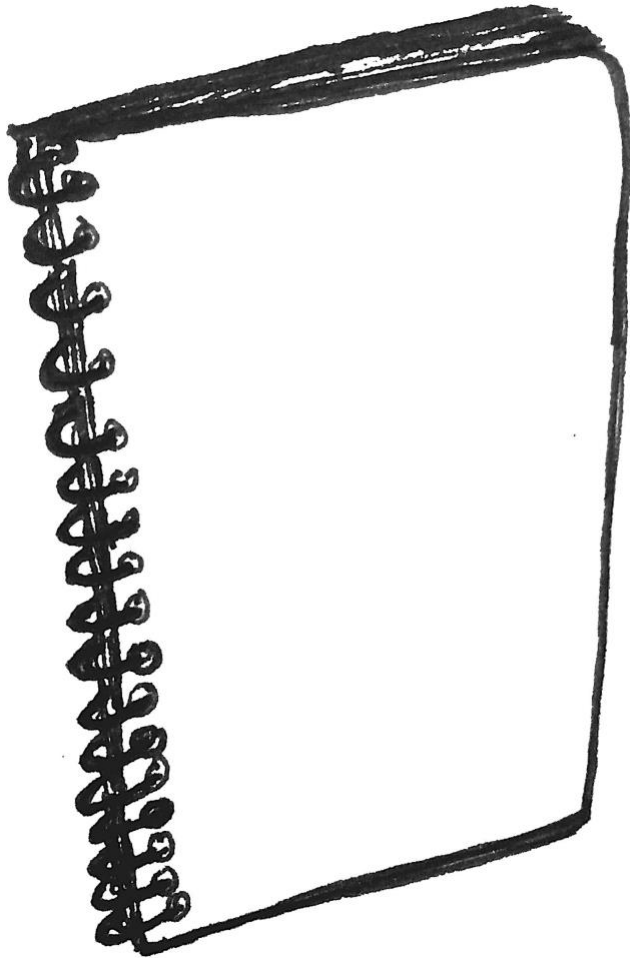


Ethnographic Writing

F a l l 2 0 2 4



ANG 6804 • 29894 • Section RK68 • CSE E220

Thursdays | Periods 6 - 8 (12:50 PM - 3:50 PM)

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office hours: Mondays 1 :00- 3:00 pm
(or by appointment)

Description: Explores the craft of writing for rendering events, circumstances, and predicaments of ethnographic fieldwork. Introduces strategies and techniques for portraying empirical worlds and provides skills needed to make ethnographic representations more discerning, vibrant and adequate to lived encounters of field research.

Summary: This class is an ethnographic writing workshop. Throughout the semester we 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.

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Course Learning Goals: By the end of this class, students should be able to:

1. identify contemporary trends in ethnographic expression;
2. analyze key concepts and concerns of fieldwork-based writing;
3. craft short ethnographic descriptions, exploring the potentials and limits of the written form;
4. maintain a writing journal/scrapbook within a larger archive of fieldwork materials;
5. write an extended ethnographic essay that is vivid, compelling and insightful.

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

Texts: Most assigned readings for this course can be downloaded from Canvas Course Page (under Files).*

The following titles are *recommended* (but mostly not required); they will be placed on reserve at Library West:

- Ballestero et al., *Experimenting with Ethnography*, Duke University Press, 2021.
Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, Hill & Wang, 2010.
Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, Duke University Press, 2009.
Kernaghan, *Crossing the Current*, Stanford University Press, 2022.
Leiris, *Phantom Africa*, Seagull Books, 2017.
Morley [Caldeira Brand] & Bishop, *The diary of Helena Morley*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1995.
Pandian & McLean, *Crumpled Paper Boat*, Duke University Press, 2017.

* The lone exception, Sarraute's *Tropisms*, will hopefully be accessible as an ebook via course reserves.

Perec, *Life: A User's Manual*, Verba Mundi, 2009.
Sanjek, *Fieldnotes*, Cornell University Press, 1990.
Sarraute, *Tropisms*, New Directions, 2015.
Starn, *Writing Culture & the Life of Anthropology*, Duke University Press, 2015.
Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, Duke University Press, 2007
Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This*, University of Chicago Press, 2011.
Walser, *Microscripts*, New Directions, 2012.

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Attendance: As a courtesy to all, please arrive punctually and remain until the end of class. If you must miss a session, please inform me ahead of time (or as soon as possible) and provide appropriate documentation (*except for religious holidays*). In such cases you are responsible for contacting a classmate to obtain notes on materials and topics covered while away.

In accord with university attendance policies ([click here to read](#)), absences for reasons of illness, religious holiday, and official university business are excused.

If the absence is planned, please notify me ahead of time and as early as possible.

If the absence is unplanned, then as soon as it is feasible for you to do so.

Please note: Since participation as well as assimilation of class materials depend upon attendance, multiple absences (4 & above) will undermine academic performance and may even risk failing. Students, however, with perfect or near perfect attendance will receive bonus credit.

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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 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.

participation grading scheme

5% / 5 points - i. regular, punctual attendance

5% / 5 points - ii. attentive listening, informed contributions during in-class conversations

5% / 5 points - iii. participation in two peer review activities

5% / 5 points - iv. effective communication with instructor (i.e. email, office hours, etc.)

