

**SARAH BESKY**

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Cornell University  
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**EDUCATION**

2012 Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison, Department of Anthropology  
2006 M.A., University of Wisconsin-Madison, Department of Anthropology  
2003 B.A., Connecticut College; New London, CT

**ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS**

2020 - Associate Professor, Department of Global Labor & Work. ILR School, Cornell University  
Director, South Asia Program, Einaudi Center (2023-2026)  
*Graduate Fields:* Anthropology, Development Studies  
*Affiliations:* South Asia Program, Environment & Sustainability

2015 - 2020 Charles Evans Hughes 1881 Assistant Professor of Anthropology & International and Public Affairs. Department of Anthropology and Watson Institute, Brown University

2012 - 2015 Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology and School of Natural Resources and Environment; University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI

2012 - 2015 Postdoctoral Fellow, Michigan Society of Fellows

**PUBLICATIONS*****Single-Authored Books***

2020. *Tasting Qualities: The Past and Future of Tea*. Oakland: University of California Press. Atelier: Ethnographic Inquiry for the Twenty-First Century.

**Reviewed in:** [Allegra Laboratory](#) (Book Symposium, October 2020); *American Anthropologist*; *American Ethnologist* 49:1; *Anthropological Quarterly* 95:1; *Anthropology of Work Review* (March 2022); *CHOICE* (January 2021); *Digest: A Journal of Foodways & Culture* 9:1; *Food, Culture, and Society* 24:3; *Nature* vol. 579; *Isis* 112:2; *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 52:1; *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 27:3; *Organizational Studies* (July 2022); *Tea Journey Magazine* (July 2020); *Times Literary Supplement* (August 21, 2020); *The Lamp Magazine* (May 2021)

2014. *The Darjeeling Distinction: Labor and Justice on Fair-Trade Tea Plantations in India*. Berkeley: University of California Press. California Studies in Food and Culture.

---- Winner, 2014 Society for Economic Anthropology (SEA) Book Award

---- Honorable Mention, 2015 Society for Anthropology of Work Book Award

---- 2018. Chinese translation of *The Darjeeling Distinction* with new preface. Translated by Huaqing Huang. Tsinghua University Press.

**Reviewed in:** [Allegra Laboratory](#) (May 2015); *Asian Ethnology* 78:1; *American Anthropologist* 117:1; *American Ethnologist* 42:3; *Comparative Labor Law & Policy Journal* 33; *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 53(3); *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* 52; *Food & Foodways* 25:1; *Gastronomica*

15:1; *Himalaya* 39:1; *Human Ecology* 43:3; *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 55:4; *International Sociology* 31:2; *Journal of Agrarian Change* 16:2; *Journal of Asian Studies* 71:1; *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 22:2; *Mountain Research and Development* 35:2; *Pacific Affairs* 88:2; *The Pangean* (February 2019); *Review of Agricultural, Food, and Environmental Studies* 97:1 [reprinted on "[Culture and Capitalism](#)" Blog]; *Social Anthropology* 23:2; *Taiwan Journal of Anthropology* 12:1 (in Chinese); "[Tea for Me Please](#)" Blog (July 2014); *Work, Employment & Society* 30:5.

### **Edited Books**

2019. *How Nature Works: Rethinking Labor on a Troubled Planet*. Sarah Besky and Alex Blanchette, editors. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research (SAR) Press.

---- Winner, 2021 Society for the Anthropology of Work Book Prize

**Reviewed in:** *Anthropology of Work Review* 42:2; *CHOICE* 57:9; *Current Anthropology* 61:6; *Environment and Society* 11:1; *Economic Geography* 96:5; *Journal of Anthropological Research* 77:1; [Sfcrownsnest.info](#) (March 2020)

### **Other Edited Collections**

2022. "Multivocal Spaces: An Exploration of Everyday Life in the Darjeeling Himalaya" special issue of *Himalaya* 41(1), co-edited with Dipti Tamang and Rinzi Lama

2018. "The Naturalization of Work" collection for the Society for Cultural Anthropology's "Theorizing the Contemporary" series, co-edited with Alex Blanchette [\[LINK\]](#)

### **Articles**

Forthcoming. "Reproducing the Plantation." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Essay for Forum series on the "Plantationocene," edited by Wendy Wolford [Online First]

2022. "Lobsters, Whales, and Traps: The Politics of Endangerment in the Gulf of Maine." *Environment and Planning E* 5(4): 1994-2010.

2021. "The Plantation's Outsides: The Work of Settlement in Kalimpong, India." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 63(2): 433-463.

2021. "Teawords: Experiments with Quality in Industrial Tea Production." *American Anthropologist* 123(1): 96-107.

2020. "Empire and Indigestion: Materializing Tannins in the Indian Tea Industry." *Social Studies of Science* 50(3): 398-417.

