

# Ethnographic Writing

El cuento se torna asombroso: el técnico que los había torturado, le viene a ver a la Doña... queriendo protección porque a raíz de este caso lo iban a botar de su trabajo. Estaba preocupado y le comienza a contar como fue: se me fue la mano. se me fue la mano. y ella, dice, comienza a llorar. ¿por qué lloras? porque él era mi amigo. no deberías de haber hecho eso. si te iba a pagar... si tenía para pagarte. pero él nomás decía, se me fue la mano, se me fue la mano... y al gordo le seguía haciendo tomar. más y más agua. y él llorando. él no era terrorista. yo lo conocía. él trabajaba, trabajaba duro. se dedicaba a trabajar. era mi amigo.

la otra noticia: «han caído dos 'legítimos'» *Doña Flor dice que me puede recibir mañana temprano.*

*Setiembre 6*  
A las 9 de la mañana. Toco la puerta. Está sola. Se fue a la Chacra... Vendrá tarde. Vuelvo en la Noche. Doña Flor triste su amiga le había llevado lejitos le-jos! para sacar plátano y pinón. Doña Flor ahora arrepentida haber ido. Y yo tu mercedito cohibo por haberme dejado plantado. Ella se ríe... ME CUENTA DE LA SRA. QUE VIENE LLORANDO POR SU HERMANO. HAN VIAJADO A COLOMBIA CON SEIS O SIETE MÁS. ESPERAN 'DICE' QUE LOS COLOMBIANOS LOS HAN MATEADO. VINE PUES LLORANDO LA HERMANA... PARA QUE LA DOÑA VIERA QUE LE HABÍA SUCECIDO A SU HERMANO. TRANQUILIZATE, TU HERMANO NO SE HA MURDIDO, SU HERMANO ESTÁ BIEN. LA SRA. NO QUERRÍA CREER... PERO AL POCO RATO LE LLAMAN DESDE QUINÓ...



**ANG 6930 – 21FC**  
**Spring 2017**

Instructor: Richard Kernaghan  
Department of Anthropology  
Turlington Hall B121

**Thurs. 4-6 (10:40-1:40)**  
**CBD 0230**

Office Hours: Weds. 1:00-3:30  
(or by appointment)  
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**Summary:** This class is an ethnographic writing workshop. Throughout the semester will explore the craft of writing in relation to events, circumstances, and predicaments that arise during ethnographic fieldwork. Our main activity as participants will be to write. However, we will also use this forum to foster an extended conversation on strategies and techniques for portraying empirical worlds. Making our own ethnographic writing more adequate to encounters with the worlds we study is the overarching aspiration of the class. To that end we will experiment with ways of rendering our texts more vivid and compelling, not in order to become “good writers” but to hone our attentiveness and sensitivities to discoveries that are pending in past fieldwork experiences and in those still to come.

**Requirements:** (1) regular attendance and engagement in discussions and activities; (2) a writing journal/scrapbook kept throughout the semester that builds upon ethnographic field notes or diaries; (3) a series of brief vignettes (five in all) each based on a different fieldwork scene, experience or encounter; (4) an annotated bibliography of works on ethnography and ethnographic writing; and (5) a term paper.

**Texts:** all required readings for this course can be downloaded from Canvas Course Page. The following titles are *recommended* (but not required) and will be placed on reserve at Library West:

Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, Hill and Wang, 2010  
Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, Duke University Press, 2009.  
Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*, Mariner Books, 2016.  
Lyon, *Conversations with the Dead*, Phaidon Press, 2015.  
Sanjek, *Fieldnotes*, Cornell University Press, 1990.  
Sarraute, *Tropisms*, New Directions, 2015.  
Starn. *Writing Culture and the Life of Anthropology*, Duke University Press, 2015.  
Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This*, University of Chicago Press, 2011.  
Walser, *Microscripts*, New Directions, 2012.

**Attendance:** Please arrive punctually and remain until the end of class. An attendance sign-up sheet will be circulated each session. If you must miss class, please inform me ahead of time (or as soon as possible) and provide appropriate documentation. In the event of an absence your responsibility to contact a classmate in order to obtain notes on the materials covered while away.

Absences for reasons of religious holiday, illness, and official university business are excused; however, proper notification should be provided. **Please note:** Multiple absences will undermine performance in the course. For official UF Policy on attendance and absences please consult: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

**Evaluations** – Final course grades will be calculated according to a combination of four criteria:

**Participation (20%):** A grade will be assessed at the end of the semester based on the degree to which you have played an active, informed role in class discussions, and in so doing contributed to the course's overall success. Therefore, it is important to arrive at each session on time, with the assigned materials in hand, and prepared to share impressions, questions and interpretations. You are also highly encouraged to meet with me individually in office hours to talk about your writing and on-going work towards the final project.

**Ethnographic vignettes (30%):** These five writing exercises (maximum 500 words each) are intended to give you a chance to narrate a crucial event or work up a striking detail from your own fieldwork experiences. The vignette could explore the play of light, shadow and dust at a certain hour of the day in a place you have frequented. It might register the sonorous reverberations of water upon a nearby shore—or else the colors and textures of boats you found beached there as you watched the daily rhythms of men and women whose livelihoods depend on the sea. Perhaps, you will write about the sensory/corporeal demands of a busy city intersection at night or about the crash that almost happened there. You might describe the signature way in which a close friend tells stories or even reveal the fieldwork discovery that came to you in a dream. Here the ‘what’ matters but only in proportion to the vividness with which it is brought forth in writing.

