

Sociology 571
Fall 2009
M 1:10-3:50

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ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS*

This course aims to provide a “how to” of ethnography and, in the process, examine the epistemology, conduct, and politics of ethnography. It is thus designed for students who require and are willing to engage in focused, hands-on training on ethnographic theory and practice. **To best take advantage of what this seminar has to offer, you are urged to come with some sketch of a research plan and be ready to enter the field in a few weeks.** [Note that this research does not necessarily have to relate to your (proposed) dissertation. Moreover, if you have already been in the field (perhaps in a non-U.S. site), you may still be eligible to participate in the course upon discussion with the instructors.] We will critically examine a number of aspects and approaches to doing and writing ethnography. We will discuss the challenges of entering, being in, and leaving the field. And we will explore alternative data collection techniques/media. Above all, however, it is our intention and sincere hope that this seminar will serve as a workshop of sorts to exchange fieldnotes, experiences, advice, and constructive criticism as you embark on the otherwise rather lonely and daunting journey of ethnographic research. To a considerable extent, then, it will be your own, very much in progress, fieldwork that will drive and shape weekly topics and readings. Therefore, we encourage you to be flexible as we adjust the syllabus on a weekly basis to accommodate your specific needs.

COURSE LOGISTICS

In the first three weeks of the semester, we will read together, establishing a common language. During this time, everyone will hand in a brief proposal of their ethnographic project. By the beginning of the third week, you should be piloting your project in the field. The following ten sessions will each be focused on the fieldnotes and/or interview transcriptions of two (or so) class members. Fieldnotes will be distributed ahead of time. Everyone will read the notes, and discussion will revolve around their interpretation. This structure requires a high level of responsibility, respect and risk-taking among all participants, both those presenting and those commenting. The rewards of participation in

* We would like to acknowledge that this syllabus has benefited from related syllabi by Leslie Salzinger, Michèle Lamont, and Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Loïc Wacquant.

such a structure are equally high. To organize and focus the discussion of fieldnotes, each week will be devoted to a particular theme, associated with one required article-length reading. In line with the hand-on approach of this methods seminar, the themes and readings for weeks four through nine will largely depend on the particular ethnographic projects of class members and will crystallize by the end of week two, with some room for change as class projects/needs/concerns evolve. We will announce the required reading on a weekly basis, but we have also included a list of recommended readings that we encourage you to look at.

Course Requirements:

- **10 weeks** of fieldwork (8-10 hours weekly, plus fieldnote writing).
- Brief research proposal (2-5 pages) describing your site, the questions you bring to it and what you expect to find: **Due by Sept. 25.**
- **Weekly**, electronic submission of fieldnotes to Robyn and Phaedra (about 5 single-spaced pages). Submission of accumulated fieldnotes and/or interview transcriptions to the whole class one week ahead of your scheduled presentation times.
- Thorough, attentive, **constructive reading of and commenting** on your colleagues' work. If you absolutely must miss a session in which others are presenting work, you are expected to give them comments in writing by the following week.
- Preliminary bibliography: **Due by Oct. 23.**
- Preliminary literature review for your paper. **Due by Nov. 20.**
- In-class presentation of your final paper. **Due on Dec. 7.**
- A final paper, based on the 10 weeks of fieldwork completed during the semester. **Due on Dec. 23.**

Course Readings:

All required texts will be made available on the course's website on Sakai. However, if you have not done so already, you are strongly encouraged to get your own copy of *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Emerson et al., 1995). **Because we want the course to develop organically around the key sets of issues you are interested in, we will be announcing the required reading on a weekly basis. We thought, however, that it would be good to provide you with some key texts for reference.**

CLASS SCHEDULE

WHAT IS "ETHNOGRAPHY"?

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Week 1 | ➤ Basic overview of its practice |
| Sept. 8 | ➤ Merits of ethnographic research |

READINGS:

- Goffman, Erving. 1989. "On Fieldwork." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 18:123-32.
- Katz, Jack. 1997. "On Ethnographic Warrants." *Sociological Methods and Research* 25:391-423.

