

The Mansueto Institute Lunch Colloquium Series



Ethnography over Time: Urban Ruptures in Evidence from the Field

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This talk juxtaposes different moments in time in the same urban space to examine how ethnography adapts to social and political change in the city. Despite the continuous change and uncertainty of city life, urban ethnography typically describes some “present” moment. This talk reflects on how anthropological research is both constrained and enabled by the temporality of its methods. To do so, it draws on a long-term ethnographic study of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from 2013 to 2019. It shows how longitudinal ethnographic evidence casts earlier findings in a new light, revealing conclusions to be dynamic rather than fixed. The talk traces local citizen relations to two government interventions in the same two favelas located on the hills of Rio de Janeiro’s wealthy South Zone over time: urban upgrading and military pacification. Amidst the uncertainty of shifting social and political alliances, there are tangible continuities with traceable effects, such as an ongoing environmental risk that neither government nor non-state actors appear to address in the present. Thus, the condition of urban life becomes a lens through which ethnographic constraints can become a site of inquiry rather than a methodological limitation.

Tuesday, January 28th
Searle Chemical Laboratory
Suite 240A
12:30 - 1:30pm
Lunch will be provided