

Anthropology 410b: Ethnographic Field Methods & Practicum

Spring 2016 Lecture 10641D M 2-4:50PM KAP 134

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Office Hours: M/W 11-12PM; also by appointment. You can also contact me Monday-Friday via email.
Course Website: ANTH 410b course materials are accessible through Blackboard at: <https://blackboard.usc.edu/webapps/login/>

Required Texts:

1. Anthropology 410b Reader. (Available in Blackboard under Content [then click on Course Reader])
2. Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, 2nd Edition. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
3. O'Reilly, Karen. 2012. *Ethnographic Methods*, 2nd Edition. London: Routledge.
4. Zinsser, William. 1993. *Writing to Learn*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Highly Recommended Text:

5. Zinsser, William. 2001. *On Writing Well*. Sixth Edition. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

NOTE: All texts are on reserve in Leavey Library.

Course Description: Welcome to ANTH 410b, the final installation of the Anthropology Department's Ethnographic Methods & Fieldwork Practicum! Last semester, you reviewed ethnographic modes of inquiry and analysis and wrote a research proposal in anticipation of your senior thesis. You also honed an appreciation for ethnography's inherent intersubjectivity, the politics of representation and reciprocity, and the imperative of researcher accountability. As such, we will not rehearse these chords at length. Instead, we will privilege them as we pursue a new song concerned with deciphering the "hook(s)" of your pilot ethnography. This work will entail a more serious engagement in fieldwork and writing. You will deepen your fieldwork engagements and "thicken" your fieldnotes. You will also workshop your data and fieldnotes with each other in the spirit of constructive collaboration. You will be responsible for adding to your literature review within anthropology writ large and other relevant disciplines. This seminar will help facilitate these goals. In particular, we will enrich our methodological and analytical skillset via several in-class *Ethnographic Practicums*, with the ultimate goal of producing a rigorous ethnographic thesis. These exercises, along with lectures, will push you further into the heart of your respective studies and coax you to translate your findings on the page. Yes; on the page! We are writing this semester – sometimes even in class – in full appreciation of the fact that while *there is nothing new under the sun*, there are (encouragingly) new ways of both *unpacking the familiar* and *making the unfamiliar familiar*. As always, practicums like this depend on your active involvement and steady participation. Let's create a mutually supportive and engaged learning environment and move our projects forward.

Course Requirements: Anthropology 410b is designed for advanced undergraduates, particularly Anthropology majors, who may progress to graduate work in the discipline. It should be equally useful in any profession since the skills required of ethnographic fieldwork (e.g., cultural sensitivity, an ability to

make nuanced observations, a willingness to be present) are particularly useful in our increasingly globalized world. Ideally, students should have some knowledge of anthropological theory and some pilot ethnographic fieldwork experience (from 410a). Consider this course an opportunity to advance a year-long research project wherein you learn a range of techniques for eliciting, interpreting, and analyzing cultural information.

Class Expectations & Evaluation: Towards this end, class meetings will include a brief lecture with a special emphasis on discussion. Some meetings (*Ethnographic Practicums*) involve exercises that enable you to distill and workshop data, findings, etc. and thus advance your research and writing.

Grade Criteria	
Participation/Attendance:	10%
3 Blackboard Postings:	30%
Research Presentation:	20%
Senior Thesis:	40%

Most of the seminar will be devoted to sharing issues/problems/insights about fieldwork; there will also be opportunities to work through some of these issues via written exercises posted in Blackboard and discussed in subsequent classes. In addition to completing assigned readings, you will be expected to: (a) conduct routine (i.e., weekly or bi-weekly) ethnographic observations (for which some course time is allotted), (b) write ongoing fieldnotes, and (c) generate a 30-40 page senior thesis. Do keep up with the modest readings and complete written assignments on time. Your course grade will be determined by your performance in the following arenas:

Class Participation: Regular attendance is expected as it will enable you to contribute a unique, informed, and collegial verse during class discussions. If you are unable to attend a class, please let me know in advance. Half of your participation score will also be determined by your constructive feedback on a randomly selected peer's their thesis draft during Weeks 13-14. **(10 points - 10%)**

