Anthropology 310: Fieldwork in Ethnography

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Semester: Fall 2001 (August 30 – December 15th)
Time: R 2:40-5:10 PM
Place: GH 240
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http://listserv.temple.edu/archives/anthro-310.html

[All] research is a practical activity requiring the exercise of judgment in context; it is not a matter of simply following methodological rules.
– Hammersley and Atkinson

We have the moral and theoretical responsibility to employ the time for reflection allowed by our relatively privileged status to address people’s real problems.
– Leith Mullings

Course description
This is a methods course. We will learn how to conduct an ethnographic research project. Although there have been numerous critiques of ethnography from every imaginable theoretical perspective, in this course we will not engage significantly with any of those debates. Students should think of this as an introductory course. No single methods course will encompass all there is to know about ethnographic fieldwork. You will learn what options are available to you and how to think about putting them together in a research project.

Instructor’s approach to the course
First, our methodologies are always works in progress needing tailoring to our particular research settings. There is no single approach that will work in all cases. Second, we must conduct research that matters outside of the academy. Embedded in our methodological discussions will be a theoretical and practical discussion about how to use our “relatively privileged status” as academics to serve the people who share their thoughts, lives, homes, and communities with us.

Course requirements
• designing an ethnographic research project
• conducting preliminary research in Philadelphia
• beginning preliminary data analysis
• writing a research proposal based on the perspective gained from the above

There are no pre-requisites and non-majors are welcome.
Field Sites
You'll have the choice to begin work either with an organization you have some affinity for or history with, or you can pick from a list that I will have arranged. You'll need to spend 5-6 hours per week in the field. Because you probably have lives and jobs outside our class, please see me if the time commitment is too much and we will work something out.

Projects
Specific instructions will be distributed for each of the course projects. A brief description of the projects follows. Projects will include keeping a field journal, leading one class discussion on the readings for that day, one short review essay (2-4 pages) that will involve analyzing an ethnographic text for its methodology, and producing a research proposal based on your preliminary fieldwork. All of your work will implicitly or explicitly engage the ethnographic theories we have discussed. Your journal will be a collection of thought - maybe not thought but your written reflections on both the readings and your experiences at your field site. Ideally, these will not (only) be disconnected ramblings, but will be an attempt to make sense of theory in light of experience (and vice versa). Further, the thoughts collected in your journal will serve as the basis for class discussions and will help you generate ideas for your essays. You may also find this journal useful for leading your class discussion. The discussant for each topic should prepare a one-page summary of themes, issues, and topics raised in the reading for the week they have chosen. You will need to distribute copies of this summary for each of the class participants (You may use this listserv to do so, but the summary should be posted no later than midnight on the Wednesday prior to class). Additionally, you will need to outline the points in your summary in a brief oral presentation and engage the class in discussion for about 20 minutes. The short essay will require you to write a critical review of an ethnography chosen from a list I will provide. These reviews should not summarize the ethnography, but rather critically engage the methodological choices made by the author and discuss other possible methodological strategies. The research proposal will be based on an actual request for proposals (RFP) for research funding and will utilize the preliminary fieldwork you will each have conducted for this class. Several assignments will lead up to the research proposal, including designing a survey, constructing interview protocols for structured interviews and life history interviews and creating a consensus modeling exercise. Students will be required to present the research proposal at the final class meeting.

I will provide examples of field journals, presentation summaries, critical reviews, and research proposals.

Class discussion
You will each be expected to participate in leading a class discussion for two class meetings, perhaps with another student. A sign-up sheet for class discussions will be available at the first class meeting.

The focus and direction of the discussion should reflect your own sense of what is important and worthwhile for the set of readings chosen. You should consider all of the
readings for the class session on which you are presenting. You may want to meet with me no later than five days before the class session, to talk about some general issues that might be covered in the discussion.

**Papers**
There are several guidelines for papers. All papers should attempt to integrate field experience, readings, films, speakers, and class discussions. All papers must be typed, double-spaced, with approximately one-inch margins. Use 10-12 pt. fonts. Insert page numbers. Please don’t turn in anemic printouts. Forget about fancy covers. A single paper cover sheet with the title, your name, student ID number, and the date will do. Before turning your paper in, have a kind and generous friend read it. Run spell check. Come see me. And use the Writing Center. Their service is free and the staff is very helpful.

**Readings**
All assigned readings must be completed by the time class begins. I recommend that you take notes while reading and incorporate these notes into your journal. You might try copying a quote (cite the text and page) or writing out a question you want to raise. You might also come to class with something that happened to you that relates to the reading – a conversation you had, an article you read, a movie you saw. We each bring a unique set of experiences to the class, and part of what makes an intellectually charged conversation about the texts we’ll read is the ideas we bring with us. And, as if the idea of an “intellectually charged conversation” weren’t enough, I may ask you to write at the beginning of class about the reading or call on you to answer questions from the reading.

