Anthropology 340C (31325)

Ethnographic Research Methods

Spring 2013
Mondays 3:00-6:00, SAC 5.118

Professor Circe Sturm
Office: SAC 5.122 (232-1561), circe@austin.utexas.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00-3:00 and by appointment.

Course Description

Understanding human behavior is immensely challenging. Fortunately, there are tools to help us make sense of social, cultural and political complexity. This course offers an introduction to the various methods and techniques used in conducting ethnographic research such as participant observation, interviewing, collecting life histories and genealogies, archival research, working with material culture, social media-based research, and visual ethnography. Our primary objectives will be to explore research design, what constitutes evidence, how to analyze data, and strategies for writing up and presenting results. We will pay particular attention to the ethical considerations entailed in anthropological research, including questions of knowledge production, power, location, experience, translation and representation. The course is run largely as a “hands-on” workshop, in which students practice a variety of ethnographic methods (both inside and outside of class), engage in ethnographic writing exercises, and actively guide one another’s work. Students will apply what they learn during the course to designing their own ethnographic research project, conducting independent field research, and presenting their findings to the class. By the end of the semester, they will have a firm grounding in ethnographic research methods and be better prepared for more advanced work.

Requirements

***Attendance and Participation (15%): Because this class meets once a week and follows a workshop format, energetic, thoughtful and consistent participation is mandatory. Students will be expected to attend all class meetings (attendance will be taken). Each absence, beyond one, that is not explained by a doctor’s note or a university administrator will result in a 3-point deduction of your final grade. Students are expected to complete the readings as scheduled on the syllabus and to come to class fully prepared to discuss them, with questions and ideas in mind. Students are also required to complete all writing exercises as scheduled on the syllabus. If you miss any exercise, without a formal written excuse, there will be NO make-up opportunity.

If you are having difficulty with any of the ideas presented in class, then it is your responsibility to meet with other students or attend office hours to clarify course materials. Please use these opportunities to your advantage.

Journals and Fieldnotes (10%): During the semester, you will keep a field journal in which you will record your notes on observations and interviews, as well as your responses to class readings, discussions, fieldtrips, and exercises. You may keep the journal in any format this is convenient for you (i.e. old school spiral notebooks,
computer files, or iPad notes, for example). However, you will need to write them up in clear and legible prose and hand them in on a regular basis throughout the semester.

**Methods Exercises (25%)**: The ethnographic methods exercises require you to conduct various forms of ethnography on a weekly basis. Some exercises will take place in class. Others will involve you having to go out into the world, well beyond the UT campus. Nearly all the exercises involve writing to some extent. You will be expected to take detailed field notes and to provide brief written reports or essays about your experiences. Detailed guidelines for all exercises will be given in class. Most exercises will require a 2-3-page report, in addition to regular more informal fieldnotes.

**Review of Ethnographic Monograph (10%)**: A four-page essay reviewing a monograph-length ethnography of your choice. A brief proposal specifying which ethnography you have chosen and why will be due in class on January 28th.

**Research Proposal (20%)**: Students will be required to submit a 5-7 page research proposal, similar to the ones that graduate students and faculty write to request funding for research. Proposal guidelines will be given in class, early in the semester, and the final proposal will be due on the last Friday of the semester. A brief abstract of the research proposal topic will be due in class on Feb. 4th.

**Oral Presentation of Research Findings (20%)**: All students will be required to give a 15-minute oral presentation on their research findings in class. The presentation will consist of a brief description of your project and your preliminary findings, as well as a question and answer session with your classmates. Presentations will occur in class on April 22nd and 29th.

