

The Department of Political Science of St Aloysius College (Autonomous) Mangaluru, organised a lecture entitled “Introduction to Ethnographic Research Methods and case study of Disaster recovery

in Sri Lanka” on January 9th, 2024 in the Auditorium (AR 201), Arrupe block. It was delivered by Dr Elizabeth Bittel, Assistant Professor of Sociology/ Anthropology Department at SUNY Cortland and a visiting scholar in the South Asia Program at Cornell University. Dr Rose Veera D’Souza welcomed the gathering consisting of the third year Political Science students. Miss Khushi Kumari introduced the speaker of the session.

Having experienced the horrors of disasters and the trepidation that accompanies it, Dr Elizabeth Bittel found interest and inspiration to learn environment sociology during her college days. She was also inspired by the measures taken by the community of Florida to manage the after effects of the Tsunami. Defining ethnography as a research method, understanding research ethics and research positionality and understanding ethnographic research through a case study on disaster recovery encompassed the objectives of the session conducted by Dr Bittel. Dr Elizabeth explained about the ‘Praxis Oriented Scholarship’ where the term Praxis refers to a particular philosophy used to guide and conduct research. The researchers involved in the Praxis oriented research involve the community or group under study in the research process. She also taught the students to identify or spot a sociological research question through simplified and easy instructions. In relation to the methods of sociological research, Dr Elizabeth explained the quantitative and qualitative research methods. Talking about the ethnographic research method, she explained that it combined both quantitative and qualitative methods. Through this explanation, we understood that the ethnographic method of research is systematic, scientific and rigorous; flexible, non-linear or iterative process; ethical, labour-intensive and time-intensive and limited in generalizability. She informed the students about the research ethics (to which the American Researchers are legally bound). It includes: informing the respondents about the potential harm in participating in the research, having informed consent and no deception. She also explained how a researcher’s positionality changes when there is a change in the social setting or context. People’s perceptions are

bound to change as there is a change in the setting where the research is conducted.

The spotlight of this session was occupied by the case study on Tsunami in Sri Lanka in the year 2008.

Dr Bittel’s interest lies in the post-emergency stage and in noting how the communities recover from

the drastic effects of the disaster. She explained the case study by defining four key concepts, i.e., Disaster, Community, Recovery and Social capital. The 2008 Tsunami of Sri Lanka took place with the Eelam war in its backdrop. Dr Bittel has spent years experiencing the culture, practices and social setting of Sri Lanka and observed the pattern of recovery between the two communities of Sri Lanka post the 2008 Tsunami. While the Thiruchendur community didn't make a great recovery, the Kattankudy community made impressive recovery in the same time period. Through this case study, Dr Bittel helped us realise the role and importance of communities in recovery stage of the disaster management. Dr Bittel works with the aim of improving the condition and assisting the people in building a more equitable and just society. The session was accompanied by a Q and A session where Dr Bittel answered the questioned posed by the students to the best of her knowledge and in an insightful manner.

Miss Jane Gonsalves proposed the vote of thanks.



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Department of Political Science

Organizes

A WORKSHOP ON RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

 Friday,
January 19, 2024

 10:50 AM to 12:35 PM

 **SANIDHYA HALL,
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New York College)

