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Office hours: M and W 10-11:30am  
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**FALL 2012 – ANTHROPOLOGY 380**  
**ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS – MODES OF INQUIRY IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL**  
**RESEARCH**  
**T 12:40-3:30PM ASBURY 318**

*I have a general idea about their life and some acquaintance with their language, and if I can somehow only “document” all this, I’ll have valuable material.*  
[Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*]

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Doing field ethnography defines the American cultural anthropologist. This tradition was begun in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by Franz Boas who wanted to teach his students a corrective to what he saw as the increasing tradition of “armchair” speculation and analysis that ran the risk of being unscientific. Boas wanted us, anthropologists and others interested in other documenting other cultures and lives, to get up out of that chair (yesterday’s version of the couch potato) and actually \*do\* anthropology, to actually \*do\* fieldwork and participate and observe in the lives of others in systematic fashion with comparable data. So that’s what this course is about – YOU are going to get out there and understand how the *science* of anthropology actually works.

This course will introduce the methods used by anthropologists to undertake research that describes and analyzes aspects of the social and cultural world around them. Through a variety of in and out of class exercises you will gather and analyze data and understand the benefits and challenges to qualitative research. By the end of the course you should have a good idea about and some practical experience in evaluating the research of others and planning and conducting your own research in terms of 1) identifying reasonable research problems, 2) selecting appropriate research methods, 3) developing research strategies, 4) collecting and analyzing data, and 5) reporting research findings in written and oral form. Throughout the course, we will focus on the ethics of undertaking research and the effects of the political climate in which research takes place.

We will examine qualitative methods used in anthropology, focusing primarily on participant-observation, on asking questions, on writing fieldnotes, and on the transformation of these primary field data into written ethnographic documents. Ethnography is a fundamental part of anthropology. Ethnography “the writing of culture” is used in two contrasting senses, referring both to the method of qualitative research characterized by living and working among people through the process of participant observation and to the product of this research: the written account. This course will focus both on the process of producing, reading and interpreting written accounts of culture, and on the methodology required for ethnographic research.

**COURSE GOALS:**

This course has several primary objectives. One goal is to give you a number of practical, applied tools during the course of the semester, which you will use in ethnographic projects. The second objective is to allow you to practice and implement these tools. The third is to read and discuss work by anthropologists, especially focusing on the lessons they learned and the challenges they faced. The final goal is to help you understand how to move from project design, to project implementation, to data analysis and reporting.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

All work must be **your own**. You must give credit to **any** information and/or ideas that you use that are not your own by citing it in your work. Failing to do so will be perceived as plagiarism resulting in a zero on the assignment and possible additional penalties to be decided by the instructor. If you are unfamiliar with proper citation procedures, you should consult the W center and/or numerous citation sources that are available online, such as (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>) where you can compare a variety of proper citation formats.

The results of being accused of trying to pass off someone else's work as your own are serious. You can fail the course, the assignment, be put on academic probation or suspended from the University. If pressures mount and you find yourself in a situation where you are concerned about completing work, please do talk to me. Please don't put yourself in a situation where your integrity is compromised.

### **GRADING SCALE:**

A 94%+	A- 90-93%	
B+ 87-89%	B 84-86%	B- 80-83%
C+ 77-79%	C 74-76%	C- 70-73%
D+ 67-69%	D 64-66%	D- 60-63%
F 59%-		

A note on graded materials—you must wait at least 24 hours (but no more than 1 week) before coming to see me about a grade you received on any class material. I am available for consultation regarding any graded assignment only after you have taken sufficient time to read through both your original work and my comments. Keep in mind that reviewing graded material means a possible increase OR decrease in the original grade, so be sure to look over your work carefully before bringing it to my attention for a second time.

The following information will help you better understand the criteria for graded material:

A= exceptionally thought-provoking, original, creative in both content and manner of presentation, and a skillful use of concepts and/or materials which are fully supported.

B= presents a solid understanding of the subject matter and an ability to handle the issues and materials encountered in the subject with only minor errors.

C= demonstrates an adequate understanding of the subject matter with central ideas present, but too general, repetitious and not clearly supported or integrated with evidence and details.

D= a minimally acceptable performance with a confusing central idea and lacking details. Parts of the assignment are missing and/or incomplete.

F= shows lack of effort and minimal comprehension of material with major mechanical errors, no thesis, and misuse of key concepts.

### **POLICY ON ASSIGNMENTS:**

It is important that students pay close attention to the details on assignments, which will be provided in handouts. Hard copy assignments must be turned in **NUMBERED AND STAPLED** (electronic copies must also have page numbers—also it is the students responsibility to make

sure their assignment is properly attached to the email). All assignments are due at the beginning of the class session, unless otherwise noted. Late assignments will not be accepted without a medical excuse or otherwise documented emergency. The instructor retains the right to lower the grade on any late assignment accepted. If you must miss class on the day an assignment is due, it is your responsibility to turn the assignment in early.

\*Be sure to **READ** this **SYLLABUS** carefully and completely – it gives you details about important due dates!

