

## **ANTH 3345 — Introduction to Ethnographic Methods**

Version 1.0 -- Subject to Change

Spring 2018

Thursdays, 2 - 4:50pm

Dallas Hall 0120

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This course is a hands-on introduction to the methods anthropologists use to collect ethnographic data. We examine a variety of research strategies ranging from interviewing to the use of visual materials and participant observation. The course will take up the question of who and what is the subject of anthropological research. Furthermore, it will ask us to reflect on the ethical questions that arise from the way anthropologists insert themselves in the lives of others and represent them.

By the end of the course, students will have learned:

- 1 How to ask a research question
- 2 How to design a feasible project
- 3 How to collect data
- 4 How to turn that data into ethnographic writing

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

#### Information Literacy

Information Literacy Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will select and use the appropriate research methods and search tools for needed information.
2. Students will evaluate sources for quality of information for a given information need.

#### Writing

Writing Student Learning Outcome:

1. Through multiple opportunities supervised and/or directed by a professor, an editor or other authority, students will demonstrate proper use of language through completion of a substantial amount of purposeful writing appropriate for a specific or targeted audience.

### **Required Texts**

- Cohen, Jeffrey. 2015. *Eating Soup without a Spoon: Anthropological Theory and Method in the Real World*. University of Texas Press.
- Weiss, Robert. 1995. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Free Press.

The two texts have been ordered through the SMU Bookstore. If the SMU Bookstore is unable to make texts available in a timely manner, it is the student's responsibility to obtain the required texts (search for online merchants or other local bookstores—should be no problem to find these books). Additionally, they have been placed in the reserves of the Fondren Library. As such, students should have no problem accessing the texts and no excuses will be admitted.

### **Supplemental Reading**

Optional readings are a resource for you and are optional.

Although we will not be reading from this book, it is a great resource and I recommend you consult it.

Bernard, Russell H. 2006. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. 4th ed. Lanham, New York, Toronto and Oxford: Altamira Press

### **Grading:**

Assignments (x6): 60%

Final Research Proposal: 25%

Participation: 15%

The course is structured around a series of assignments. They are due the day before class by 9 pm and you should bring a copy of your assignments with you to class. A core component of academia is peer review and in class we will discuss our work and offer constructive criticism. There is much to be learned by looking at how other people design research questions, and peer review will allow us as a class to benefit from the collective experience. In order for peer review to work, respect for each other is absolutely crucial. While it is perfectly fine to have critical opinions, these must be offered in a spirit of generosity. Everyone will be expected to be prepared to discuss their assignment results in class.

Participation: Students are expected to attend and come prepared for class meetings to discuss the readings. This course depends on the active participation of students and instructor in making it a fruitful experience. Class participation grades will be based on the frequency, pertinence, creativity, and clarity of contributions in class. Comments must reflect critical thinking and engage the course material; comments that are general or personal in nature will not contribute significantly toward your participation grade. Active participation is volunteered participation through discussion of assigned material. Students who have great difficulty speaking out in class are encouraged to come up with other ways to meet this requirement (e.g., creating handouts, puzzles, posters relevant to the discussion) – these must be discussed with the professor and approved for credit.

Turning in assignments: Assignments must be submitted via Canvas. No submissions via email! Canvas is the only accepted form of submission and I will not accept anything that is not received through that format. Extensions on deadlines are offered only to students with written documentation (i.e., by healthcare provider, parent, funeral director, Resident Advisor) of a debilitating illness, extenuating circumstances or death in the family.

Back-Up Copies: It is the student's responsibility to maintain (1) a backup copy and (2) a printout of the Properties page which shows the production date and size of any document. In the event of lost documents, the student can produce these to avoid late penalties.

### **Missed Class/Assignments**

Attendance and participation are important. Absences, excused or unexcused, do not excuse students from submitting assignments on time. Students should review notes, handouts, and assignment instructions from a classmate or the professor for days missed, as you will be held responsible for this material.

Dedman College Attendance Policy: If you have more than three unexcused absences in a MWF section or two in a TTH section, your grade will suffer a penalty of up to a full letter grade. And if you have more than six unexcused MWF absences or four in a TTH class, you should expect to fail the course.

Absences are only excused for a debilitating illness or death in the family, religious holidays, and sanctioned university functions (see below for policy on sanctioned university functions). Notify the professor *before* you are absent. Written documentation (i.e., by healthcare provider, parent, funeral director, Resident Advisor) must be presented to the professor upon your return in order to make up any missed work. Missed assignments or tests receive a 0 (zero), *not* an F or 50%. I do not give out copies of lectures notes. Students should obtain the notes of one or more classmates and can sign up for office hours to consult with the professor.

