ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS*

This course aims to provide a “how to” of ethnographic research and, in the process, examine the epistemology, conduct, and politics of fieldwork. It is therefore designed for students who 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 in with some sketch of a research plan that you would be ready to either directly study in the field or explore through field exercises in a few weeks. 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 my intention and sincere hope that this seminar will serve as a workshop of sorts to exchange fieldnotes, experiences, advice, and constructive criticism as you prepare to 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, research interests that will drive and shape weekly topics and readings. Therefore, I encourage you to be flexible as I adjust the syllabus to accommodate your emergent, specific needs.

Learning Goals
By the end of this course, students will: (1) develop a critical understanding of ethnographic research as theory and method; and (2) gain hands-on experience collecting, analyzing, and writing up data using a variety of ethnographic techniques.

Assessment Plan
This course will evaluate achievement of its learning goals in a variety of ways, including in-depth reading discussions, field exercises, and writing of an original research paper or proposal.

* This syllabus has benefited from an earlier syllabus on ethnographic methods co-taught by Phaedra Daipha & Robyn Rodriguez as well as related syllabi by Leslie Salzinger, Michèle Lamont, and Nancy Scheper-Hughes & Loïc Wacquant,
COURSE LOGISTICS

In the first three weeks of the semester, we will read together, establishing a common language. At the end of that time, everyone will hand in a brief proposal of their ethnographic project. The analytic themes of the following ten sessions will be fleshed out through discussion of class members’ fieldnotes and/or interview transcripts, to be distributed to everyone ahead of time. To organize and focus the discussion of fieldnotes, the theme of each week will be elaborated by one required article-length reading. This course structure requires a high level of responsibility, respect, and risk-taking among all participants, but the rewards stand to be just as high of course. In line with the hands-on approach of this methods seminar, the themes and readings for weeks four through nine will be inspired by the specific ethnographic projects and exercises of the class and will crystallize by the end of week five, with some room for change as class projects/needs/concerns evolve.

Course Requirements:

- A total of 10 weekly field exercises
  OR 10 weeks of fieldwork (8 hours weekly, plus fieldnote writing)
- Brief research proposal (2-5 pages) describing your site, the questions you (would) bring to it and what you (would) expect to find: Due by XXX.
- Weekly, electronic submission of fieldnotes to the entire class (about 5 single-spaced pages).
- Thorough, attentive, constructive reading of and commenting on your colleagues’ work. If you absolutely must miss a session, you are expected to give them comments in writing by the following week.
- Preliminary bibliography: Due by XXX.
- Preliminary literature review for your paper. Due by XXX.
- In-class presentation of your final paper. Due on XXX.
- A final paper, in the form of either a research paper or a research proposal. Due on XXX.

Course Readings:
All article-length texts will be made available on the course’s Sakai site.

The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives among our faculty and students and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have instituted clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.
CLASS SCHEDULE*

*This schedule is subject to change. Changes, if necessary, will be announced well in advance during class and on the course website on Sakai.

Week 1  WHAT IS “ETHNOGRAPHY”?  
➢ Basic overview of its practice  
➢ Merits of ethnographic research

READINGS:

GETTING THERE

Week 2  Ethnographic Styles  
➢ 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

REQUIRED READINGS:  
*Theory and Ethnography*
RECOMMENDED READINGS:

*Ethnographic Styles: The Chicago and Berkeley Schools*

*Different Approaches to Doing Fieldwork:*

**Narrative ethnography**

**Urban ethnography**

**Disaster ethnography**

**Organizational ethnography**
- Salzinger, Leslie. 1997. “From High Heels to Swathed Bodies:

**Historical ethnography**

**Virtual ethnography**

**Week 3 Qualitative Interviewing**
- Sampling
- Creating an Interview Protocol
- Interviewing techniques and etiquette

**REQUIRED READINGS:**

**RECOMMENDED READINGS:**
BEING THERE

Week 4  The Craft of Observing

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Emerson, Robert et al. 1995 Chapters 1, 2 and 3 in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:


Week 5  On Subjectivity and Reflexivity

- The power and politics of knowledge production
- Insider/outsider issues

REQUIRED READINGS:


RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Alford A. Young, Jr. 2004. “Experiences in Ethnographic


**Week 6**  
The Body as Object and Instrument of Knowledge; The Uses of Experience in Ethnography

**READINGS:**

**Week 7**  
Analyzing and Coding Data—Part I

**REQUIRED READINGS:**
- Emerson, Robert et al. 1995. “Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing.” In *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* Chicago: University of Chicago

**RECOMMENDED READINGS:**

**Week 8**  
Analyzing and Coding Data—Part II

- Hands-on coding and analysis using Atlas.ti
Week 9  
**Global Ethnography**

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

**REQUIRED READING:**


**RECOMMENDED READINGS:**


Week 10  
**Ethical Quandaries in the Field**

**REQUIRED READING:**


**RECOMMENDED READINGS:**

COMING HOME

Week 11 Transitioning from the Field

REQUIRED READING:

RECOMMENDED READING:

Week 12 Writing up

REQUIRED READINGS:

RECOMMENDED READING:
- Charmaz, Ch. 7.
- Emerson, Robert el.al. 1995. “Writing and Ethnography.” In *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* Chicago: University of Chicago

Week 13 Ethnography as Public Sociology or Social Criticism?

REQUIRED READINGS:
Social Science. 595: 264-276.


Week 14 Paper Presentations

May 14 PAPERS DUE