ANTH 611 (CRN 20552):
ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH: Epistemologies, Methods, and Ethics

This course introduces students to ethnographic fieldwork by integrating the actual practice of research methods with theoretical readings on methodology. Drawing primarily from anthropology and folklore, topics include identifying a subject of study or a field site, developing appropriate research strategies methods, initiating fieldwork, establishing rapport, and analyzing reflexivity, representation, ethics, activism, collaboration, and visual, sound and digital technology. Each student will conceptualize and execute a fieldwork project that dovetails with their graduate research in their own discipline.

A goal of this seminar is to understand the complex relationships among epistemology, the production of knowledge, ethnographic methods, and the production of texts. While the course allows students to practice and experiment with a variety of ethnographic techniques, a fundamental focus is on understanding how particular methods are driven by the larger ethical, political, and theoretical frameworks and epistemologies in which they are embedded. We will look at a variety of perspectives, including: understanding meaning, creating “objective” or “subjective” knowledge, decolonizing anthropology, and tackling multi-sited fieldwork. Our discussions will foster critique, debate, and some degree of discomfort as we question some of the traditional tenants of research.

The course introduces students to a variety of techniques in ethnographic fieldwork including oral and life histories, interviewing, focus groups, media analysis, event analysis, as well as participant observation. The basic assumption behind our explorations is that we cannot study “methods” in isolation, but must tie them to particular purposes of knowledge creation, and ethical, and theoretical choices. Finally, the course is also concerned with the kinds of political and personal relationships ethnographers build and maintain with those they work with as well as the political implications of how they work and what they do with the information they gather.

The most important resources in the class are the individual skills, experiences and research agendas of the students. A primary part of the course will be hearing about and learning from each other’s experiences. Several classes will be spent on students’ fieldwork presentations, and the remainder of the class is also student-led.

I welcome discussion with students during office hours, by appointment, or by email or telephone. I have a comment bag available at every class.

Respect for the instructor and fellow students is imperative. Some of the material in this class may be controversial. It is important that we listen to and respond civilly to one another, even when we don’t agree. I encourage everyone to participate and express their opinions freely. Please advise us of your pronouns.
If you need accommodation for any reason, please the Accessible Education Center, 346-1155, uoaec@uoregon.edu.

Please turn off all mobile devices during class. Computer use is permitted for lecture and section related activities, such as note taking.

Academic Integrity:
The University of Oregon’s policies on academic honesty and plagiarism can be found at conduct.uoregon.edu. Students are prohibited from committing or attempting to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. For example, students must properly acknowledge and document all sources of information (e.g. quotations, paraphrases, ideas). This includes material from the Internet. If you submit plagiarized work, you will be penalized and reported to the Office of the Dean of Students. Additional information is available at http://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism.

The class utilizes a Canvas site. Under Syllabus and also under Modules, Course Documents, you will find the syllabus and a list of anthropological definitions. Under Modules, Readings you will find most of the readings. Note that journalistic and newspaper articles, blogs, videos, etc., are online via urls provided in the syllabus; some of these articles are also on Canvas. Some optional articles are also on Canvas. Please use the syllabus to distinguish between required and optional readings.

Canvas Discussions is the site to post your presentation summaries, comments, further materials, and to ask questions.

Course requirements
1. 10% of the grade is based on attendance. Please notify me in advance if you are requesting an excused absence. Late arrivals and departures will count as an absence.

2. 20% of the grade is based on oral participation. Discussion is the mode of the course. Students are required to sign up for one date on which to present and lead discussion in class on the readings/videos. Using Canvas Discussion, students are required to post outlines and discussion questions on the readings/videos prior to their oral presentations (approximately 2 pp. single spaced). Please include a short bio of the author. The deadline is 6 PM of the day previous to the presentation. This is 5% of your grade. 6% is for general participation.

3. 40% of the grade is based on 2 installments of an evaluative/interpretive/critical journal on the required readings/films. I suggest that students write a few pages per session, and have them ready before class. These pages can then be re-thought, expanded and/or edited into the journal. Journal guidelines are at the end of syllabus.

The first written installment is 8 pages, due Feb 3 in class, and covers the readings/films through Jan 29 (20%).
The second is 8 pages, due March 4 in class, and covers the readings/films through Feb 26 (20%).

4. Fieldwork Project (30%): Those students who are already engaged in fieldwork projects will use their past experiences and build on them. Those planning ethnographic research will engage in activities to facilitate their larger project. Everyone will engage in a series of new exercises to help them refine and expand their methods for their graduate work.

To accomplish this goal, choose at least 2-3 of the following ethnographic activities (or others approved by the instructor) that you feel you need for your graduate work:

- interview (structured or unstructured)
- focus group
- qualitative survey
- oral or life history
- participant observation of an event
- general participant observation
- participatory learning

If you are doing digital or media ethnographic fieldwork, explain how 2-3 of these ethnographic methods/activities will dovetail with your work.

In addition, try to ensure that one activity takes place in an insider framework and one in an outsider framework. Finally, identify HOW you will document the activity: e.g., fieldnotes, audio recording, photographs, video, etc.

NOTE: Institutional Research Board (IRB) approval is required if your project is already part of your graduate work.

A proposal for your 2-3 activities and how they relate to your larger project is due Jan. 15 (1-2 pp.). Students are encouraged to meet with me to discuss possible projects/plans. Collaborative projects are welcome.