Any semester length approach to fieldwork techniques is bound to be partial. Students should consider that the readings are intended to introduce them to some of the important debates regarding ethnography and ethnographic methodologies and to stimulate discussion. They are by no means intended to draw the boundaries of a body of literature. We are going to focus on some recent critiques of ethnography and on some of the main ethnographic techniques currently in use. If students are interested, I am willing to provide appropriate bibliographic materials for further reading on ethnographic theory and methodology.

**Course materials**
Although tape recorders are not required for the class, they (and a supply of tapes and batteries) are highly recommended. Likewise, you should plan on going through several notebooks.

**Class Listserv**
I use a listserv for announcements and for distribution of class materials. I will sign each of you up. We can also use the listserv to augment class discussion. Feel free to post questions, comments, or discussion about the readings or class discussions.

**Instructor Availability**
I am looking forward to working closely with each of you to develop your projects, to discuss field sites, and on anything else related to the class. Please feel free to call, email,
or come talk with me about any aspect of the class. The class listserv is also a great forum for discussion. Don’t hesitate to post discussion, questions, objections, articles, links, rants, manifestoes, jokes, and risotto recipes to the list.

**Course Guidelines:**

*Come to class.* We’re all responsible for attending class. Not only will you be expected to use information presented in class lectures, activities, presentations, discussions, and films, but your participation grade will suffer if you’re not in class. Because of the small number of classes, more than two unexcused absence will result in a loss of two points (out of fifteen) per absence from your participation grade.

*Do the assignments.* Students are responsible for handing in all work on time. Since the assignments for this class build on one another, it is imperative that you keep up with assignments. Work can always be turned in early (and you get better feedback this way). Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period. Please don’t let this prevent you from attending class. If you come to class empty-handed, at least you don’t miss any material.

If you turn work in late, two problems arise: 1) you forfeit the chance to rewrite; and 2) the grade will be dropped 10% for each class period that goes by. If you are having a problem with the assignment, come see me before it’s due. By this I mean several days before, not at 2:35 on the day the assignment is due.

About rewrites: you have a week from the date an assignment is handed back to you to do a rewrite. If you improve, you get the better of the two grades. If you don’t improve, I still note that you tried when doing grades at the end of the semester.

**Academic Honesty**

The Academic Honesty policy of the College of Arts and Sciences will be followed. Plagiarism can result in a failing grade for the course. If you use someone else’s work – whether the actual words or the ideas – cite the reference. If you have any questions, see the TU policy on Academic Honesty on the web <www.temple.edu> or in the Undergraduate Bulletin.

**Grades**

Grades for the course will be based on the following:

- Class attendance, preparation, and participation: 15%
- Field journal: 15% (5% each collection)

 *(Evaluation of fieldwork will constitute part of the grade for both attendance and journal)*

- Critical review: 10%
- Class Discussion: 10%
- Research Proposal: 50% (abstract, survey and interview protocols, and CDA)
Schedule of Classes, Readings, and Assignments:

* DENOTES FOUND IN READING PACKET

8/30 Class 1: Introduction
Housekeeping
Why ethnography?
Trip to Social Science Research Library/TU Urban Archives

9/6 Class 2: Ethics and Field Relationships
MEET IN WRITING CENTER AT 2:40
2ND Floor, Tuttleman Learning Center
Informed Consent
Tuskegee Video
Engagement/Disengagement
Reciprocity
Researcher roles and partnerships pt. 1
Anderson 127-145 ("An Ethical Issue"); LeCompte and Schensul, Vol. 1, 183-204 ("Ethical Treatment and Care")
Anderson 25-34 ("Demands of Daily Living"), 47-57 ("Acquiring Status"), 69-83 ("A Key Informant")
(83 pp.)

9/13 Class 3: Entering the Field/Participant Observation
Loria McIntyre
(103 pp)

9/20 Class 4: Interviews, Pt. 1: Design
Formulating Questions
Gorden 9-45
Semi-structured interviews
Structured – Surveys
Open/closed questions
(89 pp)

9/27 Class 5: Interviews, Pt. 2: Engagement
DUE: SURVEY AND INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS
Jen Morgan
Delivering Questions
Communicative Atmosphere
Gorden 47-144
(98 pp)

10/5 Class 6: Choosing and Designing a Project, pt. 1
DUE: JOURNALS COLLECTED
LeCompte and Schensul, Vol. 1, 61-126 (“Overview of Research Design/Choosing and Designing a Research Project”)
Location – What’s the research site? Who’s the community?
Marcus 95-114*, Jones 99-119*
(104 pp.)