Blackboard Assignments: You must complete at least THREE written exercises described in detail within the Reading & Exam Schedule (below). Each of these assignments have fixed deadlines and will typically be due in Blackboard's "Discussion Board" by 11:59PM on Fridays. Each of these written reflections/Blackboard postings will be worth 10 points. (Late papers will be docked a minimum of two points.) There are a total of six Blackboard Assignments, only one of which is required. Additionally, you are invited to post fieldnotes and/or thesis section drafts in Blackboard for my feedback on scheduled Writing/Reading Days (no class); while posting fieldnotes or thesis section drafts are not required during Weeks 8 and 11, doing so can help you concretize insights from your fieldwork. I likewise encourage you to take advantage of these optional writing opportunities; I will provide feedback if submitted by the specified deadline.) **(30 points - 30%)**

Research Presentation: During our final class meetings, each student will present a polished ten-minute Powerpoint presentation outlining their: a) Research Questions and/or Hook, b) Methodology, c) Theoretical Background/Literature Review, d) Key Findings, and e) Research Significance. **(20 points - 20%)**

Senior Thesis: Your final paper will be a Senior Thesis that fleshes out the information conveyed in your Powerpoint presentation. This thesis will synthesize insights gleaned over the course of this two-semester practicum – preferably, in the tenor of Zinsser's *Writing to Learn*. Senior Theses **must adhere** to the following format: 30-40 pages max (less bibliography), double-spaced with the following thematic headings (*Abstract [500-word], Introduction, Literature Review/Theoretical Background, Research Design/Methods, Findings, Significance/Conclusion*), 12 point-font, and 1" top, bottom, right, and left margins. Remember to staple your thesis and number your pages in the upper right hand corner (no folders please); also include a title page and bibliography. Bibliographic entries must be formatted in either MLA or APA format and should prioritize scholarly books and articles over websites. Sample senior theses from past semesters will be made available via Blackboard under Content – "Course Resources." Final papers/theses are due in my

mailbox by **4:30PM on Monday, May 9th**. Let it be your best work, revised multiple times in consultation with your peers, myself, and (optionally) The Writing Center. (Do not email papers; also, late papers will not be accepted). (**40 points - 40%**)

READING SCHEDULE*

[NOTE: Emerson et al. = Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, O'Reilly = Ethnographic Methods, Zinsser = Writing to Learn, RDR = ANTH 410b Reader]

- WK 1: 1/11 **Course Introduction**
REQUIRED Blackboard Assignment – Self Assessment (10 points): Submit a 1 page (typed, single-spaced) assessment that outlines the research you will need to do this semester to complete your project. In the assessment, address what you need to do first, how long each part of the research will take, what problems you anticipate, and, most importantly, what you believe your “hook” or central thesis will be. **Deadline: Post in Blackboard under “Discussion Board – Week 1” by Friday, 1/15 before midnight.**
- WK 2: 1/18 **NO CLASS (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)**
- WK 3: 1/25 **Writing To Learn:** What does it mean to ‘write to learn’? How might Zinsser’s provocation and writing inform your ethnographic fieldnotes, data analysis, and, ultimately, your senior thesis?
- Jacobs: “The Arab is the New Nigger”: African American Comics Confront the Irony and Tragedy of 9/11 [in RDR]
 - Madison: Performance Ethnography [*Optional*; in RDR]
 - PDF Handout: Lessons from Writers [in RDR]
 - Zinsser: Writing to Learn (read Part I and Chapter 10)
- Blackboard Assignment – Writing To Learn (10 points):** Submit a 1-2 double-spaced essay that summarizes one of the most “teachable” texts you’ve encountered thus far that bears upon your research. Discuss how this text reflects Zinsser’s insights and critically reflect on your own scholarly writing practice. **Deadline: Post in Blackboard under Discussions Board – Week 3” by Friday, 1/29 before midnight.**
- WK 4: 2/1 **Revisiting Thick Descriptions & Failures in the Field:** Can researchers “fail”? What can we learn about the intersubjective dimensions of fieldwork, politics of representation, complexities of reciprocity, etc. from their failures, missteps, etc.? How can ethnographic fieldnotes and “thick description” be used to capture and convey these lessons?
- Emerson et al.: Revisit Chapters 3-4
 - Geertz: Thick Description [in RDR]
 - Jacobs-Huey: Learning through the Breach [in RDR]
- Blackboard Assignment – Thick Description of Failures in the Field (10 points):** Submit a 1-2 double-spaced essay that pursues a “thick” account of a failure in the field. Remember the components and goals of thick description, as well as the complex nature of “failure,” as you outline your essay. Aim to “write to learn,” – even if as ethnographic notes – and be prepared to discuss in our next class. **Deadline: Post in Blackboard under Discussion Board – Week 4 by Friday, 2/5 before midnight.**
- WK 5: 2/8 **Ethnographic Practicum: Distilling Your Hook/Crux of Your Story/Fieldwork/Data**
- Emerson et al.: Revisit Chapters 6-8
 - O’Reilly: Revisit Chapter 8
- In-Class Practicum:** Home in – (yes home in *not* hone in) on the “hook” of your fieldwork. What is the more focused story within your overall story? What nuanced cultural insights are revealed by your fieldwork? Ponder this question after pouring over your fieldnotes and other ethnographic reflections and be prepared to discuss in class.
- WK 6: 2/15 **NO CLASS (President’s Day)**

