track

OBERLIN
COLLEGE & CONSERVATORY

General Information

What role do our senses play in how we make sense of things? As anthropologists we seek to gain new understandings of the world through participant-observation, embodied experiences that are always mediated through sensory perception. However, people sense the world in different ways, both because of physical differences in our bodies and cultural variation in what how we understand and use our perceptual faculties. How can an anthropologist gain better awareness of how they and others sense the world?

This thematic unit, which can be easily tailored to enhance a wide range of individual research projects, provides an opportunity to tackle such questions through particular attention to walking as a method for exploring the role of the senses in anthropological knowing. Anthropologists have recently begun to carefully consider the role that walking – alone and with others, with ease or with effort, along well-marked paths and on routes that go against the social grain – can play in our processes of sensory engagement with social and natural worlds.

Participants in this unit will be encouraged to consciously experience and reflect on their movements through Gozo's rocky coastal trails, narrow interior valleys, and dense villages and cities and to experiment with ways of recording and mapping not only routes and landscapes, but also the sensory experiences of moving through them and the social processes through which these movements are linked to memories, stories, and relationships.

Goals

- Learn to attend to how one's own culturally specific ways of sensing affect ethnographic fieldwork.
- Explore methods for understanding alternative ways of sensing.

- Experiment with how attention to movement can enhance engagement with people and places.
- Experiment with means of communicating about sensory experience, both in the context of face-to-face fieldwork encounters, and in the processes of "writing up" fieldnotes or reports.

Directed at

Nuanced attention to sensory ecologies can enhance any ethnographic fieldwork project. Any student may participate in these sessions in order to develop strategies for engaging in their individual field sites. In order to be part of this unit, please request the application form for the Off the Beaten Track program on our website. Please note that it is mandatory to contact the leading researcher beforehand.

Leading researcher

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Program Cost

3.250 euros
Discounts and scholarships are available.

Application & information

www.anthropologyfieldschool.org