### **Late Assignments**

Assignments are due in canvas by the times listed. Assignments submitted late will be graded down by three percent for each day (24-hour period) that they are late. Thus, assignments submitted 15 minutes after the deadline will be graded down by three percent.

### **Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct**

Plagiarism, cheating, inappropriate consultation of peers or their work, any other form of academic misconduct, and failing to report evidence of others' misconduct are all Honor Code violations. Penalties are outlined in the Honor Code and may include anything from a zero for the assignment to dismissal from school. Students are expected to prepare work independently, cite any work (quotes or ideas) that is not their own, submit original work (i.e., not already submitted for any other class), and to neither give nor receive assistance in examinations. If you

are uncertain about whether an activity or piece of work compromises your academic integrity, you should speak to the professor before turning it in.

### **Computers and Cell Phones**

Computers may be used in class for note-taking only. Conducting any other business on your computer or phone is distracting to you and others who can see your screen and is strictly forbidden. I reserve the right to ban laptop/tablet/phone use for everyone if this policy is not being followed.

### **Canvas**

Course documents, announcements, and other materials will be posted on Canvas. Please consult the website regularly and inform me of any problems you encounter.

### **Extra Credit**

No extra credit is offered for this course.

### **Disability Accommodations**

Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS). Students can call 214-768-1470 or visit <http://www.smu.edu/Provost/ALEC/DASS> to begin the process. Once registered, students should then schedule an appointment with the professor as early in the semester as possible, present a DASS Accommodation Letter, and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement.

### **Religious Observance**

Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (See University Policy No. 1.9.)

### **“Campus Carry” Law**

In accordance with Texas Senate Bill 11, also known as the “campus carry” law, following consultation with entire University community SMU determined to remain a weapons-free campus. Specifically, SMU prohibits possession of weapons (either openly or in a concealed manner) on campus. For more information, please see: [http://www.smu.edu/BusinessFinance/Police/Weapons\\_Policy](http://www.smu.edu/BusinessFinance/Police/Weapons_Policy)

### **Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities**

Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (University Undergraduate Catalogue)

## **Course Schedule**

### **January 25. Week 1 -- Introduction**

Course structure, goals, assignments, expectations. Introductory lecture.

#### Optional

Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis. In Bernard, Russell H. 2006. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. 4th ed. Lanham, New York, Toronto and Oxford: Altamira Press.

### **February 1. Week 2 -- Observation, participation**

Bestor, Theodore. 2003. Inquisitive observation: Following networks in urban fieldwork. In *Doing Fieldwork in Japan*. Ed. Theodore Bestor, Patricia Steinhoff, and Victoria Lyon-Bestor. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press

Emerson, Robert M, Rachel I Fretz, and Linda L Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 2 In the field: Participating, observing, and jotting notes

Cohen, Eating soup without a spoon. Intro and Ch. 1

#### Optional

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. Deep play: Notes on the balinese cockfight. In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Read pages 412-417

Heider, Karl G. 1988. The rashomon effect: When ethnographers disagree. *American Anthropologist* 90 (1): 73-81.

### **Feb 8. Week 3 -- Ethnography and ethnographic fieldwork**

Akhil, Gupta and James Fergurson. 1997. "The Field" as site, method and location in Anthropology. In *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*. Ed. Akhil Gupta and James Fergurson. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press

Passaro, Joanne. 1997. "You can't take the subway to the field!": "Village" epistemologies in the global village. In *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*. Ed. Akhil Gupta and James Fergurson. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press

Cohen, Eating soup without a spoon. Ch 2.

#### Optional

Geertz, Clifford. 1974. "From the native's point of view": On the nature of anthropological understanding. *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 28 (1): 26

**Feb 15. Week 4 -- Ethics and human subjects**

American Anthropology Association. 2012. "Principles of Professional responsibility. Available at <http://ethics.americananthro.org/category/statement/>

Allen, Charlotte. Spies like us: When sociologists deceive their subjects.

Bourgois, Philippe. 2007. Confronting the Ethics of Ethnography: Lessons from Fieldwork in Central America. In *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*, edited by Antonius C.G.M. Robben and Jeffrey A. Sluka. Wiley-Blackwell

Cohen, Eating soup without a spoon. Ch 3.

Optional

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2004. Parts unknown: Undercover ethnography of the organs-trafficking underworld. *Ethnography* 5 (1): 29-73.

**Feb 22. Week 5 — Interviews**

Weiss, Robert Stuart. 1994. *Learning From Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: Free Press.