2017. "Fixity: On the Inheritance and Maintenance of Tea Plantation Houses in Darjeeling, India." *American Ethnologist* 44(4): 617-631.

2017. "The Land in Gorkhaland: On the Edges of Belonging in Darjeeling, India." *Environmental Humanities* 9(1): 18-39.

2017. "Tea as 'Hero Crop'? Embodied Algorithms and Industrial Reform in India." *Science as Culture*. 26(1): 11-31.
2016. "Placing Plants in Territory" (co-authored with Jonathan Padwe). *Environment and Society: Advances in Research* 7: 9-28.
2016. "The Future of Price: Communicative Infrastructures and the Financialization of Indian Tea." *Cultural Anthropology* 31(1): 4-29.
2015. "Agricultural Justice, Abnormal Justice? Fair Trade's Plantation Problem." *Antipode* 47(5): 1141-1160.
2015. "Looking for Work: Placing Labor in Food Studies" (co-authored with Sandy Brown). *Labor: Studies of Working-Class History of the Americas* 12(1-2): 19-43.
2014. "The Labor of *Terroir* and the *Terroir* of Labor: Geographical Indication on Darjeeling Tea Plantations." *Agriculture and Human Values* 31(1): 83-96.  
---- Won the 2014 Anthropology & Environment Society Junior Scholar Award  
---- Republished in: Melissa Caldwell, ed. 2021. *Why Food Matters*. Bloomsbury.
2008. "Can a Plantation be Fair? Paradoxes and Possibilities in Fair Trade Darjeeling Tea Certification." *Anthropology of Work Review* 29(1): 1-9.

### **Book Chapters**

- Forthcoming. "Seaweed." In *Solarities: Inflections and Refractions*, edited by Cymene Howe, Amelia Moore, and Jeff Diamanti. Santa Barbara, CA: Punctum Books (open access).
- Forthcoming. "Plantations." *Oxford Bibliographies in Anthropology*, edited by John Jackson. New York: Oxford University Press.
2022. "Tea." In *The Routledge Companion to Northeast India*, edited by Jelle J.P. Wouters and Tanka B. Subba. London: Routledge.
2020. "Can't Get There from Here? Writing Place and Moving Narratives." In *Writing Anthropology: Essays on Craft and Commitment*, Carole McGranahan, editor. Pp. 83-86. Durham: Duke University Press.
2020. "Monoculture." In *Anthropocene Unseen: A Lexicon*. Cymene Howe and Anand Pandian, editors. Pp. 277-280. Santa Barbara, CA: Punctum Books. (open access)
2019. "Introduction: The Fragility of Work" (co-authored with Alex Blanchette). In *How Nature Works: Rethinking Labor on a Troubled Planet*, Besky and Blanchette, editors. Pp. 1-22. Santa Fe: SAR Press.
2019. "Exhaustion and Endurance in Sick Landscapes." In *How Nature Works: Rethinking Labor on a Troubled Planet*, Besky and Blanchette, editors. Pp. 23-40. Santa Fe: SAR Press.

2018. "Subnational Occupations: Managing Darjeeling Tea." In *Darjeeling Reconsidered: Histories, Politics, and Environments*. Townsend Middleton and Sara Shneiderman, editors. Pp. 197-218. New Delhi: Oxford University Press India.

2010. "Colonial Pasts and Fair Trade Futures: Changing Modes of Production and Regulation on Darjeeling Tea Plantations." In *Fair Trade and Social Justice: Global Ethnographies*. Sarah Lyon and Mark Moberg, editors. Pp. 97-122. New York: NYU Press.

### **Essays and Commentaries**

Forthcoming. "Teawords: Rendering Quality in the Indian Tea Industry." Invited essay for *25*, a magazine published by the Specialty Coffee Association. (April 2023 issue)

Forthcoming. "Agrarian Crisis, Affect, and Accumulation." Invited commentary essay in *Dialogues in Human Geography*. [Online first]

2023. "Plantation Nation." *Cultural Anthropology* Fieldsites series on the "Plantationocene," edited by Maan Barua, Rebeca Ibáñez Martín, and Marthe Achtnich. January 24 [\[LINK\]](#)

2022. "Stories of Everyday Life in the Darjeeling Hills." Guest editorial commentary for special issue of *Himalaya* 41(1): 8-11.

2021. "Opening Access to AAA's Publishing Future" (co-written with Ilana Gershon, Alex Nading, Christopher Nelson, Katie Nelson, Heather Paxson, and Brad Weiss). Society for Cultural Anthropology "Fieldsites" essay, June 30 [\[LINK\]](#)

Translated into Chinese on "Tying Knots." September 2021 [\[LINK\]](#)

2021. "A Dress Code for the Revolution." *Cultural Anthropology* Hot Spots series on "Majoritarian and Populist Politics in South Asia," edited by Radhika Govindrajan, Bhoomika Joshi, and Mubbashir Rizvi. March 16 [\[LINK\]](#)

2020. "What's in a Cuppa?" *Queen's Quarterly* (Winter): 554-565.

