Techniques & Problems in Ethnography

Classes meet Monday evenings in Honors 195

Tentative Syllabus -- November 29, 2015

Spring 2016

To contact Dr. H.:

Email <heatherington@uwm.edu> with “Anthro 561” in the subject header. Office hours by appointment.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Course Texts</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Required</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Recommended for undergraduates (selections required)</td>
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<td>• Recommended for graduate students (selections required)</td>
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Course Overview

This course is designed to introduce graduate and undergraduate students to ethnographic methods, fieldwork and writing in cultural anthropology. As a required core course for anthropology majors, the workload is designed to be intensive, and a substantial component of independent work outside of class is expected. **Take charge of your own success:**

- Consistent attendance and preparation are mandatory.
- Readings and independent assignments must be completed in advance of the relevant class meeting.
- This is not a lecture class! Active participation in class discussions and group work is required.
- No laptops are needed in class. You will need access internet resources and email outside of class.
- NO internet surfing, checking email, social media, text messages or phone calls during class time.
- Academic honesty is essential. All the writing you submit must be your own, original work.

Course structure and learning outcomes

1. Students in this class will learn about ethnographic approaches in anthropological research by completing assigned readings. Active, critical reading techniques should be applied to understand the methodological, conceptual, and representational dimensions of these works, as an ethnographer does.

2. Students will apply the techniques of ethnography by undertaking a series of individual methods exercises documented in notes and reflections, which will be collected in methods portfolios. These independent exercises also develop time management, organization and interpersonal skills.

3. Students will learn to analyze conceptual and ethical concerns related to ethnographic fieldwork through problem-solving exercises undertaken in the context of individual assignments, as well as group-based workshops in class.

4. Students will learn about the process of interpreting fieldnotes by practicing ethnographic writing. We will pay critical, reflexive attention to style, strategies and issues of cultural representation in ethnography.

5. Students will learn skills of ethnographic and scholarly collaboration by participating in active learning groups during class time. Methods portfolios will be shared and discussed with your peers, and best practice in mutual support and peer mentorship will be rewarded in the context of group exercises.

This course syllabus may be subject to modifications before the beginning of semester. Please consult the instructor.
## Semester Schedule

<table>
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<th>Week</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Read this syllabus all the way through, and plan your semester workload commitments</td>
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| 2    | *Ethnographic Fieldwork* Introduction & Part 1 (“Beginnings”), pp. 1-81  
   - In-class workshop: Principles of ethnographic fieldwork |
| 3    | *Ethnographic Fieldwork* Part 2 (“Fieldwork Identities”), pp. 85-133  
   - In-class workshop: Positionality, location, and epistemology |
| 4    | *Ethnographic Fieldwork* Part 3 (“Fieldwork Relations and Rapport”), pp. 135-189  
   - Methods exercise 1: Participant observation at public events |
| 5    | *Ethnographic Fieldwork* Part 4 (“The ‘Other’ Talks Back”), pp. 191-233  
   - Undergraduate in-class workshop: Objects, subjects, partners (Campbell & Lassiter chs 1-2)  
   - Graduate in-class workshop: The art of ethnography (*Anthropology & Humanism* special issue) |
| 6    | *Ethnographic Fieldwork* Part 5 (“Fieldwork Conflicts, Hazards and Dangers”), pp. 236-295  
   - Methods exercise 2: Participant observation in domestic and private settings |
| 7    | *Ethnographic Fieldwork* Part 6 (“Fieldwork Ethics”), pp. 297-364  
   - In-class workshop: Ethical practice in anthropology |
| 8    | *Ethnographic Fieldwork* Part 7 (“Multi-sited Fieldwork”) pp. 365-440  
   - Methods exercise 3: Fieldwork in institutional settings |
| 9    | *Ethnographic Fieldwork* Part 8 (“Sensorial Fieldwork”) pp. 441-510  
   - In-class workshop: Fieldnotes |
| 10   | Graduate seminar on “writing culture” part I--selected reading from Clifford & Marcus (1988)  
   - Undergraduate exercise 4: Ethnography of the senses (Campbell & Lassiter chs 3-4) |
| 11   | *Ethnographic Fieldwork* Part 9 (“Reflexive Ethnography”) pp. 511-562  
   - In-class workshop: Ethnographic writing |
| 12   | Graduate seminar on “writing culture” part II--selected reading from Faubion & Marcus (2009)  
   - Undergraduate exercise 5: Interviews & conversations (Campbell & Lassiter chs 5-6) |
| 13   | *Ethnographic Fieldwork* Part 10 (“Engaged Fieldwork”) pp. 563-610  
   - In-class workshop: Collaborations and commitments |
| 14   | Undergraduate ethnographic writing projects due  
   - Graduate capstone projects due |

This course syllabus may be subject to modifications before the beginning of semester. Please consult the instructor.
Components of assessment for undergraduate students

Understanding the techniques and ethics of ethnography enables undergraduate majors in anthropology to add valuable “transportable skills” to their resumés and CVs. Ethnography can be applied to a range of fields, from journalism to business and non-profit research, to development projects and community organization. The time management, organization, documentation, problem-solving and interpersonal skills required for ethnography are fundamental assets in any career.