NOTE: Focus your readings on chapters 3 and 4 in particular. Read also 1 and 5.

**March 1. Week 6 — Coding**

Weiss, Learning from Strangers, Ch. 6

Cohen, Eating soup without a spoon, Ch 4-6

**March 8. Week 7 — Kinship, Genealogies**

Barnes, J. A. 2012. Genealogies. In *The Craft of Social Anthropology*. Ed. A. L Epstein. Transaction Publishers

Weston, Kath. 1997. *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*. Columbia University Press. Read Chapter 5 "Families we choose." Skim the introduction for context.

Optional

Watson, James L. 1975. Agnates and outsiders: adoption in a Chinese lineage. *Journal of the royal anthropological institute* 10(2)293.

**March 15 — Spring Break**

**March 22. Week 9 — No class. Consultations for your research proposal**

Schedule TBA

### **March 29. Week 10 — Anthropology of the online world**

Boellstorff, Tom. 2008. *Coming of Age in Second Life : An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 2.

Boellstorff, Tom, Bonnie Nardi, Celia Pearce and T.L. Taylor. 2012. *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A handbook of method*. Princeton UP. Read the selections provided.

Slater, David H, Keiko Nishimura, and Love Kindstrand. "Social Media, Information, and Political Activism in Japan's 3.11 Crisis." *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 10, no. 24 (2012)

#### Optional

Constable, Nicole. 2003. *Romance on a Global Stage : Pen Pals, Virtual Ethnography, and "mail-order" Marriages*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Read chapter 2. Skim the introduction for context.

### **April 5. Week 11 —Images and film**

Film: "Leviathan". 2012. Directed by Lucien Casting-Taylor and Verena Paravel

Lim, Denis. 2012. The Merger of Academia and Art House: Harvard Filmmakers' Messy World. *New York Times*, August 31.

Casting-Taylor, Lucien. 1996. Iconophobia: How anthropology lost it at the movies. *Transition* 69:64-88

Pink, Sarah. 2001. *Doing Visual Anthropology: Images, Media and Representation in Research*. London: Sage. Read "Planning and practicing visual methods"

Hoffman, Daniel. 2012. Corpus: Mining the border. *Cultural Anthropology*. Photo Essay Available at [http://www.culanth.org/photo\\_essays/1-corporis-mining-the-border](http://www.culanth.org/photo_essays/1-corporis-mining-the-border)

#### Optional

Heller, Roanna. 2005. Becoming an Artist-Ethnographer. In *Visualizing Anthropology*, edited by Anna Grimshaw and Amanda Ravetz. New Media Intellect.

### **April 12. Week 12 — Positionality and writing**

Chapter 1 "The Vulnerable Observer." Behar, Ruth. 1996. *The Vulnerable Observer : Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Rabinow, Paul. 2007. Fieldwork and Friendship in Morocco. In *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*, edited by Antonius C.G.M. Robben and Jeffrey A. Sluka. Wiley-Blackwell

Cohen, Eating soup without a spoon. Ch 7.

## Optional

Introduction "the Eye/I" Kondo, Dorinne K. 1991. *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Identity in a Japanese Workplace*. University of Chicago Press.

Scott, Joanne W. "The Evidence of Experience." *Critical inquiry* (1991): 773-797

### **April 19—Week 13. The body and the senses**

Mauss, Marcel. "Techniques of the Body." *Economy and Society* 2, no. 1 (1973): 70-88

Pink, Sarah. 2009. "Preparing for sensory research: Practical and orientation issues." *In Doing Sensory Ethnography*. London: Sage.

Law, Lisa. Home Cooking: Filipino Women and Geographies of the Senses in Hong Kong. In *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*. Edited by David Howes. Berg, 2005

### **April 26. Week 14 — Multi-species research. Anthropology beyond the human**

Salazar Parrenas, Rheana "Juno". 2012. Producing affect: Transnational volunteerism in a Malaysian orangutan rehabilitation center. *American Ethnologist* 39 (4): 673-687

Hansen, Paul. 2013. Urban japan's "fuzzy" new families: Affect and embodiment in dog-human relationships. *Asian Anthropology* 12 (2): 83-103

Robertson, Jennifer. 2010. Robots of the Rising Sun. *The American Interest* 6(1)

### **May 3. Week 15 — Research proposals and peer review**

Peer reviews TBA.

