

Sociology 573  
Spring 2014  
Th 9:30-12:10  
Office hours: Th 12:30-1:30, and by appt

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## **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.

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\* 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:

- 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.
- Fine, Gary Alan. 1993. “Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. 22: 267-294.

### 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*

- Timmermans, Stefan, and Iddo Tavory. 2012. “Theory Construction in Qualitative Research: From Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis.” *Sociological Theory* 30: 167-186.
- Wilson, William, Julius, and Anmol Chaddha. 2009. “The Role of Theory in Ethnographic Research.” *Sociological Theory* 10: 549-564.
- Snow, David, Calvin Morrill and Leon Anderson. 2003. “Elaborating Analytic Ethnography: Linking Fieldwork and Theory.” *Ethnography* 4:181-200
- Tavory, Iddo, and Stefan Timmermans. 2009. “Two Cases of Ethnography: Grounded Theory and the Extended Case Method.”

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

***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 Doing Fieldwork:***

**Narrative ethnography**

- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture." In *The Interpretation of Cultures*.
- Tedlock, Barbara. 2004. "Narrative Ethnography as Social Science Discourse." *Studies in Symbolic Interaction* 27: 23-31.

**Urban ethnography**

- 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

**Disaster ethnography**

- 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.

**Organizational ethnography**

- Behky, Beth, A. 2006. "Talking about Machines, Thick Description, and Knowledge Work." *Organization Studies* 27: 1757-68.
- Barley, Stephen, R. 1996. Technicians in the Workplace: Ethnographic Evidence for Bringing Work into Organization Studies." *Administrative Science Quarterly*.
- Smith, Dorothy. 2007. Selections 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.
- Salzinger, Leslie. 1997. "From High Heels to Swathed Bodies:

Gendered Meanings under Production in Mexico's Export-Processing Industry." *Feminist Studies* 23:549-574.

### Historical ethnography

- Stoler, Ann. 2009. "The Pulse of the Archive." In *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*.
- Morawska, Ewa. 1997. "A Historical Ethnography in the Making." *Historical Sociology* 30: 58-61.
- 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

### Qualitative Interviewing

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

#### REQUIRED READINGS:

- Duneier, Mitch. 2011. "How Not to Lie with Ethnography." *Sociological Methodology* 41: 1-11.
- Small, Mario Luis. 2009. "How Many Cases Do I Need?: On Science and the Logic of Case Selection in Field Based Research." *Ethnography*. 10: 5-38.
- Weiss, Robert. 1994. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press: Selections

#### RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- 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      **The Craft of Observing**

#### REQUIRED READINGS:

- Kusenbach, Margarethe. 2003. "Street Phenomenology: The Go-Along as Ethnographic Research Tool." *Ethnography* 4: 455-485.
- 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.

#### RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Pink, Sarah. 2001. Intro from *Doing Visual Ethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- 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

### Week 5      **On Subjectivity and Reflexivity**

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

#### REQUIRED READINGS:

- Desmond, Matthew. 2007. "Appendix." *On the Fireline* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Humphreys, Laud. "The Sociologist as Voyeur." In *Tearoom Trade*: pp. 16-44.
- Comaroff, Jean and John Comoroff. 2003. "Ethnography on an Awkward Scale: Postcolonial Anthropology and the Violence of Abstraction," *Ethnography* 4:147-1381.

#### RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- 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.
- 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.

- 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 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      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
- Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. Chapters 3 and 4 in *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*.

### RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- 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 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:

- Gille, Zsuzsa and Sean O’Riain. 2002. “Global Ethnography.” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 28:271-295.

### RECOMMENDED 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.
- Stacey, Judith. 1999. “Ethnography Confronts the Global Village: A New Home for a New Century?” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 28: 687-697.

## Week 10 Ethical Quandaries in the Field

### REQUIRED READINGS:

- Katherine S. Newman, 2002. “Qualitative Research on the Frontlines of Controversy.” *Sociological Methods and Research* 31 (2): 123-130.
- Renée R. Anspach and Nissim Mizrahi, 2006. “The field worker’s fields: ethics, ethnography and medical sociology.” *Sociology of Health & Illness* 28 (6): 713–731

### RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- 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.
- 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.



## COMING HOME

### Week 11 Transitioning from the Field

#### REQUIRED READING:

- Iversen, Roberta Rehner. 2009. "'Getting Out' in Ethnography: A Seldom-Told Story." *Qualitative Social Work* 8: 9-26

#### RECOMMENDED READING:

- Snow, David. 1980 "The Disengagement Process: A Neglected Problem in Participant Observation Research." *Qualitative Sociology*, 3:100-122.

### Week 12 Writing up

#### REQUIRED READINGS:

- Katz, Jack. 2001/2. "From How to Why: On Luminous Description and Causal Inference in Ethnography" (parts 1&2). *Ethnography*.
- Becker, Howard, S. 1998. Chapter 4, "Concepts." *Tricks of the Trade*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

#### RECOMMENDED READING:

- Becker, Howard, S. 1986. *Writing for Social Scientists*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Charmaz, Ch. 7.
- 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?

#### REQUIRED READINGS:

- Burawoy, Michael. 2009. "Epilogue: On Public Ethnography." In *The Extended Case Method* Berkeley. University of California Press.
- Becker, Howard, Gans, Herbert, Newman, Katherine, and Diane Vaughn. 2003. "On the Value of Ethnography and Social Policy: A Dialogue." *ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and*

Social Science. 595: 264-276.

- 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**

**May 14      PAPERS DUE**