

## SYLLABUS

### ANTH 417/517: RESEARCH METHODS IN CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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**Course Description.** This course is designed for students who may go on to conduct fieldwork in cultural anthropology or related fields, or who want to gain practical appreciation of what goes into the research that they read about in their classes. It is designed to give students an introduction to qualitative and quantitative methods in cultural anthropology through both theory and practice. It provides pragmatic experience with a basic toolkit of field research methods, providing a foundation for the student will later plan and execute their own research project. It also teaches students to assess which methods are most appropriate to answering different kinds of questions under different circumstances. It focuses on pragmatic aspects of: intellectual preparation, ethical considerations, and issues associated with health, and gender; choosing appropriate methods and the tradeoffs between different methodological approaches; systematic data collection methods: mapping, census, behavioral observation, structured and unstructured interview techniques, genealogy and kinship, formal and informal procedures for investigating emic perspectives, questionnaires and surveys.

The course is designed around weekly assignments completed at a local field site chosen in consultation with the professor. Although collaborative field projects have distinct advantages, and most researchers now have internet or other communication access in the field to which they can turn to for advice during fieldwork, this class follows, in microcosm, the process of field work in preparation for the student to set up their own fieldsite and to be self-reliant once in the field. This will immerse students in the process of fieldwork, while acquiring hands-on proficiency with planning and application of the methods discussed in class. It also provides hands-on experience fine tuning different methods to fit particular field circumstances.

**Student Learning Outcomes.** By the end of the term, students should be able to

- 1) Be able to conduct an efficient and thorough literature search
- 2) Explain the role of research methods in social science and cultural anthropology
- 3) Describe the history and reasons for formal conventions for the ethical conduct of research involving human subjects, and the establishment of committees for the protection of human subjects in research, as well as the process and criteria of review including:
  - a. what constitutes research with human subjects
  - b. the principles upon which ethical research with human subjects are based
  - c. criteria for exempt, expedited and full review
  - d. different categories of risk and what constitutes reasonable precautions to minimize these risks
  - e. what constitutes informed consent
- 4) Describe the different sampling strategies and the research costs and benefits of each one with respect to generalizability

- 5) Describe validity, the different kinds of validity and its assessment; reliability; precision and accuracy
- 6) Describe and apply the following research methods, and assess the kinds of questions for which they are most appropriate, the relative costs and benefits of applying each: taking field notes; keeping a journal; creating and tracking a budget; participant observation; scan sampling; focal follows; experiments; structured, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews.

### **Course Format.**

This is a lecture, in class discussion, and independent assignment hands on learning course. Please note and take seriously that although this class has readings and lectures, it is NOT a standard reading, lecture, exam type class. It is a learn it and do it course requiring a commitment to engaging in planning and executing the weekly fieldwork and other assignments. This will entail a variety of unexpected time and other kinds of delays just in real fieldwork, so you cannot leave assignments until the last minute. Simply completing readings and lectures and then going through the motions of completing the assignments will be frustrating and ultimately not very useful. Missing class will leave you confused as to the details of how to go about doing the assignments, because an hour of class time each week is devoted to helping students plan to apply the method taught to students unique situations. Commitment to learning field methods, commitment to actively engaging in the fieldwork assignments in the course, and commitment to spending the time necessary to do a good job on the assignments are mandatory for success in this class. For those who wish to make these commitments and carry through with them, this class should provide ample rewards in terms of your development as an anthropologist.

### **Grading Rubric.**

Grading is done on a straight percentage scale. Your grade in the course will be based on the total points you earn on your final grade for weekly assignments, each of which is worth 10 points (see below for policy regarding “redo and resubmit.” An incomplete grade will be used in accordance with the official university grading policy, which can be found at [http://registrar.uoregon.edu/incomplete\\_policy](http://registrar.uoregon.edu/incomplete_policy)

A+ = 97-100%	A = 93-96.9%	A- = 90-92.9%
B+ = 87-89.9%	B = 83-86.9%	B- = 80-82.9%
C+ = 77-79.9%	C = 73-76.9%	C- = 70-72.9%
D+ = 67-69.9%	D = 63-66.9%	D- = 60-62.9%
F = < 59.9%		

### Expected levels of performance:

**A+:** Quality of student's performance significantly exceeds all requirements and expectations required for an A grade. Very few, if any, students receive this grade in a given course.

**A:** Quality of performance is outstanding relative to that required to meet course requirements; demonstrates mastery of course content at the highest level.

**B:** Quality of performance is significantly above that required to meet course requirements; demonstrates mastery of course content at a high level.

**C:** Quality of performance meets the course requirements in every respect; demonstrates adequate understanding of course content.

**D:** Quality of performance is at the minimal level necessary to pass the course, but does not fully meet the course requirements; demonstrates a marginal understanding of course content.

**F:** Quality of performance in the course is unacceptable and does not meet the course requirements; demonstrates an inadequate understanding of course content.