Your grade will be determined using your total point score, scaled against everyone else in the class. The scale for final grades is such that:

- 94 to 100 pts. = A
- 90 to 93 pts. = A-
- 87 to 89 pts. = B+
- 84 to 86 pts. = B
- 80 to 83 pts. = B-
- 77 to 79 pts. = C+
- 74 to 76 pts. = C
- 70 to 73 pts. = C-
- 67 to 69 pts. = D+
- 64 to 66 pts. = D
- 60 to 63 pts. = D-
- 59 pts. and fewer = F

Note: there is no midterm or final examination. You will be evaluated on the following basis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>15 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal / Fieldnotes</td>
<td>10 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Methods Exercises</td>
<td>25 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review of Ethnographic Monograph</td>
<td>10 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Presentation</td>
<td>20 pts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Proposal</td>
<td>20 pts.</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100 pts.</td>
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Assignments will be due at the beginning of class and there will be no make-up exams, incompletes, or time extensions, except in the case of emergencies. No extra credit assignments are available.

Cheating will not be tolerated! Anyone caught cheating will be charged under the academic misconduct code. Laptops, iPads/iPods, cell phones and other electronic devices may not be used in class, unless a documented disability requires them. Please be sure and turn all electronic devices off when you arrive (and not to simply silence them).

**Required Readings**

The required textbook (Angrosino) is available at the University Co-Op Bookstore or online at Amazon. The required ethnographic monograph (your choice) can also be ordered online through Amazon.com or any local bookstore. All other required articles and chapters will be posted on the course Blackboard site. They required readings are listed below.

****(Ethnographic Monograph of your own choosing)*


The University of Texas is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all students with disabilities. Students with disabilities who require accommodations are asked to speak with the professor as early in the semester as possible. Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services prior to receiving accommodations in this course.

This class is challenging in that it requires active participation on a weekly basis and that you stay organized and conscientious about assignments. However, it also provides a unique hands-on learning environment that is a lot of fun. Let’s have a great semester!
# Weekly Course Schedule

Reading Key: DCA = Doing Cultural Anthropology, BB = Article Posted on Blackboard. All readings are to be completed by the week that they appear on the schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 14</td>
<td>Introduction and Aims of the Course</td>
<td>Choose Ethnography</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>MLK Holiday: No Class</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Participant Observation and Ethnographic Fieldwork</td>
<td>DCA Intro. &amp; Ch. 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Due: First Set of Fieldnotes, and Your Choice of Ethnography</td>
<td>BB: Van Maanen 1988</td>
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<td>In Class-Exercise: Writing Observation</td>
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<td>Feb. 4</td>
<td>Research Proposal Design</td>
<td>DCA Ch. 8 &amp; 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Interviewing and Collecting Life Histories</td>
<td>DCA Ch. 3</td>
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<td>Due: Second Set of Fieldnotes</td>
<td>BB: Murchison 2010, Kiesinger 1998</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Ethnography: Writing Culture</td>
<td>DCA Ch. 4</td>
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<td>Due: Life History Interview Transcription</td>
<td>BB: Abu-Lughod 2005, Geertz 1973</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Intersubjectivity, Kinship and Social Location</td>
<td>DCA Ch. 2</td>
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<td>In Class Exercise: Genealogy Interview</td>
<td>BB: Nader 1969, Ruby 1980</td>
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<td>Mar. 4</td>
<td>Museums, Representation and Material Culture</td>
<td>DCA Ch. 6</td>
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<td>Field Trip: Blanton Museum</td>
<td>BB: Miller 2001, Nanda 2004</td>
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<td>Due: Genealogy Interview Write-Up</td>
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<td>11-17</td>
<td>Spring Break, NO CLASS</td>
<td>DCA Ch. 10 &amp; 11</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Archival Research</td>
<td>DCA Ch. 5</td>
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<td>Field Trip: Barker History Center</td>
<td>BB: Greenbaum and Rodriguez 1998</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Ethical Dilemmas: Controversies and Solutions</td>
<td>DCA Ch. 7</td>
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<td>Apr. 1</td>
<td>Visual Methods</td>
<td>Archival Community Group Project</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Social Media/Virtual Ethnography</td>
<td>Visual Ethnography Project</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Reflexivity and Auto-Ethnography</td>
<td>Fifth Set of Fieldnotes</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Student Research Presentations</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Student Research Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 3</td>
<td>Due: Final Research Project Proposals</td>
<td>Field Journals</td>
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