- WK 7: 2/22 ***Ethnography of Popular Texts:*** How might we study popular texts using ethnographic insights? How might we articulate the thematic intersections between popular culture/popular texts and our ethnographic research?
- Jacobs-Huey: Moralizing Whiteness in Joan of Arcadia [in RDR]
 - Additional Readings: TBA
- Blackboard Assignment – Ethnography of Popular Texts (10 points):** Conduct an observation of an event, meeting, gathering, ritual, or performance and synthesize your insights in the form of ethnographic fieldnotes (1-2 pages). Alternatively, analyze a popular text (e.g., movie, play, song(s), comedy sketch, poem, etc.) that bears upon your research and articulate their thematic and cultural intersections. **Deadline: Post in Blackboard under “Discussion Board – Week 7” by Friday, 2/26 before midnight.**
- WK 8: 2/29 **NO CLASS (Research and Writing Day)**
(You will conduct fieldwork and/or write in lieu of class and can post fieldnotes or thesis section drafts (e.g., Intro, Lit Review, Methods, Findings, Significance) in Blackboard under Discussion Board – Fieldnotes/Thesis Section Drafts) **by Friday, 3/4 before midnight for feedback.**
- WK 9: 3/7 ***Ethnographic Practicum: Deciphering Members Meanings re: Race, Gender, Class, Sexuality, etc.***
- Emerson et al.: Revisit Chapters 5-6
 - Jacobs et al.: I/We Narratives among African American Families Raising Children with Disabilities [in RDR]
- In-Class Practicum:** Identify moments in your fieldwork (e.g., observations, interviews, archival research, etc.) where members index and/or inflect notions of race, gender, class, sexuality – or their complex intersections. **Bring excerpts and/or insights to class and be prepared to discuss.** Also be prepared to discuss the potential absence of such references/markers and what that might mean in the context of your work.
- SPRING BREAK 3/14-3/20**
- WK 10: 3/21 ***The Politics of Representation:*** What aspects of your research remain untold given fears about “airing dirty laundry,” anxieties about *voice*, and/or a desire to honor the fact that some aspects of culture should remain private? What broader politics inform your ethnographic fieldwork and writing?
- Jacobs-Huey: Into the Breach [in RDR]
 - Jacobs: Revisiting “Hair”: Unversed Scenes from The Kitchen to The Parlor [in RDR]
- Blackboard Assignment – Politics of Representation (10 points).** Submit a 1-2 double-spaced essay that considers what stories remain untold in your own work. Ask yourself “why?” and consider in light of prior discussions re: the politics of representation. Write about this and let it inform your thesis). **Deadline: Post in Blackboard under “Discussion Board – Week 10” by Friday, 3/25 before midnight.**
- WK 11: 3/28 **NO CLASS (Research and Writing Day)**
(You will conduct fieldwork and/or write in lieu of class and can post fieldnotes or thesis section drafts (e.g., Intro, Lit Review, Methods, Findings, Significance) in Blackboard under Discussion Board – Fieldnotes/Thesis Section Drafts) **by Friday, 4/1 before midnight for feedback.**
- WK 12: 4/4 ***Ethnographic Practicum: Outlining Your Thesis***
- Booth et al.: Pre-Drafting and Drafting [in RDR]
 - Rankin: Meeting Readers’ Needs [in RDR]
- Blackboard Assignment – Outlining Your Thesis (10 points):** Outline your thesis *rigorously* per Booth et al.’s instructions and/or Rankin’s advice. **Deadline: Post in Blackboard under “Discussion Board – Week 12” by Friday, 4/8 before midnight.**

