Habits are located between interiority and exteriority, between affecting and being affected, between self and other. A habit can be a mental and bodily disposition; a physical appearance; a posture or demeanour; a way of dwelling and of being in the world. The notion that anthropologists study "habits" is both old and new. E.B. Tylor already defined "culture" as a complex whole that includes "habits"—but neither he nor his followers unpacked what "habits" are. Mauss, and later Bourdieu, established "habitus" as a key object of inquiry, but in many ways they also deepened the hiddenness of habit. Over the past few years, habit has made a startling comeback in the humanities and social sciences, including political theory, feminist cultural theory, and the philosophy of action. A fruitful discussion comes from rediscovering the philosophical writings of Ravaisson, who saw habit as both generated by change as well as a disposition toward future change. In this paper I explore what difference habit could make to how we define anthropology, and propose that "habitography" (rather than ethnography) opens up new possibilities for collecting, and making sense of, the evidence we collect -- in this paper, this will be evidence from fieldwork on psychopharmaceutical uses in India.

Date: Tuesday, 26.07.2016
Venue: South Asia Institute, Room Z10
Time: 17.15 – 18.45