10/12 Class 7: Interviews, Pt. 3: Life Histories
DUE: CRITICAL REVIEW
Etter-Lewis 43-56*; Anderson and Jack 11-25*; Ginsburg 623-36*; Schneider 61-74*; Gorden 145-171
(80 pp.)

10/19 Class 8: Choosing and Designing a Project, pt. 2
DUE: PROPOSAL ABSTRACT
Bill McKinney
Theory, area, and interests
Funding
Agar 82-90* (“Getting Funds”)
Researcher roles and partnerships, pt. 2
LeCompte 1-69* (“Researcher Roles”), Thomas 17-32*
(95 pp.)

10/26 Class 9: Cultural Domain Analysis
DUE: JOURNALS COLLECTED
Borgatti 115-148*
Validity/reliability debates
(69 pp)

11/1 Class 10: Network analysis
DUE: CULTURAL DOMAIN ANALYSIS EXERCISE
Anderson 35-45; Trotter 1-50*; Schweizer 739-758*
(80 pp)

11/8 Class 11: Collecting Ethnographic Data
EXTRA CREDIT: NETWORK ANALYSIS PROTOCOL DUE
OPTIONAL: RESEARCH PROPOSAL DRAFT DUE
LeCompte and Schensul, Vol. 1, 127-147 (“Collecting Ethnographic Data”); Johnson 13-29*
Choosing methods/Triangulation
Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte Vol. 2, 9-48 (Building Formative Theoretical Models”), 49-68 (“Operationalization”)
(97 pp)

11/15 Class 12: Archival and Geographic Data
OPTIONAL: RESEARCH PROPOSAL DRAFT DUE
(30 pp)

11/22 NO CLASS

11/28-12/4 AAA

11/29 Class 13: Data Analysis, pt. 1
DUE: JOURNALS COLLECTED
(58 pp)

12/6 Class 14: Data Analysis, pt. 2: Computer Applications
Pat Hansell
Statistical Analysis
SPSS
Anthropac
NUDIST
Document E-180 “Using the Computer as a Research Tool”
(38 pp.)

12/13 Final Exam Period: Presentation of Proposals
DUE: RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Required Texts
Available at Zavelle’s
Anderson, Barbara Gallatin

Gordon, Raymond L.

LeCompte, Margaret D. and Jean J. Schensul

Schensul, Stephen L., Jean J. Schensul, and Margaret D. LeCompte

**Available in the Student Copy Center, 6th Floor, Conwell Hall**

Document E-180 “Using the Computer as a Research Tool”

**Reading Packet (Available at Docucare):**

Agar, Michael H.

Jones, Delmos J.

Marcus, George E.

Schweizer, Thomas

LeCompte, Margaret D.

Thomas, Jim

Johnson, Allan G.

Wolcott, Harry F.

Borgatti, Stephen P.

Schneider, William

Anderson, Kathryn and Dana C. Jack

Etter-Lewis, Gwendolyn

Ginsburg, Faye

Trotter, Robert T. II
Suggested Further Reading

** DENOTES AVAILABLE AT ZAVELLE’S OR B&N – CHECK WITH ROB

** Ethnographic Theory

Agar, Michael H.

Behar, Ruth and Deborah A. Gordon

Bourdieu, Pierre

Clifford, James and George Marcus

Comaroff, John L. and Jean Comaroff

Durkheim, Emile

** Dresch, Paul, Wendy James and David Parkin, eds.

Geertz, Clifford

Hammersley, Martyn

** Hammersley, Martyn and Paul Atkinson

Kuper, Adam

Malinowski, Bronislaw
Nash, June

**Willis, Paul.
Paley Stacks   GN345 .W52 2000

Wolf, Margery
Paley Stacks   GN345.W65 1992

**Social Network Analysis:**
Degenne, Alain and Michel Forsé ; translated by Arthur Borges
Paley Stacks   HM741 .D43 1999

Wasserman, Stanley and Katherine Faust
Paley Stacks   HM131.W356 1994

Wasserman, Stanley and Joseph Galaskiewicz, editors
Paley Stacks   HM131.A318 1994

**Ethics**
Asad, Talal, ed.

Diamond, Stanley

Hymes, Dell

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy

**Research Partnerships/Applied Ethnography/Critical Ethnography**
Bennett, John W.
  *Current Anthropology* 37(1) Supplement: S23-S53.

Singer, Merrill

Thomas, Jim

Van Maanen, John

**Statistics for Dummies**
Johnson, Allan G.