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REVIEW

Cool Anthropology: How to Engage the Public with Academic Research, edited by Kristina Baines and Victoria Costa
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Baines and Costa's *Cool Anthropology* is a valuable resource for anthropologists who want to engage with publics and collaborators beyond academia. While the title may make it sound like just a fun, how-to guide to public scholarship, the book is undergirded by an important moral imperative: anthropologists have a responsibility to share their research with varied publics outside the academic sphere. The volume convincingly makes the case for "cool anthropology," which the authors of chapter 11 define as "unconventional ways of disseminating credible anthropological content" (179). What makes the book even more compelling is that it doesn't romanticize the project of public scholarship, but rather offers practical insights and critical reflections on the challenges and barriers to doing this work.

The book is divided into four parts. Part One, Imperatives, focuses on the urgency of public-facing work and the importance of working with compressed timelines for publication. Part Two, The World Wide Web, highlights projects that use online spaces to reach different audiences. Part Three, Reimagining Public Spaces, emphasizes the classroom as a powerful public space and underscores the overlap between innovative teaching and public-facing scholarship. And Part Four, Creatives, spotlights the use of art and collaborations with artists to engage the public. This organization is helpful for readers who might have a particular project or medium in mind, and the chapters are linked together by common themes that appear throughout the book.

Each of the chapters offers specific ideas and advice for engaging with broader publics through different genres, formats, and platforms, from VR video to social media posts to performance art to blogs to comics. They also provide examples of collaboration with people outside the academy, like community stakeholders or filmmakers. The authors reflect on their own experiments with public-facing work and share practical advice, like how to work with Google algorithms to increase site traffic, for those hoping to do the same. The [companion website](#) is also helpful in this way because it features concrete examples of what is discussed in each chapter. One key takeaway across

chapters is the importance of good storytelling in reaching broader audiences, refuting myths and stereotypes, and disseminating perspective-shifting anthropological insights.

Across the book, the authors also present critical reflections on the institutional barriers to producing public-facing work, both within anthropology and in the academy more broadly. Many of the chapters highlight a lack of training in graduate programs and mentoring for early-career scholars on how to produce and disseminate public scholarship. A number of authors comment on the dense, jargon-filled – and thus exclusionary – writing style that reigns in anthropology. Another overarching theme is about the institutional standards that determine what is legitimate scholarship. Many authors note that academic institutions often incorrectly classify public-facing work as service or simply an add-on to academic publications, thus creating double work for those who produce public scholarship and delegitimizing particular media and genres. Through these observations, the book offers a cogent critique of disciplinary norms and intellectual hierarchies.

The book's greatest strength is that it provides the reader with clear examples of anthropologists and collaborators who, despite significant institutional barriers, are doing this work and clearing the way for others. These accounts are both inspirational and grounding; they encourage the reader to imagine new possibilities for what anthropological knowledge can be, and they situate her within a community of like-minded innovators.

However, one critique of the book is that the chapter authors are principally tenured faculty members. Though indeed the challenges these academics face as they work to produce impactful public scholarship are great, those for individuals who spend years navigating the academic job market and/or working as non-tenure-track faculty are exponentially greater. At many institutions of higher education, non-tenure-track faculty outnumber tenure-track faculty. The book would have been even more compelling and would perhaps have found a larger audience had it highlighted more accounts from this group of scholars. And, as is the case with chapter 13, this might also have been an opportunity to show how some anthropologists find alternative career paths through experimentations with public-facing work.

This point notwithstanding, *Cool Anthropology* is a resource that I will definitely return to, both for camaraderie and practical advice. Further, it is a timely intervention into disciplinary conversations about the past and future of anthropology, and thus will find an audience in anyone interested in efforts to revitalize the discipline, emphasize its relevance, and expand the scope of its knowledge.

References

Baines, Kristina and Victoria Costa, eds. 2022. *Cool Anthropology: How to Engage the Public with Academic Research*. Toronto: The University of Toronto Press.