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. Anywhere from 4000 to 6000 words in length, ideally it will contribute directly towards the development of a conference paper, journal article or dissertation chapter.

All assignments should be submitted via Canvas.

Assignment Deadlines:

- 1) ethnographic vignettes: 8/29; 9/12; 9/26; 10/10; 10/24
- 2) abstract for Final Paper: 10/17
- 3) annotated bibliography: 11/21
- 4) Final Paper: 11/21

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, unless justified by mitigating circumstances (e.g. a documented accident, illness, etc.). *Please note:* For the final paper extensions are generally not granted, except in special, extenuating cases, as mentioned above, and in accordance with university policies (those policies may be consulted by clicking [here](#)).

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Academic Honesty: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Student Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by Students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible

sanctions. [Click here to read the Honor Code](#). Furthermore, you are encouraged to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Grading: The following scale will be used for grades on all assignments: 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). [Click this link to consult current UF policies for grades and grading](#).

Course feedback: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. [Click here for guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. [Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students here](#).

In-Class Recording: Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

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Additional UF Resources:

Health & Wellness

- *U Matter, We Care:* If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center:* Visit the [Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center:* Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the [Student Health Care Center website](#).
- *University Police Department:* Visit [UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#)

Academic

- *E-learning technical support*: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- *Career Connections Center*: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- *Library Support*: The [UF Libraries](#) provide access to numerous resources and services that will help you succeed in this course. Access thousands of [online databases, books, and articles](#) or visit one of the branch locations for additional [resources, services, and study spaces](#). Further, as this class requires students to complete a bibliography, research paper, or project, both the [Anthropology Library Guide](#) and the [Anthropology Assignment Guide](#) may be of assistance. You can also contact the [Anthropology Librarian](#) directly for help with developing your research topic/question, searching for sources, and evaluating information. And you can also [Ask A Librarian](#) for help by email, chat, text, or phone.
- *Teaching Center*: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- *Writing Studio*: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- *Student Complaints On-Campus*: [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.](#)
- *On-Line Students Complaints*: [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.](#)
- *Anthropology Library Guide*: <http://guides.uflib.ufl.edu/c.php?g=147739&p=969917>

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

Course Schedule

week 1 painting & translating

8/22 Sarraute, *Tropisms* (excerpt)

Morrison, "Site of Memory"

Leiris, "The Sacred of Everyday Life"

film: *Reassemblage* (Trinh T. Minh Ha)

week 2 writing encounters

8/29 Perec, "Approaches to what?"

Hurston, "Turpentine Camp – Cross City"

Hurston, *Mules and Men* (excerpt)

Stewart, "The Point of Precision"

week 3 actualities

9/5 Blanchot, "Diary and Story"

Ponge, "Crate"; & also, "The Trees Delete Themselves Inside a Fog-Sphere"

Ferry, "the diary of 'Helena Morley'"

Bishop, Forward & Introduction to "*Minha vida de menina*"

"*Minha vida de menina*" (excerpt)

week 4 field | sketch | note | book

9/12 Kincaid, "What I have been doing lately"

Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This*, chapters 1 & 2

Walsler, *Microscripts* (selections)

Perec, *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*

week 5 **writing workshop**

9/19 Burroughs, "The Cut-Up"

Burrough's not so short film: *The Cut Ups* (1966)

excerpts from Burroughs' *Ports of Entry* exhibition

Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This*, chapters 3 & 4

Perec, "Think/Classify"

week 6 **listening: which voices?**

9/26 Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (select passages)

Hunt, "An Acoustic Register"

Peterson, "Murmurs:..." (*Atmospheric Noise*: Chapter 4)

week 7 **speech situations**

10/3 Sarraute, *Tropisms*

Sarraute, "Conversations and sub-conversations"

film: Jeanne Dielman 23 Quai Du Commerce 1080 Bruxelles (Chantal Akerman)

week 8 **when things look back**

10/10 Erdrich, "The Stone"

Ponge, "Matter & Memory"

Bennett, "The Force of Things"

week 9 **pictures still and moving**

10/17 Munira Khayyat, Yasmine Khayyat, Rola Khayyat, "Pieces of Us"

"The idea of Still: interview with Rebecca Baron"

film: The Idea of North (Rebecca Baron)

week 10 **writing workshop**

10/24 Robbe-Grillet, "From Realism to Reality"

Bénabou, "Rule & Constraint"

Perec, *A Void* (excerpt)

Garréta, "To sleep, perchance to dream"

week 11 **of dreams**

10/31 Cortazar, "Night Face Up"

Leiris, *Night without Day, Day without Night* (excerpts)

Blanchot, "Dreaming, Writing"

week 12 **"husky, dark, metallic..."**

11/7 Benjamin, "The Handkerchief"

Peterson, "Vibrating Matter" (*Atmospheric Noise*: Chapter 5)

Ballesterio, "Doña Ana and the Possibilities of De-objectified Sound"

week 13

cliché

11/14

D.H. Lawrence, "Cezanne"

Deleuze, "The Painting before Painting"

Grespi, "The Technical Object and Somatic Thought"

week 14

final project presentations

11/21

with group critique exercise