GETTING THERE

Week 2
Sept. 14

- Deciding among styles of ethnography: Theoretically driven versus grounded theoretical traditions
- Formulating a research question
- Developing a research plan
- Getting IRB approval
- Beginning work at specific sites

READINGS:

Theory and Ethnography

- Snow, David, Calvin Morrill and Leon Anderson. 2003. "Elaborating Analytic Ethnography: Linking Fieldwork and Theory." *Ethnography* 4:181-200
- Burawoy, Michael. 2009. "Prologue: Bringing Theory to the Field," in *The Extended Case Method*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Ethnographic Styles: The Chicago and Berkeley Schools

- Abbott, Andrew. 1997. "Of Time and Space: The Contemporary Relevance of the Chicago School." *Social Forces* 75:1149-82
- Burawoy, Michael. 2009. "From Manchester to Berkeley by way of Chicago." In *The Extended Case Method*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Different Approaches to Specific Sites, Events:**Narrative tradition** ("classical" Anthropology)

- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. Selected chapters of *The Interpretation of Cultures* New York: Basic Books.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1922. Selected chapters of *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* London: Routledge.

Urban ethnography (Chicago School)

- Wirth, Louis. 1928. *The Ghetto*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Duneier, Mitchell. 1999. *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux . OR
- Duneier, Mitchell. 2006. "Voices from the Sidewalk: Ethnography and Writing Race." (with Les Beck) *Ethnic and Racial Studies*

29:543-565.

- Wacquant, Loïc. 2002. "Scrutinizing the Street: Poverty, Morality, and the Pitfalls of Urban Ethnography." *American Journal of Sociology* 107:1468-532

Disasters

- Klinenberg, Eric. 2006. "Blaming the Victim: Hearsay, Labeling and the Hazards of Quick-Hit Disaster Ethnography." *American Sociological Review* 71: 689-698.
- Dunier, Mitchell. 2006. "Ethnography, the Ecological Fallacy, and the 1995 Chicago Heat Wave." *American Sociological Review* 71:679-688.

Events

- Newman, Katherine. 2002. "Introduction: Qualitative Research on the Frontlines of Controversy." *Sociological Methods and Research* 31:123-130.
- Roth, Wendy and Jal D. Mehta. 2002. "The Rashomon Effect: Combining Positivist and Interpretivist Approaches of Contested Events." *Sociological Methods and Research* 31: 131-173.
[NOTE: This doesn't quite address events from an ethnographic approach, but may offer some interesting insights]

Institutional and Organizational ethnographies

- Smith, Dorothy. 1987. Selected chapters from *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Smith, Dorothy. 2007. Selected chapters from *Institutional Ethnography*. Lanham, MD. Rowman and Littlefield.
- Blom Hansen, Thomas and Finn Steppatut (editors). 2001. "Introduction." In *States of Imagination*, Durham: Duke University Press.
- Haney, Lynn. 1996. "Homeboys, Babies, Men in Suits: The State and the Reproduction of Male Domination." *American Sociological Review* 61: 759-78. [Also see her 2002 book, *Inventing the Needy*.]
- Salzinger, Leslie. 1997. "From High Heels to Swathed Bodies: Gendered Meanings under Production in Mexico's Export-Processing Industry." *Feminist Studies* 23:549-574 [Also see her 2003 book, *Genders Under Production*.]