### **Course Requirements.**

Course materials (e.g., syllabus, readings, assignments, films) are posted on the course website on canvas, with readings and assignments posted for each week, according to the **Course Schedule**, below). The text is available open access online, and will be posted in canvas for your convenience, as will supplementary readings.

Each week, you are required to complete a reading assignment, attend lectures, and complete an assignment. **All assignments are due on the due date at the beginning of class.** Most assignments involve formulation of a question to be answered and application of a particular research methods at a local fieldsite, chosen in consultation with the professor. Assignments involve the application of materials, methods and evaluation of those methods presented in class, and an assessment of any issues faced in application of those methods, and assessment of the relative costs and benefits of using the method at your field site. The final assignment is a synthesis of your assignments, including summary of results and conclusions and an assessment of various methods employed, as well as a hypothetical research plan for answering particular questions at your field site, over the course of a one-year research project.

**Graduate Students**, in addition to completing undergraduate requirements, will, for each weekly assignment, also write a plan for application of the assignment materials for their anticipated or proposed Masters or Dissertation research project. They will also read two classic ethnographic monographs over the course of the term, chosen in consultation with the instructor, and describe and assess the methods used and results reported in terms of validity, reliability, precision, and accuracy, as well as the real-world constraints and costs and benefits of those methods.

### **A word on field research and course assignments and grading:**

The process of fieldwork, as you will find, may include setbacks, unanticipated events, potentially uncomfortable situations, self-doubt, and, if you do it right and pick a place of interest to you, new insights into a place or issue of interest, a new appreciation of research and, hopefully fun, fun, fun. Nevertheless you are likely to find that you feel at least slightly unprepared for at least some of the assignments. This is due to a number of factors:

- 1) you have not used the particular research techniques before,
- 2) general discomfiture that always comes with working in a novel field setting,
- 3) you will be doing things that are outside the basic social frameworks with which you are accustomed,
- 4) each fieldwork setting entails different unanticipated challenges with which the individual fieldworker (YOU) needs to deal (in consultation with me of course),

5) the course is an overview of methods, so you will not have sufficient time to hone your skills at any 1 particular method before moving on to the next.

The best way to get through these problems is to do what all researchers do when confronted with such problems: first plan and prepare as thoroughly as possible, then get on with it and reassess. Minimize mistakes, refine your techniques, and try it again. With that in mind, you may ***redo and resubmit assignments*** on which you received the equivalent of C or better the first time around. I allow you to do this for assignments 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 only.

### **Student Workload.**

**Undergraduates:** In this course, you may expect to spend an average of approximately 3 hours a week attending lectures, average of 2 hours a week on the reading material (20-100 pages per week), 2-3 hours per week planning fieldwork assignment, 3-4 hours per week executing the fieldwork assignment and/or redoing a previous assignment, and 3 hours per week writing up your assignment(s) (this includes for the final assignment, as no other assignment is given in week ten), for a total of 13-15 hours per week, or 130-150 hours per term. It should be noted that students vary in the time they need to complete these activities: some students may find that they need less time to meet the course requirements, and some may find that they need more.

**Graduate students:** In addition to workload expected of undergraduate students, you may expect to spend an additional 36 hrs per term distributed as follows: 1 hour per week planning, and 2 hours per week writing up mock application of the fieldwork assignment for their anticipated or proposed Masters or Dissertation research project, and an additional 2 hours per week reading of classic ethnography for a total of 16-18 hrs per week devoted to the course, as well as an additional 6 hours total over the term to write up your methodological evaluation of these. In sum then, you should expect to devote between 166 and 186 hours over the term. Again, some students may find that they need less time to meet the course requirements, and some may find that they need more.

### **Accessible Education.**

The University of Oregon is dedicated to the principles of equal opportunity in education and accepts diversity as an affirmation of individual identity within a welcoming community. Disability is recognized as an aspect of diversity integral to the university and to society. Appropriate accommodations will be provided for students with documented disabilities. If you anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please contact me asap and send me a notification letter from Disability Services outlining your accommodations. Please see the following link for more information: <http://aec.uoregon.edu/>

### **Academic Honesty.**

Academic misconduct is a violation of the UO Student Conduct Code, which prohibits the “act of cheating, fabrication, and plagiarism. Examples: looking at another person’s exam, making up lab results, and failing to cite sources in a paper.” Listening to lectures, watching films, and studying with other students in the class is allowed and encouraged, but all tests and assignments must be done independently. All work submitted for this course must be your own,

and produced exclusively for this class. Any student who engages in academic dishonesty risks failing the class.

### **Open Learning Environment.**

The intention of university level courses is to provide open, thoughtful forums for a wide variety of topics. While discussing these topics, students shall comply with University policy, as follows: “The University of Oregon affirms and actively promotes the right of all individuals to equal opportunity in education and employment at this institution without regard to race, color, sex, national origin, age, religion, marital status, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or any other consideration not directly and substantively related to effective performance. This policy implements all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and executive orders” as outlined in the handbook on the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. <http://aeo.uoregon.edu/AAEO%20Booklet%20Color.pdf>

Please note that fieldwork in cultural anthropology usually involves engagement with people whose views, opinions, gender relations, foods, economic and other behaviors are different from those of the researchers own culture, and a regular part of fieldwork is learning about, and working within, this context. Therefore, some of our discussions will be quite frank, regarding safety, hygiene and the like.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

Notation on readings:

“Bernard” refers to, HR Bernard. 2006. *Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Alta Mira.