### **POLICY ON ATTENDANCE:**

Regular attendance and active class participation is required. Irregular attendance and repeated late arrivals will result in the lowering of the final course grade.

### **Class Preparation:**

Your class preparation is essential to your required active participation in the course. You must complete assigned readings **before** the class period for which they are assigned. You must come to class with prepared questions and comments regarding the assigned readings. This will help ensure your active participation in class. [See below for elaboration on participation and grading]

Things to think about regarding the readings: What was the author's main point/thesis? How does this relate to the class topic? What connection can you make between the reading and your own life?

### **ASSIGNMENTS:**

1. Pilot Field Study Pieces (40%)
  - a. For this study, you are to select a site and design a mini-research proposal **by week 3**. Throughout the semester you will do assignments at your chosen field site that are designed to give you practice using specific methods for data collection (4 assignments worth 10% each). During the second half of the semester, students will dedicate one day a week to fieldwork and turn in typed fieldnotes on a bi-weekly basis. Students will also be organized into partners who will read each other's fieldnotes, share practical problems and solutions. You are responsible for sharing your fieldnotes with one another in advance of our classtime.
  
2. Research Report (30%)
  - a. The course will culminate in a final ten-page research report on the trial field project. It should include:
    1. A problem statement, supported by some references to the research literature.
    2. A description of the research site, including people and activities involved.
    3. A description of your method for gaining access to the site and establishing field relationships. Observer effects on the data. Ethical problems encountered.
    4. A description of your data-gathering activities.
    5. A description of your data-analysis procedures.
    6. A statement of your findings. These will be exploratory and tentative, but should be grounded in the data you will have collected. How do the findings relate to your original problem

statement? Do they confirm, refute, or suggest a reformulation of the research problem? What do these early findings suggest about what you would need to do to continue this research?

- b. Each student will present their research findings to the class. Classmates are expected to offer feedback on the research methods and findings – these comments will factor into the final evaluations.
3. *Thoughtful Participation* (10%)
    - a. Remember, this is a seminar-style course and a portion of your grade is based on your participation. This includes active listening, responding to your classmates in respectful and engaging ways; also making comments that connect with course readings and demonstrate that you have read and thought about the material for the day's discussion. **Each student will be expected to lead the discussion with a partner for one class, either as an advocate or critic of the assigned readings.** While there are assigned discussion leaders, you should be prepared to fulfill this role on any given day—this requires that you come to class having finished the reading and thought about possible questions and comments to share with the class. You should reflect on the key methodological questions you see in the readings, issues you think are worthy of further discussion, and analytic problems you think are important in the readings.
  4. *Critical Reaction Paper* (20%)
    - a. Submit a six-page critical reaction paper comparing, contrasting, and evaluating the two required course ethnographies, connecting key themes and concepts discussed in class.

### **BOOKS/MATERIALS:**

Righteous Dopefiend, Philippe Bourgois

My Freshman Year, Rebekah Nathan

Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods, Michael Quinn Patton

\* Additional articles are assigned and are available on Moodle under Library course reserves

### **SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:**

Week One: T 8/28 - Introduction

#### **Read:**

<http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/177/395> [an interesting article on the nature of Ethnography by Michael Agar, a leading scholar in the field of Qualitative research methods]

*Fatherhood in British Evangelical Christianity: Negotiating with Mainstream Culture*, [article in Men and Masculinities 13(2) 168-189, 2010 by Kristen Aune, sent to you by Professor Upton and available on Moodle]

Patton, Chapter 1 – *The Nature of Qualitative Inquiry*

**DUE: You will write a one page (double spaced) biography to introduce yourself to others. We will share these at our first meeting in order to begin our discussion on the *what* and *why* of the ethnographic endeavor and the role of the researcher and the value of auto-ethnography. This is a brief statement so think carefully about what you want to include, how you might describe yourself, your place of origin, things that are important to you in ways that an anthropologist might describe you.**

Week Two: T 9/4 – Theory, Thick Description & Symbolism

**Read:**

Patton, Chapters 2 & 3 – *Strategic Themes in Qualitative Inquiry, Variety in Qualitative Inquiry: Theoretical Orientations*

*Thick Description* [from Clifford Geertz, in Toward a Theory of Culture]

*Animals in Lele Religious Symbolism* [Mary Douglas in Africa (27)1, 1957]

**DISCUSSION LEADERS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DUE: Step one in finding a research site – this is the beginning step of your major research project. Venture out, explore your world and come back with some ideas about possibilities for the research topic – that means, possible settings, locales, communities and groups you might want to research using ethnographic methods. Be prepared to present your ideas to the class for discussion and modification.**

Week Three: T 9/11 – Ethics and Reflexivity

**Read:**

*I Was a Playboy Bunny* [from G. Steinem, Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions]

*Being Sane in Insane Places* [D.L. Rosenhan, in Science vol. 179. 1973]

*Benefits of Observer Effects: Lessons From the Field* [Torin Monahan and Jill Fisher, in Qualitative Research 10(3) 2010]

**DISCUSSION LEADERS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DUE: Prepare a clear research plan – this should include a statement of the central problem you want to investigate, questions at the heart of the problem and a list of the kinds of data you anticipate collecting and how you anticipate collecting it. [#1 of 4 Project Pieces]**