2020. "Afterword: Work, Place, and the Value of Ethnography." *Anthropology of Work Review* 41(2): 129-132.

2018. "Sickness" In "The Naturalization of Work," edited by Besky and Blanchette. Theorizing the Contemporary, *Cultural Anthropology* website. July 26 [\[LINK\]](#)

Translated into Chinese on "Tying Knots." May 2021 [\[LINK\]](#)

2018. "Introduction: The Naturalization of Work." In "The Naturalization of Work," edited by Besky and Blanchette. Theorizing the Contemporary, *Cultural Anthropology* website. July 26 [\[LINK\]](#)

2017. "Monoculture." In "Lexicon for an Anthropocene Yet Unseen," edited by Cymene Howe and Anand Pandian. Theorizing the Contemporary, *Cultural Anthropology* website. June 28. [\[LINK\]](#)

2017. Preface to the Chinese edition of *The Darjeeling Distinction*. Chapati Mystery. May 16. [\[LINK\]](#)

2017. “Ten Questions with Sarah Besky.” Chapati Mystery. January 27 [\[LINK\]](#)
2016. (with Ned Dostaler) “The Materiality of Finance: An Interview with Sarah Besky.” Dialogues, *Cultural Anthropology* website. March 17. [\[LINK\]](#)
2016. Response to Daniel Münster’s review of *The Darjeeling Distinction* on Allegra Laboratory. January 25. [\[LINK\]](#)
2015. “Inheriting the Hill Station.” Essay for “Edge Effects.” Center for Culture, History, and Environment, University of Wisconsin-Madison ([www.edgeeffects.net](http://www.edgeeffects.net)). May 19. [\[LINK\]](#)
2015. “Can’t Get There from Here? Writing Place and Moving Narratives.” Essay in the “Writer’s Workshop” Series on “Savage Minds” ([www.savageminds.org](http://www.savageminds.org)). March 26. [\[LINK\]](#)
2014. “The Promise of Fair Trade for Plantation Laborers.” *For a Better World*. Fair World Project: Portland, Oregon. Issue 9 (Fall): 15-16. (<http://fairworldproject.org>) [\[LINK\]](#)

#### **Invited Book Reviews**

- Forthcoming. Review of Tania Li and Pujo Semedi. *Plantation Life: Corporate Occupation in Indonesia’s Oil Palm Zone* (Duke University Press, 2021). *Anthropological Quarterly*.
- Forthcoming. Review of Sophie Chao. In *the Shadow of the Palms: More than Human Becomings in West Papua* (Duke University Press, 2022). *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*.
2022. Review of Arnab Dey. *Tea Environments and Plantation Culture: Imperial Disarray in Eastern India* (Cambridge University Press, 2018). *Agricultural History* 96(4): 627-628.
2020. Review of Mythri Jegathesan. *Tea and Solidarity: Tamil Women and Work in Postwar Sri Lanka* (University of Washington Press, 2019). *Anthropology of Work Review* 41(2): 140-141.
2020. Review of Erika Rappaport. *Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton University Press, 2017). *Journal of Asian Studies* 79(2): 524-526.
2018. Review of Sarah Ives. *Steeped in Heritage: The Racial Politics of South African Rooibos Tea* (Duke University Press, 2017). *Environment and Society* 9: 175-176.
2017. Review of Townsend Middleton. *The Demands of Recognition: State Anthropology and Ethnopolitics in Darjeeling* (Stanford University Press, 2015). *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 23(2): 432-433.
2016. Review of Kamran Asdar Ali. *Communism in Pakistan: Politics and Class Activism, 1947-1972* (I.B. Tauris, 2015). For Chapati Mystery book forum. [\[LINK\]](#)
2016. Review of Jeffrey Witsoe. *Democracy against Development: Lower Caste Politics and Political Modernity in Postcolonial India* (University of Chicago Press, 2013). *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*. [\[LINK\]](#)

2016. Review of Andrew Willford. *Tamils and the Haunting of Justice: History and Recognition in Malaysia's Plantations* (University of Hawaii Press, 2014). *American Ethnologist* 43(1): 173-174.
2015. Review of *Empire of Tea: The Asian Leaf that Conquered the World* (Reaktion Books, 2015). In *Times Literary Supplement*. 7 October.
2015. Review of Jinghong Zhang. *Puer Tea: Ancient Caravans and Urban Chic* (University of Washington Press, 2013). In *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 21(3): 696-697.
2015. Review of David Gellner, editor. *Borderland Lives in Northern South Asia* (Duke University Press, 2013). *American Ethnologist* 42(1): 195-196.
2014. Review of Paige West. *From Modern Production to Imagined Primitive: The Social World of Coffee from Papua New Guinea* (Duke University Press, 2012). *Journal of Anthropological Research* 70(3): 457-458.
2013. Review of Jayeeta Sharma. *Empire's Garden: Assam and the Making of India* (Duke University Press, 2011). *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 13(3): 81-82.
2013. Review of Neil White. *Company Towns: Corporate Order and Community*. (University of Toronto Press, 2012). *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55(4): 1021-1022.