“Chagnon” refers to, NA Chagnon. 1974. *Studying the Yanomamo*. Holt/Rinehart/Winston.

**WEEK 1:** Course overview, expectations, and grading. Guest presentation by Research Compliance Services regarding Research Ethics and Human Subjects Compliance.

### **I. Overview of Field Research**

- a) Introduction: Brief introduction to Social science, ethnography, ethnology, and the role of research methods. Basic terminology.
- b) Overview, Process of Field Research.
- c) Choosing a field site, research question, and methods.

**II. Research Ethics: Formal Conventions for the ethical conduct of research involving human subjects. Human Subjects Compliance**

### ***Readings:***

Bernard: Chapter 1 (pps 1-27), *Anthropology and Social Science*

Bernard: Chapter 2 (pp 28-68). *The foundations of Social Research*

**Assignment 1:** Preliminary choice of field site. Potential ethical problems with choice of subject population.

**WEEK 2: Literature search, Participant observation, (Assignment 1 due)**

- I. Social science, and the role of research methods elaborated.
- II. Doing a literature search: Area, theory, and methods.
- III. Preparing for the Field
- IV. Culture Shock
- IV. Participant Observation

**Readings:**

Belmont report:

Bernard: Chapter 3 Preparing for Research, pp 69-96.

Chagnon: preface-45. First contact with the Mishimishimaboweiteri.

**Assignment 2:**

- a) Literature Search on information relevant to field site.
- b) Practice Research Compliance and Informed consent.

**WEEK 3: (Assignment 2a, b, due)**

- I. Cultural relativism revisited.
- II. If you didn't write it down, it didn't happen!
  - a) Keeping a Journal
  - b) Taking and managing field notes.
  - c) Census
- III. Where am I, where are they, and what is here? Mapping the field site.

**Readings:**

Bernard: Chapter 14. Field notes. Pp 387-412.

Bernard: Chapter 6. Sampling. Pp 169-186

Chagnon: Chapter 5. The difficulties of being relative when you are a relative of the one-who-lives-there. Pp 162-197

**Assignment 3:**

- a) Map it!

**Assignment 4a, 4b begin.**

- 4a. Keep a journal.
- 4b. Take good notes and date them!

**WEEK 4: (Assignment 3 due).**

- I. Validity and Reliability

- II. Sampling procedures.
- III. Direct (Reactive) Observation
  - a) Continuous monitoring
    - focal group
    - focal person
  - b) Scan, or spot sampling and Time allocation studies.

**Readings:**

Bernard: Chapter 7: Sampling Theory. Pp 169-196.

Bernard: Chapter 15: Direct and Indirect Observations. Pp. 413-450

**Assignment 5:** Spot (Scan) Sampling

**WEEK 5: (turn in copies of 4a, 4b to date)**

- I. Validity and Reliability 2: Choosing appropriate methods.
- II. Descriptive Statistics (overview)
- III. Experimental Studies

**Readings**

Bernard: Chapter 12: Scales and Scaling. Pp 318-341.

**Assignment 6:** Focal Person Follow

**WEEK 6: (assignment 5 due)**

- I. Quantitative analysis, conceptual bases for simple statistical testing (conceptual overview)
- II. Unstructured and Semi-Structured Interviewing

**Readings:**

Bernard: Chapter 9. Interviewing: Unstructured and Semistructured. Pp 210-250.

**Assignment 7:** Unstructured Interview

**WEEK 7: (assignment 6 Due)**

- I. Structured Interviewing techniques

**Readings:**

Bernard: Chapter 10. Structured Interviewing I: Questionnaires. Pp 251-298.

Bernard: Chapter 11. Structured Interviewing: Cultural Domain Analysis. Pp 299-317.

**Assignment 8:** Structured Interviews

**WEEK 8: (assignment 7 due; turn in 4a, 4b to date)**

- I. Genealogical method
- II. Cross-cultural comparison
- III. Using the HRAF
- IV. Coding qualitative data

**Readings**

Chagnon: Chapter 3. Genealogies, notes and data organization. Pp. 88-161.

**Assignment 9: Genealogy**

**WEEK 9: (Assignment 8 due)**

- I. Qualitative data analysis
- II. Survey Research
- III. Whew! Make sure you are up to date on assignments that need to be redone.

**Readings:**

Bernard: Chapter 11

**WEEK 10: (assignment 9 due; 4a, 4b to date)**

- I. Research design considerations in retrospect.
- II. Culture shock and returning from the field.
- III. Presenting your research.

**Readings:**

**Assignment 10: Presentation of Findings: problems, new questions to ask and ways to ask them.**

**Final Exam date: (Assignment 10 due)**