**ANTHROPOLOGY 562: THE PRACTICE OF ETHNOGRAPHY**

**Fall 2019, T 4-6:50**

**Social Sciences Building B43**

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Office Hours: T 1-3 PM

This course provides an introduction to ethnography as a series of research methods and as a genre of writing. As the bread and butter of sociocultural anthropology, ethnography can include a close examination of the minutia of everyday life and individual lives to broad analysis of the social structure. But what exactly do researchers do “in the field” to collect ethnographic data? What constitutes data and how do we get it? In this class we will not only study the primary methods used in ethnographic research, but also practice these various methods. I envision this course as a workshop built around practical exercises in aspects of ethnography that complement the range of readings about this endeavor. To that end, students will identify a site of study, engage in research exercises, and plan a research project.

Learning Objectives:

1. Identify and carry out the principal ethnographic research methods of participant observation, interviewing, and writing field notes.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of ethical considerations when conducting research with human subjects.
3. Analyze and write-up ethnographic research into a proposed research project.

Texts:

De León, Jason. 2015. *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. Oakland: University of California Press.

DeWalt, Kathleen M. and Billie R. DeWalt. 2011. *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*. 2nd Ed. Lanham, Md: Altamira Press.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Field Notes*. 2nd Ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Reese, Ashantè M. 2019. *Black Food Geographies: Race, Self-Reliance, and Food Access in Washington D.C*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Electronic Reserve: Blackboard

**Course Requirements:**

**Participation and Attendance:** Class meetings will consist of discussion, activities, and brief lecture. The readings should be completed before class and everyone should come to class prepared to discuss them. Additionally, bring your research questions and conundrums to class where we can brainstorm possible ways to approach the issues. Attendance is mandatory. Missing more than three (3) classes will risk failing the class.

**Fieldwork Exercise Reports:** By the third week of class you should identify a physical field site where you can carry out ethnographic research exercises. Throughout the semester you will conduct a series of research methods at your field site. These experiences will enable you to practice the techniques we read about, provide fodder for discussion, and act as the basis for your research proposal due at the end of the semester.

**Research Proposal:** The final assignment will be a research proposal based on your field site exercises with an introduction, methodology section, research questions, literature review, social and historical context, preliminary findings, and a bibliography. (15-17 pages) Due December 17

**Reading Response:** Students should submit a reading response (no more than one page) for four different weeks of your choosing. The response should reference a quote or specific section of a reading and include a discussion question. These should be posted Monday by 5pm (the day before class). You may choose which weeks you will respond to. On the last day of class you should bring a 5-page draft of a proposal to class for work shopping.

Evaluation:

20% Participation and Attendance

30% Fieldwork Exercise Reports

30% Research Proposal

20% Reading Response

Field Research

Ethnographic **field research** is a fundamental part of this course, as your own research notes and recordings will supply the backbone of most course assignments, and the final project for the course is an ethnographic essay that draws on research materials you have gathered throughout the semester. With this in mind, you should be prepared to spend the necessary time, ***at least* 3-5 hours per week, *doing* participant-observation fieldwork**: conducting in-person interviews, observing and documenting practices, and generally getting to know the people and the community you are studying by **spending time** with them.

Many of you will begin this course with a broad or narrow **research topic** in mind: a problem, question, or community you are interested in studying. Building on these ideas, by week 3, you will identify a **specific local research site** where you will conduct the majority of your research for this course. For the purposes of this class, **your “primary” research site must be a physical place that you can visit in person, on at least a weekly basis**. You should choose a place where you have a reasonable expectation of sufficient access – such as the support of key staff or community members; the help of willing translators, if necessary – to do effective research.

As social lives are increasingly lived in virtual realms, and communities become more mobile and more dispersed, anthropologists have come to recognize that the study of human experience often requires a multi-sited approach to ethnography. Even though your own long-term research plans may include multi-sited research, **for work completed in course, you are expected to commit to conducting research at a single, local site.** With that said, you will naturally want to follow up on interesting contacts and connections you make, which means you may find yourself meeting informants at locations other than your primary site. Likewise, you may find it expedient to conduct certain interviews via phone or video chat. Keep in mind, however, that for this course **you are expected to conduct majority of your research and observation (that is at least 80%) in person,** either face-to-face with individual informants or within a specific community space.