#### **Other Publications**

2017. Darjeeling Studies Collective. 2017. "Op-Ed: What's Brewing in Darjeeling." *The Hindu*, July 25. (An international scholarly collaboration and co-written piece.) [[LINK](#)]
2013. "Fair for All? Plantations and the Future of Fair Trade." *Minpaku Anthropology Newsletter* (Issue Theme: "The Anthropological Study of Fair Trade"). Osaka, Japan: National Museum of Ethnology. No. 36. [Invited Essay]
2013. "Anthropology and Environment Society's Dissertation Workshop." *Anthropology News* 54 (2).
2012. "Kolkata, India." In *The Encyclopedia of Consumption and Waste: The Social Science of Garbage*, Bill Rathje and Geoffrey J. Golson, eds. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
2012. "Dump Digging." In *The Encyclopedia of Consumption and Waste: The Social Science of Garbage*, Bill Rathje and Geoffrey J. Golson, eds. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
2008. "Indian Labor Law and the Limits of Fair Trade in Darjeeling Tea Production." *Darjeeling Times* 1(8): 15-16.
2008. "Old Grievances." Letter to the Editor in response to "Unrest in India's Hill Country." *New York Times* (Sunday Travel Section). July 13.
2007. "Rural Vulnerability and Tea Plantation Migration in Nepal and Darjeeling." *Himalayan Research Papers*. Nepal Study Center, University of New Mexico [Research Report]

## FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

### *External Research Fellowships*

- 2023-2025 National Science Foundation, Senior Fellowship, Science and Technology Studies Program
- 2022-2023 American Institute of Indian Studies/National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship
- 2022 Central New York Humanities Corridor Grant for “Social and Cultural Sustainability in South Asia.” (with Iftikhar Dadi, Daniel Bass [Cornell], Mona Bhan [Syracuse], and Llerena Searle [Rochester]). Supplemental funding for “The Next Monsoon” conference.
- 2021-2023 National Endowment for the Humanities Collaborative Research Grant (with Iftikhar Dadi (PI) Sonal Kullar, and Rupali Gupte) for “The Next Monsoon,” a conference on climate change in South Asia and associated publications.
- 2019 Hunt Postdoctoral Fellowship, Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research
- 2016-2017 School for Advanced Research (SAR) Advanced Seminar Grant for “How Nature Works.” (co-organized with Alex Blanchette and Naisargi Dave)
- 2015-2017 European Commission Marie Curie Actions Fellowship [Declined]
- 2012-2015 Michigan Society of Fellows Postdoctoral Fellowship
- 2011-2012 Andrew W. Mellon Foundation/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship
- 2011-2012 American Association of University Women (AAUW) Dissertation Fellowship [Declined]
- 2008-2009 American Institute of Indian Studies Junior Fellowship
- 2007-2008 Fulbright Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship – India
- 2007-2008 Fulbright Institute for International Education Fellowship – India [Declined]

## HONORS AND PRIZES

- 2021 Society for the Anthropology of Work Book Prize
- 2014 Anthropology & Environment Society Junior Scholar Award
- 2014 Society for Economic Anthropology Book Award (awarded every 3 years)
- 2012 Miller-Hitchcock-Weinstein Award, Department of Anthropology, UW-Madison
- 2011 Dor Bahadur Bista Prize, Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies
- 2011 Finalist for the Early Excellence in Teaching Award, UW-Madison

- 2011 University Housing Honored Instructor Award, UW-Madison
- 2011 Honorable Mention, Genevieve Gorst Herfurth Award for Outstanding Research in Social Studies, Office of the Secretary of the Faculty, UW-Madison
- 2010 Roy A. Rappaport Graduate Student Prize Winner, Anthropology & Environment Section of the American Anthropological Association

## **COURSES TAUGHT**

### ***At Cornell University***

“Food and Work.” [ILR undergraduate lecture course, cross-listed with Anthropology, Environment & Sustainability]

“Money, Work, and Power.” [ILR sophomore writing seminar]

“Anthropology of Work” [ILR graduate seminar]