

# **Ethnographic Field Methods**

## **ANG 6801**

Fall 2015

Tuesdays 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> 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.

Michael Agar. 1996. *The Professional Stranger*. Second ed. Emerald Publishing.

- Russ Bernard. 2011. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Fifth ed. AltaMira Press.
- Robert M. Emerson, Rachael I. Fretz, and Linda Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Second ed. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Jeff Johnson. 1990. *Selecting Ethnographic Informants*. Sage.
- Jerome Kirk and Marc L. Miller. 1985. *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research*. Sage.
- Hortense Powdermaker. 1967. *Stranger and Friend: The Way of the Anthropologist*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- John Van Maanen. 2011. *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*. Second ed. University of Chicago Press.
- Robert S. Weiss, 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press.

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?

4. A description of your data collection activities: what did you do? What worked, and what didn't? Why?
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
- 4.

## 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:* Powdermaker (all), Bernard (ch. 1-3), Van Maanen (ch. 1-2)

Aunger, Robert. 1995. On ethnography: Storytelling or science? *Current Anthropology* 36(1):97-130.

Bernard, H. Russell et al. 1986. The construction of primary data in cultural anthropology. *Current Anthropology* 27: 382-396.

Goffman, Erving. 1989. On fieldwork. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 18-2 (July): 123-132.

Harris, Marvin. 1976. History and significance of the emic/etic distinction. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 5: 329-350.

Katz, Jack. 1997. Ethnography's warrants. *Sociological Methods and Research* 25(4): 391- 423.

Mintz, Sidney W. 2000. Sows' ears and silver linings: A backward look at ethnography. *Current Anthropology* 41(2): 169-189.

Stacey, Judith. 1999. Ethnography confronts the global village: A new home for a new century? *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 28(6): 687-697.

### September 8: Participant Observation and Gaining Rapport

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

Coe, Cati. 2001. Learning how to find out: Theories of knowledge and learning in field research. *Field Methods* 13: 392-411.

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.

Kornblum, William. 1989. On studying south Chicago. Pp. 101-112 in: Carolyn D. Smith, and William Kornblum (eds.), *In the Field: Readings on the Field Research Experience*. New York: Praeger.

Marcus, GE (1995) Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography." *Annual Reviews in Anthropology* 24(1): 95-117.

Wax, Rosalie H. 1957. Twelve years later: An analysis of field experience. *American Journal of Sociology* 63: 133-142.

### September 22: Ethics and IRB

*Readings:* Agar (all)

Bosk, Charles L., and Raymond G. de Vries. 2004. Bureaucracies of mass deception: Institutional review boards and the ethics of ethnographic research. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 595: 249-263.

Brandt, Allan M. 1978. Racism and research: The case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study. *The Hastings Report* 8(6): 21-29.

Cassell, Joan. 1980. Ethical principles for conducting fieldwork. *American Anthropologist* 82: 28-41.

Fine, Gary Alan. 1993. Ten lies of ethnography: Moral dilemmas of field research. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22: 267.

Gordon, Elisa J. 2003. Trials and tribulations of navigating IRBs: Anthropological and biomedical perspectives of 'risk' in conducting human subjects research. *Anthropological Quarterly* 76: 299-320.

Myerhoff, Barbara. 1978. So what do you want from us here? Pp. 1-39 in *Number Our Days*. New York: Simon &

Schuster.

Plattner, Stuart. 2003. Human subjects protection and cultural anthropology. *Anthropological Quarterly* 76: 287-297.

Shea, Christopher. 2000. Don't talk to the humans. *Lingua Franca* 10(6): 27-34. Available [here](#)

Thorne, Barrie. 1980. "You still takin' notes?" Fieldwork and problems of informed consent." *Social Problems* 27:284-297.

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

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

Creswell, John W. and Dana L. Miller. 2000. Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory Into Practice* 39(3):124-130.

Mathison, Sandra. 1988. Why triangulate? *Educational Researcher*. 17(2): 13-17.

Strathern, Marilyn. 1987. Out of context. *Current Anthropology* 28(3): 251-270.

