

## Visual Anthropology at Temple U

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Temple is located just north of the center of downtown Philadelphia and occupies two stops of the moist, 12 mile long Broad Street subway line. Most of Temple's 30,000 students commute to school, many from New Jersey. Education is among Philadelphia's major exports. A hundred colleges and universities are located in the region. It is a rare book or journal that cannot be found somewhere close-to-hand in one of the area's many libraries.

Temple Anthropology's visual program is the oldest in the US, founded in late 1960s. The program first came to international attention through the efforts of Jay Ruby, who for many years directed the annual conferences at Temple on Ethnographic Film and Culture and Communication. Ruby was joined early in the department's visual career by Richard Chalfen, and now recently by Jayasinhji ("Bapa") Jhala. East Africanist Peter Rigby has also contributed substantially to the visual and analytical acuity of students in the department, as have the seminars of such visiting notables as Tom Blakely, Kristin Koptiuch, Michael Silverstein, and filmmaker Hubert Smith.

Currently, Anthropology at Temple only accepts Ph.D. applicants, although master's degrees in culture and communication are still awarded. All entering graduate students are required to take an overview course in each of the 4 fields of anthropology. Those who pursue the visual track are also required to pass a two semester seminar, Approaches to the Anthropology of Visual Communication, currently taught collaboratively by Ruby and Jhalla. Since the masters degree requires 8 courses (24 units), MA-level students have little overall coursework flexibility, but they often elect at least 1 production course from Temple's well respected Department of Radio Television and Film. The anthropology Ph.D. degree, which requires 16 courses (48 units), allows more opportunities in the department's Visual Study tracks, whether Public Culture and Museums (new), Mass Media and Aesthetics, Ethnographic Film or Photography.

Richard Chalfen will return to Philadelphia and Temple in Fall 1995, after a two year stint at Temple, Japan. He will take over the departments new undergraduate emphasis in visual anthropology and among other subjects, will teach cross-listed courses in the topic he loves best, nonprofessional media making. (Chalfen wrote a chapter in the Worth Adair path-breaker, Through Navajo Eyes. He is author of Snapshot Versions of Life and Turning Leaves: The Photograph Collections of Two Japanese American Families.) Ruby offers courses in ethnographic film (he recently edited a volume on John Marshall and one on Jean Rouch) and in still photography (his Secure the Shadows: Photography and Death has recently been published). Jhala presently teaches the Problems in Visual Production seminar concentrating this semester on class collaboration in an ethnographic video production about boxing. (Jhala has written several essays on indigenous media and is currently producing video portraits of Tim Asch, John Marshall and Jean Rouch, along with a collaborative video Whose Painting?, about a number of sixteenth-century and later Indian Rajput paintings now held in a

private Philadelphia collection).

The visual anthropology track primarily trains media analysts, but it offers students access to a variety of technical production facilities as well. Students may enroll in courses from the Department of Radio, Television and Film, as well as Tyler School of Art. In addition, Anthropology owns a Hi-8 and two S-VHS One-chip video cameras, and has recently acquired a PC-based FAST Electronic Video Machine that edits interformat video. Digital media are not a part of Anthropology's current offerings, although Radio-Television-Film does provide a few introductory courses in visual production.

Tuition at Temple is comparatively low, currently about \$300 a unit. The cost of living in Philadelphia is also low by national standards. As elsewhere in American graduate education, however, student funding has become increasingly difficult to obtain in recent years. In 1994-95, 12 teaching assistantships were granted to first year anthropology graduate students. Four advanced graduates were given "Future Faculty" teaching positions (with full responsibility) and a few university fellowships have been granted as well. An occasional \$5000 PhD write-up grant is awarded by the university to anthropology students.

The quality of life in Philadelphia is made more pleasant by an astonishing ethnic and blue-collar mix of students on campus and by the city's extraordinary multicultural enclaves, its great music and art scenes, its active Independent Film Video Association and its proximity to New York and Washington, D.C. The tremendous educational resources of the Philadelphia area make students' exploitation of non-Temple course-offerings and faculty very feasible.

On the negative side, recent administrative announcements and warnings about the disappearance of expected TA-ships (and the closing of a few graduate programs Anthropology definitely not included) has sent fur flying across the Schuylkill River. In comparison to 1990, when Temple had a debilitating faculty strike, life on campus is now serene. For students seeking employment, levels of film and video production in the area are quite low, since most of the local independent work is shunted to New York. Post-graduate visual-production aspirants may do well to relocate there (or to Los Angeles).

Nevertheless, visual studies at Temple, as elsewhere, have blossomed in Anthropology's decade-long crisis of representation. Half of Temple's 70 graduate applicants this year seek the visual track. (It is anticipated that 7 will be accepted.) Current graduate students are engaged in a variety of fascinating analyses. Jason S Greenburg, third year, is designing a dissertation on contradictory museum representations of sedentary Negev-Bedouins in Israel. He plans a companion CD-ROM containing his Arabic interviews. Lindsey Powell, a second year student, whose TA-ship is his service as the departments Media Lab coordinator, is in the process of collaboration with Jhala on several video productions. Pamila Gupta has just returned from Goa in southwest India, where she is producing a video life-history as well as writing her dissertation on the sacred bodily dismemberment of Saint Francis de Sales.

Past PhDs from the department include SVA Board member Najwa Adra, whose dissertation explored the transformation of Yemeni dance; Michael Intintoli, who dissected the production of a television soap opera; Diane Freedman, who

studied dance in Romanian courtship and marriage; Mary Strong, who investigated New Yorican murals; and Peter Biella, who critiqued scientific ethnographic film theories. Among many now-professional Masters graduates are the successful filmmakers Steve Olsson and Scott Andrews. Their nationally broadcast Faces of War about Afghanistan won an Emmy award. Kristen Riggs, a recent MA produced a strong ethnographic film, George Washington Slept Here in which she and her colleagues play themselves as eighteenth-century "reenactresses" and "enactors" employed by Valley Forge National Monument.

After I roamed the second-floor halls of the Department of Anthropology for two days last week, my impression is that spirits are as high as I have seen them at Temple since I first set foot there 20 years ago. The principle concern among students, after obligatory objections to required coursework, is the dwindling of financial aid. Otherwise, the department seems in very good shape.