Historical ethnography

- Morawska, Ewa. 1997. "A Historical Ethnography in the Making." *Historical Sociology* 30: 58-61.
- Stoler, Ann. 1995. Selected chapters from *Race and the Education of Desire*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Comaroff, John and Jean Comaroff. 1991. Chapters 1 and 6 in *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Virtual ethnography

- Howard, Philip N. 2002. "Network Ethnography and the Hypermedia Organization: New Media, New Organizations," *New Methods in New Media and Society* 4:550-574.
- Murthy, Dhiraj. 2008. "Digital Ethnography: An Examination of the Use of New Technologies for Social Research," *Sociology* 42: 837.
- Hine, Christine. 2008. "Overview: Virtual ethnography: modes, varieties, affordances." In *Handbook of Online Research Methods*, edited by Nigel G. Fielding, Raymond M. Lee and Grant Blank. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

**Week 3
Sept. 21**

Qualitative Interviewing

- Sampling
- Creating an Interview Protocol
- Interviewing techniques and etiquette

READINGS:

- Weiss, Robert. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press.
- Heyl, Barbara Sherman. 2001. "Ethnographic Interviewing," *Handbook of Ethnography*, edited by Paul Atkinson, et al. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Spradley, James. 1979. Selections from *The Ethnographic Interview* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Biernacki, Patrick and Dan Waldorf. 1981. "Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques in Chain Referral." *Sociological Methods and Research* 10:141-163.
- Watters, John K. and Patrick Biernacki. 1989. "Targeted Sampling: Options for the Study of Hidden Populations." *Social Problems* 36: 416-430.
- Becker, Howard S. 1998. Chapter 3 of *Tricks of the Trade: how to think about your research while you're doing it* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

BEING THERE

**Week 4
Sept. 28**

The Craft of Observing, Writing, and even Photography and Video(!)

READINGS:

- Thorne, Barrie. 1980. "'You Still Takin' Notes?' Fieldwork and Problems of Informed Consent." *Social Problems* 27: 284-297.

- Emerson, Robert et al. 1995 Chapters 1, 2 and 3 in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Harper, Douglas. 2003. "Framing Photographic Ethnography," *Ethnography* 4: 241-266.
- Shrum, W., Duque, R., & Brown, T. 2005. "Digital video as research practice: Methodology for the millennium," *Journal of Research Practice* 1:1-19
- Pink, Sarah. 2001. Selections from *Doing Visual Ethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Week 5 On Subjectivity and Reflexivity

- Oct. 5**
- The power and politics of knowledge production
 - Insider/outsider issues

READINGS:

- Desmond, Matthew. 2007. "Appendix." *On the Fireline* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Comaroff, Jean and John Comoroff. 2003. "Ethnography on an Awkward Scale: Postcolonial Anthropology and the Violence of Abstraction," *Ethnography* 4:147-1381.
- Naples, Nancy. 1996. "A Feminist Revisiting of the Insider/Outsider Debate," *Qualitative Sociology* 19:83-106.
- Behar, Ruth. 2003. "Ethnography and the Book that was Lost." *Ethnography* 4: 15-39.
- Also see some of the other chapters in James Clifford and George Marcus' 1986. *Writing Culture* Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Alford A. Young, Jr. 2004. "Experiences in Ethnographic Interviewing About Race." In *Researching Race and Racism* edited and introduced by Martin Bulmer and John Solomos. New York:Routledge.
- Wolf, Margery. 1992. *Thrice-Told Tale: Feminism, Postmodernism, and Ethnographic Responsibility* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Paul Rabinow. *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*
- Wellin, Christopher and Gary Alan Fine. 2001. "Ethnography as Work: Career Socialization, Settings and Problems" in *Handbook of Ethnography* edited by Paul Atkinson, et al. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Week 6 The Body as Object and Instrument of Knowledge; The Uses of
Oct. 12 Experience in Ethnography

READINGS:

- Okely, Judith. 2007. "Fieldwork Embodied." *Sociological Review* 55:65-79.