## **Assignments**

Assignment 1: Participant Observation

**Due** Feb 7 by 9pm

Spend approximately two hours observing and possibly participating in one of the following places: a restaurant or bar, a bus stop, a grocery store, a public library, a coffee shop, or a park. You should have a question in mind of what it is that you want to focus on before you begin. Some ideas include how gender affects the organization of the space, the presence of security, how the layout of the space contributes to interactions, the relationship between people and the objects they use, etc. You can talk to people and you should write fieldnotes. Submit your fieldnotes as well as a 500-750 word reflection and analysis of what you observed. If you handwrite your fieldnotes, you can take a picture of them so long as they are readable.

## Assignment 2: Interview

**Due Feb 28 by 9pm**

Conduct an interview of approximately 30 minutes in length with somebody of your choice but whom you do not know well (i.e., no close friends or relatives). The interview can be on one of the following topics:

- 1 A turning point in the person's life as they see it.
- 2 Their relationship to the place they live in. How they came to live in this place, how they move through it, their networks, etc.
- 3 Their experience with the educational system

You should record the interview (almost every cellphone has a voice recording feature. If you don't have access to a voice recorder, speak to me). Transcribe approximately three to five minutes of an important moment of the interview and submit it together with a 500-750 word reflection about the exercise. How did your interview go? How did you prepare for it? What surprised you? How would you do it differently if you had a second chance? What kind of information were you able to elicit?

## Assignment 3: Kinship Chart

**Due Mar 21 by 9pm**

Ask someone over the age of 30 for their family genealogy. Do not voice-record this interview; figure out a different way of taking notes. Draw a visual representation of their family structure (we will cover this in class) and submit it together with a 500-750 word reflection on the exercise. What challenges did you encounter? What were you able to learn through this method?

## Assignment 4: Ethnography of online worlds

**Due Apr 4 by 9pm**

Find someone who would be willing to show you how they interact online and the applications they use. Ask them to guide you through some of the apps/sites in which they spend significant time and how they use them. In doing this assignment, pay attention to the relationship between their offline activities and their online presence, as well as their thoughts on what online interactions mean to them. Submit a 500-750 word reflection on what you learned and what it means to do research about online interactions.

## Assignment 5: Images and Film

**Due Apr 11 by 9pm**

Identify a person, a group, or a place that is of ethnographic interest to you and use photography or video to produce a visual representation. Submit your photos or videos together with a 500-750 word reflection of how you think these methods communicate your ethnographic interests and what they allow an ethnographer to do.

## Assignment 6: The senses

**Due Apr 25 by 9pm**

Find someone with whom you can engage in a sensorial activity. You could take a walk, sit at a park, go rock climbing, eat some new food, dance, etc. Pay attention to your sensorial experience — What sounds did you hear? Smells? Tastes? Textures? New ways of using the body? At the end of the experience, ask your companion about their experience. Take notes, either written or voice-recorded, and use them to write a 500-750 word reflection on both your experiences; pay attention to the moments when you experienced things similarly and whether there were also moments when your experiences diverged.

## Draft Proposal for Discussion

**Due May 1 by 12pm**

Write an 8-10 page, double-spaced, research proposal to be submitted for consideration by the class. Your proposal should include

- 1 A research question
- 2 State the relevance of the research question to the discipline
- 3 A methodology section
- 4 Your background and why you are able to conduct this research
- 5 A budget

Every student will be assigned to review and offer constructive criticism on somebody else's research proposal. In addition, we will discuss each proposal as a class and comment on the merits and areas of improvement for each project. Your proposal can be based on some of the research you have conducted throughout this class, or propose a new topic.

Though this submission will not be graded, late submissions will be penalized and points taken off the final paper.

To help you write the proposal, consult the following resources:

Pzreworski, Adam and Frank Salomon. *On the Art of Writing Proposals*. SSRC.

Harvard Anthropology. *How to prepare a grant proposal*.

Wenner Gren Foundation. *Sample Budget*.

## Final Proposal

**Due May 11 by 5pm**

Write an 8-10 page, double-spaced, research proposal to be submitted for consideration by the class. Your proposal should include

- 1 A research question
- 2 State the relevance of the research question to the discipline
- 3 A methodology section
- 4 Your background and why you are able to conduct this research

## 5 A budget

Every student will be assigned to review and offer constructive criticism on somebody else's research proposal. In addition, we will discuss each proposal as a class and comment on the merits and areas of improvement for each project. Your proposal can be based on some of the research you have conducted throughout this class, or propose a new topic.

To help you write the proposal, consult the following resources:

Pzeworski, Adam and Frank Salomon. *On the Art of Writing Proposals*. SSRC.

Harvard Anthropology. *How to prepare a grant proposal*.

Wenner Gren Foundation. *Sample Budget*.