You must complete *all* the assigned readings from the course texts *in advance* of class meetings. For undergraduate students, the final grade in the course is based mainly on ongoing assessment, including readings/participation and methodological exercises. In order to fully “digest” and retain the readings, you will take notes and discuss them in small groups, and answer workshop questions in class, which will be evaluated collectively for participation. Our work in class is fundamentally collaborative.

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<td>Group workshops</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Attendance, preparation and participation are evaluated on the basis of collaborative workshop assignments developed in class, worth 2% each. Each group will have 3-5 members and may change composition each class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods portfolio</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Undertake 5 different fieldwork exercises and document them with fieldnotes, sketches, maps, illustrations, diagrams, charts, etc. as appropriate. You should also add reflections and questions emerging from your experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnographic writing</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Develop one of your methods exercises into a descriptive narrative, engaging reflexive and critical issues: 8-10pp, with formal citations &amp; bibliography. How does your experience with ethnography enable you to relate to the readings?</td>
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Every second week, you are required to complete a methods exercise and write-up in addition to class readings. Our group work in class on these days will be divided between a discussion of assigned readings, and a discussion of the results of your methods exercises. Undergraduates will complete five of these exercises to explore a variety of techniques, while graduate students will place more emphasis on developing depth through the interpretive and writing process.

A final ethnographic writing assignment is due at the end of the semester. Guidelines will be discussed in class. You will work closely with your TA, who is available for questions during office hours TBA.

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Components of assessment for graduate students

As graduate students, you will need to know essential techniques of ethnographic method, and understand a range of critical concerns about ethnographic method and writing, in order to complete your thesis research successfully. You are must complete the required readings for graduate students in advance of class meetings. For graduate students, half of the grade is based ongoing assessment of group workshops together with individual methodological exercises. In addition, there are additional readings and class meetings for graduate students, and a capstone project worth 50% is due at the end of the semester.

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<td>20%</td>
<td>Attendance, preparation and participation are evaluated on the basis of collaborative workshop assignments developed in class. Each group will have 3-5 members. Graduate students should help mentor undergrads.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Methods portfolio</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Undertake 3 different fieldwork exercises and document them with fieldnotes, sketches, maps, illustrations, diagrams, charts, etc. as appropriate. You should also add reflections and questions emerging from your experience. You are encouraged to use these exercises not only to explore techniques of ethnography, but also ethnographic writing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capstone project</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Final essay 15-18pp double-spaced, demonstrating scholarship and research skills. Topic must be approved; consult instructor (see below).</td>
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Capstone Options

Graduate students who have not yet done fieldwork research should undertake a comparative reading of three full ethnographic monographs. Consult the instructor in the selection of these books. Your essay must also engage some course readings and recommended resources to incorporate reflections on ethnographic location, positionality, intersubjectivity, ethical concerns, and cultural representation. The essay should document all sources used with in-text citations and a list of references cited.

Graduate students who have already completed a significant component of fieldwork research for their thesis project may choose to develop an ethnographic essay suitable and formatted for a specific journal focused on ethnography, such as *Anthropology and Humanism*, *Anthropological Quarterly* or *American Ethnologist*. Visit your chosen journal for author guidelines. You should draw on some class readings.

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Absences and late assignments

You should come to class on time, and contribute your share to group work. Students are responsible to organize their personal, work and childcare schedules to enable ongoing class attendance. If you are sick, however, please don’t come to class. Up to two class absences during the semester will not affect your final grade, but you should always send a short note to the instructor documenting the reason for any absence. Additional absences may be excused at the discretion of the instructor under legitimate circumstances, including health issues and family emergencies, although make-up work may be required in lieu of missed workshops. Make-up work may not be accepted for unexcused absences.

Methods assignments should be completed independently and written up by the relevant class meeting. Each assignment is worth 10% of the course grade. You may petition the instructor to be allowed to submit one (and only one) of these assignments up to 2 days late without penalty, for any reason. Any other assignment submitted late, or any assignment submitted more than two days late, will be subject to a penalty of -1 point (out of ten) per day, unless a legitimate reason for exception is documented.

No extensions are allowed on assignments and capstone projects due at the end of semester, unless warranted by student visas or truly exceptional circumstances. Graduate students should not expect to take incompletes. Students are advised to contact the instructor by email immediately in the event of emergency.

Special accommodations

If you have a disability or special circumstances that qualify you for academic accommodations, please register with the Accessibility Resource Center <http://uwm.edu/arc/services-and-accommodations/> and present your student VISA to the instructor as soon as possible at the beginning of semester.

Ongoing adjustments to the semester schedule

The semester schedule may be subject to minor ongoing adjustments, announced in class or via email. Please ensure that you check your UWM email account frequently to be informed about any class cancellations or changes/clarifications with regard to assignments. In rare circumstances, class meetings can be disrupted, and in this case, the syllabus requirements will be modified to permit course completion, and the course may shift “online”. Please keep abreast of email announcements.

Student rights and responsibilities

Please consult university policies relevant to religious observances, academic conduct, complaint and appeals procedures, etc.: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/news_events/upload/Syllabus-Links.pdf

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