Each student will write an original paper (8 pp. double spaced) describing and analyzing their fieldwork activities in relationship to their project (30%). Due Thurs. March 19, 10:14 AM.

Each student will present and discuss their fieldwork activities twice in class:
- Feb 10, 12, and 17: progress reports (10 minutes each)
- March 4, 9, and 11: final presentations (20 minutes each).

Please sign up for 2 slots: 1 progress report and 1 final presentation.

The grading system used in this course is as follows:
A – Outstanding performance relative to that required to meet course requirements; demonstrates a mastery of course content at the highest level.
B – Performance that is significantly above that required to meet course requirements; demonstrates a mastery of course content at a high level.
C – Performance that meets the course requirements in every respect; demonstrates an adequate
understanding of course content.
D – Performance that 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 – Performance in the course is unacceptable and does not meet the course
requirements; demonstrates an inadequate understanding of the course content

I ordered several books for the Duck Store-- all are optional.

PDFs of the following 2 books are on Canvas:

Approaches* (4th ed).

Useful ebook via UO library:
Anthropology*. Rowman and Littlefield.

These websites are useful:
National Centre for Research Methods (UK)  [https://www.ncrm.ac.uk/](https://www.ncrm.ac.uk/)
[http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/view/subjects/](http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/view/subjects/)
[http://anthropology.ua.edu/cultures/cultures.php](http://anthropology.ua.edu/cultures/cultures.php)

**Course Schedule**

1. **Jan 6.** Introductions. Goals of the course. Thematic issues. Planning ethnographic research.
From field to text: methods and writing. What is ethnography? What is your favorite
ethnography and why do you like it? What kinds of theoretical and methodological contributions
does it make? What is the standpoint of the author? How is the narrative framed? What voices
are present in the book and how are they represented? What voices are absent? How are
fieldwork methods addressed?

2. **Jan 8** Fieldwork, truths, and objectivity. Epistemology: What is the purpose of ethnographic
knowledge? How do we study "culture?" What are the goals of ethnography? How have
traditional understandings of research and ethnography been challenged? How can we handle
the issue of representation? What happens when the subjects speak back?

Sluka, Jeffrey, and A. Robben. Fieldwork in Cultural Anthropology: An Introduction. In
Blackwell.


Schensul, Stephen, Jean J. Schensul, and Margaret Diane LeCompte, 1999. Essential Ethnographic Methods, chapter 4 Entering the Field, pp. 69-89, and chapter 5 Exploratory or Open-Ended Observation, pp. 91-120. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.


5. Jan 20. MLK Holiday

6. Jan 22. Interviews: variations and techniques; focus groups; ethnographic conversations.


How to do a research interview, Graham Gibbs
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9t--hYjAKww&feature=youtu.be

Glance through: Agar, Michael and James Mac Donald. 1995. Focus Groups and Ethnography Human Organization 54 (1): 78-86


http://www.academiccommons.org/commons/essay/theorizing-through-digital-stories

Optional: Video with and about Benmayor: U Stories: Latina Life Stories  
www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLbh2gw8EsA

Glance through: http://mediatedcultures.net/michael-wesch/

Jan. 28. Dr. Dana Hercberg (Folklore, Univ. of Penn) lecture, Narrative and Memory in Jerusalem: Seeking the Implicit in Ethnography, 5 PM 204 Condon.


10. Feb 5. Reciprocal/Feminist Ethnography

Lawless, Elaine J. 1992. "I was afraid someone like you... an outsider... would misunderstand": Negotiating Interpretive Differences between Ethnographers and Subjects. *Journal of American Folklore* 105:302-14.

https://www.google.com/books/edition/Writing_Friendship/SO6_DwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover

11. Feb 10. Fieldwork project progress reports.

12. Feb 12. Ethnography and colonialism. What is the historical relationship between anthropology (and other kinds of research) and colonialism? How have traditional forms of western knowledge production subordinated marginalized peoples? What is an indigenous research agenda? What kinds of projects are useful to marginalized people? How can we engage in ethical, collaborative research in communities of color?


13. Feb 17. Participatory Action Research. Activist research: current directions


https://crs.ceu.edu/index.php/crs/article/view/16


Glance through these blog posts: https://culanth.org/fieldsights/series/collaboration


15. Feb 26. Film on Barbara Myerhoff’s Fieldwork with Orthodox Jews in Los Angeles: Video: In her Own Time (58 minutes, 1985).

Read the Study Guide on Canvas.

17. March 2. No class.


Final fieldwork project report due Thurs. March 19, 10:15 AM via email and Canvas
Journal Guide (draft)

Points will be deducted for late papers and for papers exceeding the 8 pp. double-spaced page limit. No folders, please: 1" margins, 12 pt font, one staple in left hand corner. Name in header, no further ID needed. You are encouraged to group articles and emphasize theoretical themes, and analytical contrasts and similarities. You may omit 1-2 articles/films at most; please list your omissions at the top. If you cite authors in the required readings, just cite the last name and page number. No bibliography needed for required readings.

1. What are the author's main objectives, goals and agendas?

2. What is the context for the writing of this article/making of this film? To what body of writings or issues does the article relate?

3. What are the major findings?

4. Do you agree with the arguments? why? why not?

5. How does the article relate to the methods and issues and debates previously discussed in class? You may also bring in readings from outside the class, and of course, your own experiences.

6. How do you evaluate the article/film? What questions does it raise for you?