Week Four: T 9/18 – Being Human Subjects

**Read:**

My Freshman Year [Rebekah Nathan]

Patton, Chapter 6 – *Fieldwork Strategies and Observation Methods*

**DISCUSSION LEADERS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DUE: Conduct research at your selected site and construct a map to be used as part of your final research report. It must be a real place with real people and the assignment must take you into “the field”. Use the map as a way to investigate the interactions of people who live there and to reflect upon how our culture and various sub-cultures might use space. [#2 of 4 Project Pieces]**

Week Five: T 9/25 – Reflexivity and Language

**Read:**

Patton Chapter 7 – *Qualitative Interviewing*

*Ethnography and the Book that Was Lost* [R. Behar in Ethnography 2003]

**DISCUSSION LEADERS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DUE: Recruit two people that you do not know for an interview. They must be associated with the organization; place or setting that will be the subject of your final research report. This exercise will hone your observation skills and then train you to ask increasingly precise questions about your topic and subjects. It will also require that you pay close attention to various forms of communication (ie: both verbal and body language) as well as the use of new specialized vocabulary. You must record the interviews and keep detailed field notes throughout the interview. Each interview must be at least 20 minutes in length. Begin to transcribe one of the interviews – these take considerable time so get a head start this week. We will discuss coding and the development of a coding key.**

Week Six: T 10/2 — Guest lecture from Chair of IRB

**Read:**

Patton, Chapter 5 – *Designing Qualitative Studies*

*The Ethics Police: IRBs’ Views Concerning Their Power* [R. Klitzman]

*Victims in Our Own Minds: IRBs in Myth and Practice* [Laura Stark]

**DUE: Continue to transcribe one of the interviews. This is due next week.**

Week Seven: T 10/9 -Variables/Measurement – **Guest Lecture – Quantitative Methods**

**Read:**

Patton, Chapter 4 – *Particularly Appropriate Qualitative Applications* [skim]

*Quantitative Methods* [Patel, in Empirical Law Seminar, 2009]

[additional reading TBA]

**DUE: Transcription of one interview – this means it must be transcribed entirely verbatim, do not summarize. This will take some time, plan accordingly. It takes approximately one hour to transcribe 20 minutes of recorded conversation. [#3 of 4 Project Pieces]**

**FALL BREAK ☺**

Week Eight: T 10/23 – Challenges in Fieldwork

**Read:**

Righteous Dopefiend [Philippe Bourgois]

**DISCUSSION LEADERS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DUE: We will have developed a key and discussed coding. You will use your key to code your interview and connect concepts from your interview to those identified in your study. Bring the coded data to class for discussion with others.**

Week Nine: T 10/30 – Archival Data, Tech Tools and Secondary Sources

**Read:**

*Web Surveys to Digital Movies: Technological Tools of the Trade* [David M. Fetterman in Educational Researcher Vol. 31, No. 6 (Aug. - Sep., 2002), pp. 29-37 Published by:

[American Educational Research Association](http://www.aera.net/)

Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3594437>

*Fieldwork at the Movies* [F. Ginsburg in Exotics No More]

**DISCUSSION LEADERS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DUE: Identify a cultural artifact from your field site and evaluate it as a source of ethnographic information. Things to consider as you evaluate the artifact include: authorship, context, audience and purpose of the artifact.**

Week Ten: T 11/6 – “Capturing” the Field

**Read:**

*Object Lessons and Ethnographic Displays: Museum Exhibitions and the Making of American Anthropology.* D. Jenkins in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol 36, 1994.

**DISCUSSION LEADERS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DUE: In addition to your written work, what are the other ways that you can describe your fieldsite? Take photographs or video of your fieldsite and compile a powerpoint (or video) to show the class. You should think clearly about how the images you collect tell a story about your research. Be sure to record the process in your field notes (this means recording the date and time you capture the image, similar to how you recorded the interviews you conducted). Be sure too to include a list of captions for the images that you compile (think here about how museums label and define/describe ethnographic artifacts). [#4 of 4 Project Pieces]**

Week Eleven: T 11/13 – Evaluation of Ethnographic Work

**Read:**

Patton Chapters 8 & 9 – *Qualitative Analysis and Interpretation, Enhancing the Quality and Credibility of Qualitative Analysis*

*The Art of Writing Proposals* [SSRC, Adam Przeworski and Frank Salomon]

**DUE: Six page critical reaction paper in which you compare and contrast the key concepts of each of the two ethnographies we have read and set them in context of other readings we have come across. Essentially you are responsible for evaluating the ethnographic work that we read and providing a review of that material based upon your knowledge of the discipline.**

Week Twelve: T 11/20 – **Presentations of final projects/analysis**

Week Thirteen: T 11/27 – **Presentations of final projects/analysis**

Week Fourteen: T 12/4 – Where Do We Go From Here? From Methods to Senior Seminar

**Meet at Professor Upton’s house for final wrap up/discussion**

**FINAL REPORT DUE: Friday December 14<sup>th</sup> by 4pm**