Ethnographic Field Methods  
ANG 6801

Fall 2015

Tuesdays 7th-9th period (1:55-4:55 pm)  
Turlington 2341

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Course Description and Objectives

In Anthropology, the ethnography – writing about a culture – is the primary end result of the fieldwork experience. Yet, despite the ethnography being the principal product of fieldwork, graduate training in methods for either doing fieldwork or writing ethnography has historically been ignored, often under the premise that students either can or cannot accomplish these things on their own. Kroeber, for example, famously advised his students to avoid reservation politics and bring plenty of pencils.

This course is designed to cover some of the basic considerations and methods employed for doing fieldwork. Consequently, the course has three objectives: (1) Training in the basic techniques of data collection – including interviewing, behavior observation, genealogy and social organization – and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each technique; (2) Analysis of the important debates surrounding ethnography, including ethics, gender, politics; and (3) Writing ethnography and representing culture through an individual fieldwork project of the student’s own design. We will spend some time discussing research design and data analysis, but these topics will appear only as they intersect with our primary objectives.

This course is a seminar and will be taught as such: students will be expected to carry each week’s discussion, with students volunteering to lead discussion each week. This course is also a practical course. As such, we will be practicing what we learn, and each week will be devoted to hands-on exercises designed to build familiarity with concepts and develop our skills.

A major component of this course involves individual ethnographic field projects, and over the first weeks of the course students are expected to develop a proposal for an ethnographic research project, which students will the research and present at the end of the semester.

Textbooks and Reading Assignments:

The following textbooks are required for the course. Earlier editions are acceptable. Many of these texts can be purchased used for considerable savings.


In addition, there will be readings from the primary literature, available as .pdf documents. These will be available through the Canvas learning portal, and placed under the resources tab on the site. Articles will be identified by the author’s last name and year. Bibliographic information for these readings can be found in the weekly schedule, below.

**Assignments, Projects, and Grading**

The grades and assignments for this course break down as follows:

Class participation: 75 points
Homework/In-class Writing Assignments: 75 points
Ethnographic Research Report: 100

Total 250 points. As for letter grades, the numbers are as follows:

A=225+, B+= 218-224, B=205-218, B-=200-204, C+=193-199, C=180-192, C-=175-179, D=150-174, E=<150

*Class participation* should be self-explanatory. This is a graduate seminar, and students are expected to alternatively participate and lead class discussions. Because this is a graduate seminar and we meet only once per week, attendance is effectively mandatory. Unless there is a compelling reason you cannot attend class, you are expected to be here.

*Homework* is a catch-all category that covers the various writing assignments we will complete during the semester. Some of these are assignments that will have to be completed outside of class. Others are assignments that will be completed in class. Further details in the course timeline.

*Ethnographic Research Report:* Students are expected to produce a final research report based on research conducted in the Gainesville area during the course of the semester. The assignment will allow students to explore some of the local cultural area while developing your ethnographic skills. The final report should be article-length – about 30 double-spaced pages – and include the following:

1. A problem statement based on some references to research literature
2. A description of the research site
3. A description of how you arrived at the site and gained access. How did you gain rapport? What were some thorny ethical issues you had to address?
5. A description of how you are analyzing your data – how are you assessing your evidence?
6. A statement of findings. How do your findings relate to the original problem statement? What do your findings suggest about future steps? What could you do better? What would the next steps be for further research?

Academic Honesty

Unless it is specifically connected to assigned collaborative work, all work should be individual. Evidence of collusion (working with someone not connected to the class or assignment), plagiarism (use of someone else’s published or unpublished words or design without acknowledgment) or multiple submissions (submitting the same work for different courses) will lead to the Department’s and the University’s procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty. All students are expected to honor their commitment to the University’s Honor Code.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Disability Resource Center. The DRC will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Please make any requests by September 3.

UF Counseling Services.

Resources are available on-campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career and academic goals that interfere with their academic performance. These resources include:

1. University Counseling and Wellness Center, 3190 Radio Road, 392-1575. Personal, career, and emergency counseling
2. Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601, Career development assistance and counseling
3. Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Writing assistance, study skills, test preparation

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations. Evaluations are typically open during the last 2-3 weeks of the semester, but students will be notified of specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are also available to students.

Course Outline

Some Important Dates:

Ethnographic Project Proposals: Due September 8
Draft Ethnographic Project: Due November 17
Final Project Report: Due December 8

Weekly Schedule of Topics:

August 25: Organizational Meeting
September 1: What is Ethnography, Anyway?

Readings: Powdormaker (all), Bernard (ch. 1-3), Van Maanen (ch. 1-2)


September 8: Participant Observation and Gaining Rapport

Readings: Emerson et al. (ch. 1-3), Bernard (ch. 12)


Hannerz, Ulf. (2003) “Being there... and there... and there! Reflections on multi-Site ethnography.” Ethnography 4(2): 201-216

Johnson, Jeffrey C. et al. 2006. The active participant observer: Applying social role analysis to participant observation. Field Methods 18: 111-134.


September 22: Ethics and IRB

Readings: Agar (all)


Schuster.

**September 29: Validity, Reliability, Sampling, and Problems of Design**

*Readings: Kirk and Miller (all), Johnson (all), Bernard (Ch. 4-7)*


**October 6: Interviewing**

*Readings: Weiss (all), Bernard (ch. 8-11)*


Spradley, James, and Brenda Mann. 1975. How to ask for a drink. Pp. 120-143 in *The Cocktail Waitress: A Woman's World*.

**October 13: Behavior Observation**

*Readings: Bernard (ch. 14)*


October 20: Genealogy and Kinship


October 27: Life Histories and Case Studies


Haviland, John B. 1991. “That was the last time I seen them, and no more”: Voices through time in Australian Aboriginal autobiography. *American Ethnologist* 18: 331-361.


November 3: Taking and Writing Fieldnotes

*Readings:* Emerson et al. (ch. 3-6), Bernard (ch. 14), Van Maanen (ch. 3-6)


November 10: Writing Ethnography

*Readings:* Emerson et al. (Ch. 7), Bernard (ch. 18-19)


**November 17: Reflexivity, Subjectivity, Politics, Epistemologies**


**November 24: PAR, Collaboration, and Authority in Ethnography**


December 1: Student Workshop: Presentation of Ethnographies

December 8: Student Workshop: Presentation of Ethnographies