WK 13: 4/11 **NO CLASS (THESIS DRAFT SUBMISSION - ONLINE & HARD COPY)**
Required Assignments: Deliver a hard copy to Prof. Jacobs' mailbox in the Anthropology Department in KAP 352 **before 4:30PM on Friday 4/15**; also post your polished thesis draft in Blackboard under "Discussions – Senior Thesis Drafts" **that same day before 5PM**. Finally, read your randomly-assigned peer's draft and post constructive feedback before 2PM on Monday, April 18th.

Recommended Reading

- Booth et al.: *Revising Style: Telling Your Story Clearly* [in RDR]
- Booth et al.: *Introductions* [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Zinsser: *On Writing Well* [*Optional*]
- Sample ANTH 410b Theses [in Blackboard under "Content - Course Resources"]

WK 14: 4/18 **OPTIONAL CLASS/VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS (To Be Determined)**
Prof. Jacobs will either will be in class and/or hold virtual office hours to respond to any remaining queries re: your senior thesis and/or final 10-minute presentation next week. Past senior thesis presentations will also be posted in Blackboard under "Content – Course Resources."

WK 15: 4/25 **FINAL IN-CLASS POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS (10-minutes max)**

Senior Theses are due in my mailbox in ANTH DEPT (KAP 352) by 4:30PM on Monday, May 9th

[NOTE: DO NOT EMAIL PAPERS; THEY WILL NOT BE PRINTED OR READ]

*The Reading Schedule may be subject to modification (e.g., trimming, additions, etc.).

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY (Books in bold)

- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 1995. Pre-Drafting and Drafting. *In The Craft of Research* (155-174). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 1995. Revising Style: Telling Your Story Clearly. *In The Craft of Research* (215-233). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 1995. Introductions. *In The Craft of Research* (234-254). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 2011. Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, 2nd Edition. Chicago: Chicago University Press.**
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973 [2000]. Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture. *In The Interpretation of Culture* (3-30). New York: Basic Books.\
- Jacobs, Lanita. n.d. Revisiting “Hair”: Unversed Scenes from the Kitchen to the Parlor. Unpublished Essay.
- Jacobs, Lanita. 2011. “The Arab is the New Nigger”: African American Comics Confront the Irony and Tragedy of 9/11. In T. Gournelos and V. Greene (Eds.) *A Decade of Dark Humor: How Comedy, Irony, and Satire Have Shaped Post-9/11 America* (47-56). Jackson: University Press of Mississippi. [Reprint]
- Jacobs, Lanita, Mary Lawlor, and Cheryl Mattingly. 2011. I/We Narratives among African American Families Raising Children with Disabilities. *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 35(1): 3-25.
- Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2009. Into the Breach: Representing the Messy Truths of Black Women’s Hair and Language Politics. In Sonja L. Lanehart (Ed.) *African American Women’s Language: Discourse, Education, and Identity* (262-275). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2009. Moralizing Whiteness in *Joan of Arcadia*. In Diane Winston (Ed.) *Small Screen Big Picture: Television and Lived Religion* (233-258). Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.
- Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2007. Learning through the Breach: Language Socialization among African American Cosmetologists. *Ethnography* 8(2): 171-203.
- Madison, D. Soyini. 2005. Performance Ethnography. *In Critical Ethnography: Methods, Ethics, and Performance* (149-180). London: Sage.
- O’Reilly, Karen. 2012. Ethnographic Methods; 2nd Edition. London: Routledge.**
- Rankin, Elizabeth. 2001. Meeting Readers’ Needs. *In The Work of Writing: Insights and Strategies for Academics and Professionals* (27-51). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Zinsser, William. 2001. On Writing Well. Sixth Edition. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.**
- Zinsser, William. 1993. Writing to Learn. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.**