Spradley, James P. 1979. 'Informants' and 'Locating an informant.' Pp. 24-54 in *The Ethnographic Interview*. New York: Holt, Reinhart, & Winston.

Patrick Biernacki and Dan Waldorf, 1981. "Snowball sampling: Problems and techniques in chain referral." *Sociological Methods and Research* 10 (2): 141-163.

Usher, Peter J., and George Wenzel. 1987. Native harvest surveys and statistics: A critique of their construction and use. *Arctic* 40: 145-160.

Watters, John K., and Patrick Biernacki, 1989. "Targeted sampling: Options for the study of hidden populations." *Social Problems* 36 (4): 416-430.

### October 6: Interviewing

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

Briggs, Charles L. 2007. Anthropology, interviewing, and communicability in contemporary society. *Current Anthropology* 48: 551-580.

Collings, Peter. 2009. Participant observation and phased assertion as research strategies in the Canadian Arctic. *Field Methods* 21: 133-153.

Labov, William. 1972. The logic of nonstandard English. Pp. 179-215 in Pier Paolo Giglioli (ed.), *Language and Social Context*. Baltimore: Penguin Books.

Wendy Luttrell, Wendy. 2000. Good enough methods for ethnographic research. *Harvard Educational Review*. 70 (4): 499-523.

Merton, Robert K, and Patricia Kendall. 1946. The focused interview. *American Journal of Sociology* 51(6): 541-57.

Morgan, David L. 1996. Focus groups. *Annual Review of Sociology* 22: 129-152

Riessman, Catherine K. 1987. When gender is not enough: Women interviewing women. *Gender and Society* 1(2):172-207

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)

- Baksh, Michael. 1989. The spot observation technique in time allocation research. *Cultural Anthropology Methods Newsletter* 1(2), 1-3.
- Borgerhoff-Mulder, Monique, T.M. Caro, J.S. Chisholm, et al. 1985. The use of quantitative observational techniques in anthropology. *Current Anthropology*, 26(3): 323-335.
- Dunbar, R. I. M., and A. Marriott. 1997. Human conversational behavior. *Human Nature* 8(3): 231-246.
- Fouts, Hillary N., Barry S. Hewlett, and Michael E. Lamb. 2005. Parent-offspring weaning conflicts among the Bofi farmers and foragers of central Africa. *Current Anthropology* 46(1): 29-50.
- Gravlee, Clarence C, S N Zenk, S. Woods, Z. Rowe, and A. J. Schulz. 2006. Handheld computers for direct observation of the social and physical environment. *Field Methods* 18(4): 382-397.
- Gross, D. R. 1984. Time allocation: a tool for the study of cultural behavior. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 13: 519-558.
- Hames, Raymond. 1987. Garden labor exchange among the Ye'kwana. *Ethology and Sociobiology* 8(4): 259-284.
- Kahneman, D, A.B. Krueger, D.A. Schkade, N. Schwarz, and A.A. Stone 2004. A survey method for characterizing daily life experience: The day reconstruction method. *Science* 306: 1776-1780.
- Wells, William D., and Leonard A. Lo Sciuto. 1966. Direct observation of purchasing behavior. *Journal of Marketing Research* 3(3): 227-233.
- Williams, RL, SA Flocke, and KC Stange. 2001. Race and preventive services delivery among Black patients and White patients seen in primary care. *Medical Care* 39(11): 1260-1267.