**Reading Schedule:**

**8/27 Week 1: First Day of Class**

**9/3 Week 2: What is Ethnography or Fieldwork? What ethical considerations should ethnographers take into account when conducting research?**

Boellstorff et. al., 10 Myths about Ethnography, Pgs. 29 - 51 (BB)

DeWalt and DeWalt, Ch. 1, 11

<http://ethics.americananthro.org/ethics-statement-1-do-no-harm/>

Jackson, Ethnographobias and Ethnographrenias, Pgs. 23 - 27 (BB)

*Fieldwork Exercise #1: Think About Your Project and Position*

**9/10 Week 3: Entering the Field and Positionality**

DeWalt and DeWalt, Ch. 2, 3

Clifford Geertz, Notes on the Balinese Cock Fight, Pgs. 412 - 453 (BB)

Mark Schuller, “Mr. Blan,” Or, the Incredible Whiteness of Being (an Anthropologist), Pgs. 105-130 (BB)

Tulasi Srivinas, The Anthropology of Wonder, Pgs. 16-24 (BB)

**9/17 Week 4: Observation, Field notes, Rapport**

DeWalt and De Walt, Ch. 5

Emerson, Writing Ethnographic Field Notes, Ch. 2, 3

Letizia Bonanno, Drawing as a Mode of Translation (<http://www.americananthropologist.org/ethno-graphic-bonanno/?fbclid=IwAR3M9eSz-kB5jWny9KA8AshwnKxUPOkermZZ6rJgZVCfu6MtU2K-v2qs7kA>)

*Fieldwork Exercise #2: Field Observation: Jot Notes*

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**Sunday, September 22**

**Masters in Visual Anthropology Thesis Films Premiere**

**Film Screening**

**2:00 – 6:30 PM, School of Cinematic Arts, Room 112**

**Albert and Dana Broccoli Theatre**

**All Are Invited!!**

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**9/24 Week 5: Interviews**

DeWalt and DeWalt, Ch. 8

O’Reilly: Interviews, Ch. 5 and 6 (BB)

Optional: Spradley, Step 4, 7, 9 (BB)

*Fieldwork Exercise #3: Conduct an Interview*

**10/1 Week 6: Research Design, Developing Research Questions**

DeWalt and DeWalt, Ch. 7

Wayne Booth, et. al. Ch. 4 & 6 (BB)

*Fieldwork Exercise #4: Annotated Bibliography*

**10/8 Week 7: Ethnographic Interlude**

Reese, Introduction, Ch. 2 and 3

De León, Introduction, Ch. 4 and 5

**10/15 Week 8: Research Day**

**10/22 Week 9: Visual Field Methods**

Pink, Ch. 4 and 5 (BB)

De Leon Ch. 7

Grabski, Dakar’s Market Imaginary, http://cssaamejournal.org/borderlines/dakars-market-imaginary/

*Fieldwork Exercise #5: Photographic depiction of field site*

**10/29 Week 10: Space& Place, Events, Digital Ethnography**

Reese, Ch. 5

Low, Spatializing Culture, Pgs. 34-38 (BB)

TBA: Article on Digital Ethnography

*Fieldwork Exercise #6: Field Site Observation: Describe an event or activity and map the space*

**11/5 Week 11: Analyzing Data, Pursuing Research Participants’ Meanings**

DeWalt and DeWalt, 10

Emerson, Fretz, Shaw, Ch. 6

Hanna Garth, Alimentary Dignity: Defining a Decent Meal in Post-Soviet Cuban Household Cooking (BB)

**11/12 Week 12: Ethnographic Writing Workshop**

Emerson, Fretz, Shaw, Ch. 8

Using exercises from Alive in the Writing by Kirin Narayan we will construct ethnographic vignettes in class and share them. You do not need to read Narayan before class.

