ACTIVIST RESEARCH PRACTICUM
AFR372C (#29689), ANT324L (#30623), LAS324L (#39604)
M, W 3-4:30 p.m. SRH 1.320

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Course Description

From this upper-division seminar students will learn the basics of qualitative research methods, and gain hands-on experience doing “activist research” with an Austin-based organization. Coursework will consider the ethics and politics of anthropological research, tracing this evolution from its colonial origins, through upheaval and critique in the 1960s and 1970s, to various “post-colonial” responses to these criticisms. After working through conventional research methods, we will focus on “activist anthropology,” as one means to confront the problems associated with anthropology’s colonial legacy. Together we will explore the complexities of activist research methods, while each student conceives and carries out an activist research project in conjunction with an organization in the Austin area. Once this “practicum” portion of the course begins (no later than Friday, February 6), seminar meetings will be reduced in order to allow additional time for the placements. From February 9 on, students are expected to devote an average of eight hours a week to their activist research project.

Required Texts

Booth, Wayne C., et al. (Booth, Colomb, and Williams 1995), The Craft of Research.
Checker, Melissa (Checker 2005), Polluted Promises.
hooks, bell (hooks 2003), Teaching Community.
Reiter, Bernd, et al. (Reiter and Oslander 2015), Bridging Scholarship and Activism.

Requirements and Grading

Commit to internship (6-8 hrs. / week): January 26th through May 1st ------- 20%
Preliminary Research Proposal: Due February 13th ------------------------ 5%
Brief reflection piece on Weber and objectivity: Due Feb 27th------------ 10%
Research proposal: Due March 6 ------------------------------------------- 5%
Final research paper:
  First draft: April 24th ----------------------------------------------- 10%
  Oral presentation: May 4th --------------------------------- 10%
  Written version: May 11th ---------------------------------- 20%
Seminar attendance and participation------------------------------- 20%
Activist Research Internships—Basic Description

A major portion of your time in this course will be devoted to a “research internship” with the organization of your choice. A rough estimate of your “work time” with the organization is 6 to 8 hours a week. This will typically include both general volunteer work time offered to the organization, in accordance with its needs, and time specifically devoted to research activities. It does not include the time you will need to spend apart from the actual research activities, to organize the data and write up the results. You will need to begin thinking about your research placement immediately. You are required to work with the organization for roughly 12 weeks. This means starting by January 28th.

Choosing a placement
We will hand out a list of possible placements, developed through prior discussions with the organization. If placements are on this list, it means that the organization in question has expressed a willingness, in principle, to take on one or more interns. It does not mean that the placement is guaranteed. You will still need to make contact, hear about the organization’s particular needs, and discuss a possible research topic, to make sure that the arrangement is mutually acceptable.

If you prefer you may develop a placement based on your own experience or interests. All the same parameters apply. In addition, if the placement is of your own creation, you need to receive my approval prior to the start date.

Working for the organization
Part of the internship agreement involves a commitment for the intern to donate a certain number of hours a week to the organization’s general needs. This is justified partly as a gesture of support for the organization, and partly because it is the best way for the intern to learn about the organization and its work. As you discuss this portion of the internship, you should feel free to exercise choice, when appropriate. But you must also keep in mind that these tasks may not always be the most exciting or interesting to you.

Designing the “Activist Research” Project
This is the especially creative part of the internship, which involves putting your rudimentary skills as an anthropologist (or social analyst) to work. The research project should be:

• Designed through discussions between you and organization members;
• Focused on a topic that interests you, and also, that has the potential to generate knowledge and analysis that will be useful to the organization;
• Oriented toward new data collection, rather than summary of existing knowledge (although the latter is crucial to making sense of the new research);
• Designed to use anthropological research methods, including interviews and participant observation.
Outline of Weeks January

21—Introduction to the Course

(Hale 2001), “What is Activist Research?” Illich, Ivan “Why we must disestablish school”

26—Can “schooling” and “research” be reformed?

**Guest Speaker:** Cristina Tzintzun, Executive Director, Workers Defense Project

(Freire 1970), pp. 19-56
(hooks 2003), pp. ix-24

28—Power, Privilege and the “Master’s Tools”

(Lorde 1984a), pp. 89-92
(McIntosh 1995), pp. 291-295
(hooks 2003), pp. 25-66

*Conventional Research Methods*

February

2—Analytical Questions

Booth (1995), pp. 9-16, 35-74

4—*Internships—No Class*

9—Data Collection

(Briggs 1986), pp. 1-30, 61-93
(Johnson and Sackett 1998), pp. 131-173

11—*Internships—No Class*

**February 13—Preliminary Research Proposal Due**

16—Objectivity, Neutrality, Positivism

(Weber 1949), pp. 50-112

18—Sources and Field Notes
23—Data Analysis and Interpretation

Hale Guatemala data [available on Canvas]

25—Presenting Research Results

Booth (1995), pp. 208-262

**February 27—First Analytical Essay Due**

Challenges and Transformations

March

2—Global Politics

(Asad 1973), pp. 9-19
(Wolf and Jorgeson 1970), pp. 26-35
Gusterson “Do professional ethics matter in war?”
   http://thebulletin.org/do-professional-ethics-matter-war

4—Internships—No Class

   **March 6—Final Research Proposal Due**

9—Reflexivity, ethnographic authority and writing culture

(Clifford 1988), pp. 21-54
(Haraway 1988), pp. 575-599

11—Race, Gender and Class Inequalities in Research Relations

(Smith 1999), pp. 1-76

   **Spring Break**

23—Beyond Rationality: Emotions as source of analytical insight

(Luhrmann 2005), pp. xx-xx
(hooks 2003), pp. 127-185
Rocha (nd) [TBA]
25—The Power of the Erotic

(Lorde 1984b), pp. 53-59
(Allen 2012), pp. 325-338

30—Internships—No Class

Locating Activist Scholarship

April

1—Formulating an activist research project

(Pierre 2008), pp. 115-135
(Pulido 2008), pp. 341-365

6—Engaging Contradictions

(Hale 2008), pp. 1-28
(Oslender 2015), pp. 63-74

8—Making sense (and use) of the research

(Perry 2015), pp. 151-171
(Greenwood 2008), pp. 299-340

13—Drawing Conclusions, Presenting Results

(Esteva 2015), pp. 15-30
(Rappaport and Ramos 2012), pp. 122-143

15—Internships—no Class

Activist Scholarship in Practice

Over the next four sessions we will discuss Polluted Promises (Checker 2005).

20, 22: Checker, pp. 1-103

**First Draft Research Paper due: Friday, April 24th at 5:00 p.m.**

27, 29: Checker, pp. 104-190

May
4—Presentations [OJO: We will try to start class at noon this day]

6—Evaluations, Reflections, Conclusions

(Gordon and James 2008), pp. 367-375

**Final Research Paper due: Monday, May 11 at 5:00 p.m.**

References

Allen, Jafari

Asad, Talal

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams

Briggs, Charles

Checker, Melissa

Clifford, James

Esteva, Gustavo

Freire, Paulo

Gordon, Edmund T., and Joy A. James

Greenwood, Davydd J.

Hale, Charles R


Haraway, Donna


hooks, bell


Johnson, Allen, and Ross Sackett


Lorde, Audre


Luhrmann, T.


McIntosh, Peggy


Oslander, Ulrich


Perry, Keisha-Khan


Pierre, Jemima


Pulido, Laura