**Annotated bibliography (20%):** This document should be selective, not exhaustive, featuring at least ten but no more than twenty entries. The relevance of each title to the participant’s ethnographic writing should be made explicit in the brief description that accompanies it.

**Term project paper (30%):** The final paper should be an original and creative piece of ethnographic writing. Of approximately 5500-7000 words in length, ideally it will contribute directly towards the development of a conference paper, journal article or dissertation chapter.

The final paper must be typed and double-spaced with one-inch margins and pages numbered. Please do not forget to staple. In addition to handing in a hard copy of the assignment, *you are also required to submit an electronic version via Canvas.*

**Assignment Deadlines:**

- 1) ethnographic vignette deadlines : TBA
- 2) final paper & annotated bibliography: Apr. 13

**Late policy:** Assignments are due at the beginning of class of the calendar deadline. Papers handed in late but still within one week of the original due date will be docked the equivalent of a full letter grade. After that they will no longer be accepted. No extensions will be granted for the final term paper.

**Academic Honesty:** All work submitted for a grade must be free from unauthorized assistance or deliberate misrepresentations of one’s own effort. The penalty for plagiarism or cheating is a grade of zero points on the assignment in question.

If you have questions about what constitutes academic misconduct, please consult the UF Honor Code as well as the UF Policies on Academic Honesty, Student Rights and Responsibilities. See <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/student-honor-code.aspx>, also <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/seminars-modules/academic-integrity-module>

**Accommodations for students with disabilities:** The University of Florida is committed to providing academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities

requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, a student should present his/her accommodation letter to me supporting a request for accommodations. The University encourages students with disabilities to follow these procedures as early as possible within the semester.

**Grading:** The following scale will be used for grades on all assignments and exams: 94-100=A; 90-93=A-; 87-89=B+; 83-86=B; 79-82=B-; 76-78=C+; 72-75=C; 69-71=C-; 66-68=D+; 62-65=D; 59-61=D-; 58 and below=E (failing).

**Course feedback:** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

### **Additional UF Resources:**

#### Health & Wellness

- U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) or 352 392- 1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student
- University Counseling & Wellness Center, 3190 Radio Road (392-1575)  
<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/>
- University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies
- Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161
- Student Health Care Center (392-1161) <http://shcc.ufl.edu/>

#### Academic

- Teaching Center, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.  
<http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>
- The Writing Studio, 302 Tigert Hall (864-1138)  
<http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/for-students/>
- Career Resource Center, Reitz Union (392-1601) <http://www.crc.ufl.edu/>
- Library Support, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

**Please note:** I may make minor adjustments to class readings during the course of the semester. Any and all modifications will be announced ahead of time.

## Course Schedule

### **week 1        introductions**

1/5        film: Letters from Home (dir. Akerman)

### **week 2        writing encounters**

1/12        Hurston, “Turpentine Camp – Cross City”

Hurston, *Mules and Men* (excerpt)

Stewart, “The Point of Precision”

### **week 3        drawing**

1/19        Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This* (selected chapters)

Calvino, “Visibility”

Blanchot, “Diary and Story”

notebooks from Burroughs’ *Ports of Entry* exhibition

### **week 4        field work and notes**

1/26        Walser, *Microscripts* (excerpts)

Rabinow, “Ali: An Insider’s Outsider”

videos from *Labor in a Single Shot* project (Antje Ehmman and Harun Farocki)

**week 5            which voices?**

2/2            Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (select passages)

Burroughs, "The Cut-Up"

Stewart, "Precarity's Forms"

**week 6            where nothing happens**

2/9            Benjamin, "The Handkerchief"

Cadava, "Traces" & "Nightdreams" from *Words of Light*

**week 7            pictures still and moving**

2/16            Lyon, *Conversations with the Dead*

Barthes, "The Third Meaning"

film: Rebecca Baron's, "The Idea of North"

**week 8            when things look back**

2/23            Bennett, "The Force of Things"

Calvino, "Multiplicity"

"The idea of Still: interview with Rebecca Baron"

**week 9            speech situations**

3/2            Sarraute, "Conversations and sub-conversations"

Sarraute, *Tropisms*

<b>week 10</b>	<b>no class</b>
3/9	Spring Break
	Barthes, <i>Camera Lucida</i> (select passages)
<b>week 11</b>	<b>clichés</b>
3/16	D.H. Lawrence, "Cezanne"
	Deleuze, "The Painting before Painting"
<b>week 12</b>	<b>of dreams</b>
3/23	Blanchot, "Dreaming, Writing"
	Leiris, <i>Night without Day, Day without Night</i> (excerpts)
<b>week 13</b>	<b>final presentations</b>
3/30	writing workshop
<b>week 14</b>	<b>final presentations</b>
4/6	writing workshop
<b>week 15</b>	<b>final presentations</b>
4/13	writing workshop