**11/19 Week 13: Writing Grant Proposals**

SSRC (Social Science Research Council), The Art of Writing Grant Proposals (BB)

Liisa Malkki, The Fulbright Proposal (BB)

**11/26 Week 14 Research/Writing Day**

**12/3 Week 15: Last Day of Class**

Workshop Proposals: Bring a rough draft of at least 5 pages to class. We will workshop the papers and discuss problems or questions.

*Fieldwork Exercise #1: Think About Your Project and Position*

Due 9/9, 5pm, Blackboard

This prompt is meant to assist you in beginning to think about your field research project for this class. Your proposal should address the following questions: What are you interested in? What do you think you might find? What do you already know about this subject? How are you positioned in relation to your potential research subjects? How might your identity hinder, facilitate, or inflect your ethnographic research? (2-3 pages)

*Fieldwork Exercise #2: Field Observation: Jot Notes*

Due 9/23, 5pm, Blackboard

By week 3 you should settle on a field site. Visit your field site and jot down your initial impressions. Recordings should include a mix of: fragments of talk and actions, sensory details, emotional expressions and experiences, detailed events and descriptions, or your general impressions or feelings. (2-4 pages)

*Fieldwork Exercise #3: Conduct an Interview*

Due 10/21, 5pm, Blackboard

Approach someone in your field site for an interview. Conduct the interview and transcribe three pages of text from the interview. Include a one-page description of the scene, person’s gestures and mannerisms, and other scene details. (3 pages)

*Fieldwork Exercise #4: Annotated Bibliography*

Due 10/21, 5pm, Blackboard

Part of research design involves connecting your project to the existing academic literature. Search for academic literature on your topic. Develop a list of at least ten (10) sources, list them in alphabetical order, and include a summary of the source. Use a format that is common to your discipline or area.

*Fieldwork Exercise #5: Photographic depiction of field site*

Due 10/28, 5pm, Blackboard

Following Chapter 4 in *Doing Visual Ethnography* by Sarah Pink take a series of at least five (5) images from the material environment of your field site. If you feel like you have permission and feel comfortable doing so, photograph activities or people as well. Submit the photographs with a **one-page** description of what you chose to photograph and how the photos may assist you in your project.

*Fieldwork Exercise #6: Field Site Observation: Describe an event or activity and map the space*

Due 11/4, 5pm, Blackboard

Write field notes that describe an event or activity from your field site. Draw a map from your site and provide a narrative of the space. We are not all graphic designers, but take the time to draw the map carefully. Use a pencil and ruler to begin. Add sketches and unique details. What location are you mapping? Did you notice anything what mapping that you did not in your other interactions with the space? (Note: In revisiting the site you might note how your observations vary over multiple visits) (3-5 pages)

Course Bibliography

Atalay, Bonanno, Letizia, et. al. . "Ethno/Graphic Storytelling: Communicating Research and Exploring Pedagogical Approaches through Graphic Narratives, Drawings, and Zines." *American Anthropologist* 121.3 (2019): 769-72. Print.

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Cerwonka, Allaine and Liisa H. Malkki. *Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007. Print.

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Garth, Hanna. "Alimentary Dignity: Defining a Decent Meal in Post‐Soviet Cuban Household Cooking." *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 24.2 (2019): 424-42. Print.

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973. Print.

Grabski, Joanna. "Dakar’s Market Imaginary: Mobility, Visuality, and the Creative Economy of Second Chances." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*  (2014): https://cssaamejournal.org/borderlines/dakars-market-imaginary/. Print.

Jackson, Jr., John L. *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005. Print.

Low, Setha. *Spatializing Culture: An Engaged Anthropological Approach to Space and Place*. The People, Place, and Space Reader. Ed. Jen Jack Gieseking, William Mangold, Cindi Katz, Setha Low, and Susan Saegert. London: Routledge, 2014. Print.

Narayan, Kirin. *Alive in the Writing: Crafting Ethnography in the Company of Chekhov*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012. Print.

O’Reilly, Karen. *Ethnographic Methods.* New York: Routledge, 2012.

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Srivinas, Tulasi. *The Cow in the Elevator: An Anthropology of Wonder*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2018. Print.