#### October 20: Genealogy and Kinship

- Bell, Duran. 1997. Defining marriage and legitimacy. *Current Anthropology* 38: 237-253.
- Bodenhorn, Barbara. 2000. 'He used to be my relative': Exploring the bases of relatedness among Inupiat of northern Alaska. Pp. 128-148 in: Janet Carsten (ed.), *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Collings, Peter. 2011. Economic strategies, community, and food networks in Ulukhaktok, NT, Canada. *Arctic* 64: 207-219.
- Draper, Patricia, and Christine Haney. 2005. Patrilineal bias among a traditionally egalitarian people: Ju/'hoansi naming practice. *Ethnology* 44: 243-259.
- Howell, Nancy. 1988. Understanding simple social structure: kinship units and ties. Pp. 62-82 in Barry Wellman and S.D. Berkowitz (eds.), *Social Structure: a Network Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Leach, Edmund. 1971. Concerning Trobriand clans and the kinship category 'Tabu.' Pp. 120-145 in: Jack Goody (ed.), *The Developmental Cycle in Domestic Groups*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mayhew, Bruce H. 1980. Structuralism vs. individualism: Part I, shadowboxing in the dark. *Social Forces* 59: 335-375.
- Peletz, Michael G. 1995. Kinship studies in late Twentieth-Century anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 343-372.
- Rivers, W. H. R. (1900). A genealogical method of collecting social and vital statistics. *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 30: 74-82.
- Schneider, David M. and G. C. Homans. 1955. Kinship terminology and the American kinship system. *American Anthropologist* 57(6): 1194-1208.
- Wellman, Barry. 1983. Network analysis: Some basic principles. *Sociological Theory* 1: 155-200
- Wellman, Barry, and S.D. Berkowitz. 1988. Thinking structurally. Pp. 15-18 in: Barry Wellman, and S.D. Berkowitz (eds.), *Social Structures: A Network Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### October 27: Life Histories and Case Studies

- Agar, Michael. 1980. Stories, background knowledge and themes: problems in the analysis of life history narrative. *American Ethnologist* 7: 223-239.
- Behar, Ruth. 1990. Rage and redemption: reading the life story of a Mexican marketing woman. *Feminist Studies* 16(2):223-258.
- Bertaux, Daniel. 1981. From the life-history approach to the transformation of sociological practice. Pp. 29-45 in Daniel Bertaux (ed.), *Biography and Society: The Life History Approach in the Social Sciences*; pp. 29-45. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Bertaux, Daniel, and Martin Kohli. 1984. The life story approach: A continental view. *Annual Review of Sociology* 10: 215-237.
- Burawoy, Michael. 1998 The extended case method. *Sociological Theory* 16(1): 4-33.
- Crapanzano, Vincent. 1984. Life histories: A review essay. *American Anthropologist* 86:953-960.
- Draper, Patricia. 1992. Remembering the past: !Kung life history narratives. Pp. 7-41 in: Patricia Lyons Johnson (eds.), *Balancing Acts: Women and the Process of Social Change*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Ferrarotti, Franco. 1981. On the autonomy of the autobiographical method. Pp. 19-27 in: Daniel Bertaux (ed.), *Biography and Society: The Life History Approach in the Social Sciences*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- 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.
- Ochs, Elinor, and Lisa Capps (1996) Narrating the self. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25:19-43.
- Labov, William. 1972. The transformation of experience in narrative syntax. Pp. 354-396 in W. Labov (ed.), *Language in the Inner City*. pp.354-396. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Peacock, James, and Dorothy Holland (1993) The narrated self: life stories in process. *Ethos* 21(4):367-383.
- Thompson, Paul. 1981. Life histories and the analysis of social change. Pp. 289-306 in: Daniel Bertaux (ed.), *Biography and Society: The Life History Approach in the Social Sciences*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

### November 3: Taking and Writing Fieldnotes

- Readings*: Emerson et al. (ch. 3-6), Bernard (ch. 14), Van Maanen (ch. 3-6)
- Emerson, Robert. 1987. Four ways to improve the craft of fieldwork. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 16(1):69-89.
- Jackson, Jean E. 1990. "Deja entendu:" The liminal qualities of anthropological fieldnotes. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 19(1): 8-43.
- Jackson, Jean E. 1990. I am a fieldnote: Fieldnotes as a symbol of professional identity. Pp. 3-33 in R. Sanjek (ed.), *Fieldnotes: The Making of Anthropology*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Lederman, Rena. 1990. Pretexts for ethnography: On reading fieldnotes. Pp. 71-91 in R. Sanjek (ed.), *Fieldnotes: The Making of Anthropology*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Sanjek, Roger. 1990. A vocabulary for fieldnotes. Pp. 92-121 in R. Sanjek (ed.), *Fieldnotes: The Making of Anthropology*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

### November 10: Writing Ethnography

- Readings*: Emerson et al. (Ch. 7), Bernard (ch. 18-19)
- Fretz, Rachel I. 1994. Trhough ambiguous tales: Women's voices in Chokwe storytelling. *Oral Tradition* 9(1):230-250.

- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. Pp. 3-30 in *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Handler, Richard. 1985. On dialogue and destructive analysis: Problems in narrating nationalism and ethnicity. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 41(2):171-182.
- Marcus, George E., and Richard Cushman. Ethnographies as texts. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 11: 25-69.
- Ong, Walter J. 1975. The writer's audience is always a fiction. *PMLA* 90(1): 9-21
- Ramos, Alcida. 1987. Reflecting on the Yanomami: Ethnographic images and the pursuit of the exotic. *Cultural Anthropology* 2(3): 284-304.
- Richardson, Laurel. 1990. Narrative and sociology. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 19(1): 116-135.
- Rubinstein, Robert L. 1995. Narratives of elder parental death: A structural and cultural analysis. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 9(2):257-276.
- Wolcott, Harry F. 1990. Making a study "more ethnographic." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 19(1): 44-72.

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

- Agar, Michael. 1990. Text and fieldwork: Exploring the excluded middle. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 19(1):73-88.
- Burawoy, Michael. 2003. Revisits: An outline of a theory of reflexive ethnography. *American Sociological Review* 68(5): 645-679
- Falk Moore, Sally. 1987. Explaining the present: Theoretical dilemmas in processual anthropology. *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 14(4): 727-736.
- Goodwin, Jeff, and Ruth Horowitz, 2002. Introduction: The methodological strengths and dilemmas of qualitative sociology." *Qualitative Sociology* 25(1): 33-47.
- Katz, Jack 2004. "On the rhetoric and politics of ethnographic methodology." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 595: 280-308.
- Rosaldo, Michelle. 1980. The use and abuse of anthropology: Reflections on feminism and cross-cultural understanding. *Signs* 5(3): 389-417.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2000. Ire in Ireland. *Ethnography* 1(1): 117-140).
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2004. Parts unknown: Undercover ethnography of the organs-trafficking underworld. *Ethnography* 5(1): 29-73.
- Stoller, Paul. 1989. The son of Rouch: Songhay visions of the Other. Pp. 84-98 in *The Taste of Ethnographic Things*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Whitehead, Tony L. 1980. Identity, subjectivity, and cultural bias in fieldwork. *The Black Scholar* 2(7): 40-44, 83-87.
- Whitehead, Tony L. 1986. Breakdown, resolution and coherence: The fieldwork experience of a big, brown, pretty-talking man in a West Indian community. Pp. -239 in T.L. Whitehead and M.E. Conway (eds.), *Self, Sex and Gender in Cross-Cultural Fieldwork*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

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

- Dickson G. & K.L. Green. 2001. Participatory action research: Lessons learned with aboriginal grandmothers. *Health Care for Women International* 22: 471-482.
- Lassiter, Luke E. Collaborative Ethnography and Public Anthropology. (2005). *Current Anthropology*, 46(1):83-106.

- Lassiter, Luke E. 2001. From "Reading over the Shoulders of Natives" to "Reading alongside Natives", Literally: Toward a Collaborative and Reciprocal Ethnography. (2001). *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 57(2):137-149
- Mohatt G.V., Hazel K.L., Allen J., et al. 2004. Unheard Alaska: Culturally anchored participatory action research on sobriety with Alaska Natives. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 33: 263-273.
- Rocheleau, Dianne E. 1994. Participatory research and the race to save the planet: Questions, critique, and lessons from the field. *Agriculture and Human Values* 11(2-3):4-25.
- Williams, Joan, and Brinton Lykes. 2003. Bridging theory and practice: Using reflexive cycles in feminist participatory action research. *Feminism and Psychology* 13(3):287-294.

December 1: Student Workshop: Presentation of Ethnographies

December 8: Student Workshop: Presentation of Ethnographies