- Wacquant, Loïc. 2002. "Taking Bourdieu into the Field." *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 46: 180-6
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2004. "The Peasant and his Body." *Ethnography* 5: 579.
- Campbell, Marie. 1998. "Institutional Ethnography and Experience as Data." *Qualitative Sociology*, 21:55-73. [see too, Dorothy Smith, *The Everyday World As Problematic*; also Steve Lopez discusses experience in his introduction to *Re-organizing the Rustbelt* published in 2003]

Week 7
Oct. 19

Global Ethnography

- Comparative and. multi-sited ethnography
- Between the everyday and world-historical structures

READINGS:

- Hannerz, Ulf. 2003. "Being There... And There... And There! Reflections on Multi-Site Ethnography." *Ethnography* 4: 201-16.
- Burawoy, Michael. 2009. "Multicase Ethnography." In *The Extended Case Method* Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Marcus, George E. 1986. "Contemporary Problems of Ethnography in the Modern World System." In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gille, Zsuzsa and Sean O'Riain. 2002. "Global Ethnography." *American Sociological Review*, 28:271-295.
- Stacey, Judith. 1999. "Ethnography Confronts the Global Village: A New Home for a New Century?" *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 28: 687-697.
- Charles Ragin, 1987. *The Comparative Method. Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Week 8
Oct. 26

Ethical Quandaries in the Field

READINGS:

- Bosk, Charles, L. 2008. Sections 2 and 3 in *What Would You Do?: Juggling Bioethics and Ethnography*. Chicago: Chicago University Press
- Van Maanen. 2001 (1983). "The Moral Fix: On the Ethics of Field Work." Pp. 269-87 in *Contemporary Field Research* edited by Robert M. Emerson. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Katherine S. Newman, 2002. "Qualitative Research on the Frontlines of Controversy." *Sociological Methods and Research* 31 (2): 123-130
- Katz, Jack 2004. "On the Rhetoric and Politics of Ethnographic Methodology." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political*

and Social Sciences 595: 280-308.

Week 9

Nov. 2

Going Back to the Field

READINGS:

- Burawoy, Michael. 2009. "The Ethnographic Revisit," in *The Extended Case Method*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

COMING HOME

Week 10

Nov. 9

Analyzing and Coding Data

READINGS:

- Emerson, Robert et. al. 1995. "Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing." In *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* Chicago: University of Chicago
- Dohan, Daniel and Martin Sanchez-Jankowski. 1998. "Using Computers to Analyze Ethnographic Field Data: Theoretical and Practical Considerations." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 24: 477-498
- Anselm Straus and Juliet Corbin. 1998. "Open Coding." In *Basics of Qualitative Research* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Week 11

Nov. 16

Transitioning from the Field

READINGS:

- Iversen, Roberta Rehner. 2009. "'Getting Out' in Ethnography: A Seldom-Told Story." *Qualitative Social Work* 8: 9-26
- Snow, David. 1980 "The Disengagement Process: A Neglected Problem in Participant Observation Research." *Qualitative Sociology*, 3:100-122.

Week 12

Nov. 23

Writing up

READINGS:

- Becker, Howard, S. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Becker, Howard, S. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Emerson, Robert et.al. 1995. "Writing and Ethnography." In *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* Chicago: University of Chicago
- Marcus, George. 1986. "Afterword: Ethnographic Writing and Anthropological Careers." In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Churchill, Christian J. 2005 "Ethnography as Translation."

Qualitative Sociology 28: 3-24

- John Van Mannen. 1988. *Tales of the Field*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Week 13 Ethnography as Public Sociology or Social Criticism?

Nov. 30 *Tentative Guest speaker: Michael Burawoy*

READINGS:

- Burawoy, Michael. 2009. "Epilogue: On Public Ethnography." In *The Extended Case Method* Berkeley. University of California Press.
- Kassabia, Anahid et.al. 2001, "Writing and Research Feminist Poststructural Criticism in U.S. Sociology: Retrospectives on Patricia Clough's *The End(s) of Ethnography: From Realism to Social Criticism.*" *Qualitative Inquiry* 7: 542-558.

Week 14 Paper Presentations

Dec. 7

Dec. 23 PAPERS DUE