

## **Ethnographic Methods\***

### **COMM 314 / SOC 319**

Thursdays, 10:30am-1:20pm

Winter, 2017

Classroom: 50-52E

Instructor: Angèle Christin

Office Hours: Wed. 4-6pm

Rm 334, Building 120

### **Course description**

This course offers an introduction to the practice and politics of ethnographic fieldwork. It provides a “how to” of ethnographic research. Students will conduct an ethnographic project of their own, complemented by weekly readings and discussions. In the process, we will discuss the theory and epistemology of fieldwork, along with the practicalities and politics of doing fieldwork in different domains. We will examine different stages of ethnographic research (entering the field, exiting the field, writing it up), different methods (observations, interviews, “going along”), as well as distinct styles of ethnographic work. The course will serve as a participative workshop for students to exchange field notes, share practical advice, and consolidate their research interests.

### **Course requirements**

This course requires the students to pick a particular fieldwork site by the second week. The students will be expected to observe the interactions that occur there, to write field notes after each visit to the site, to conduct interviews, and to write a final paper based on their research.

The requirements for the course are the following:

1. *Students will write four short (approximately 1,000 words) reports about their research (due by 5pm Wednesday, the day before class):*
  - Week 2 (Research proposal)
  - Week 3 (Describing the setting)
  - Week 4 (Observation notes)
  - Week 5 (Transcribed interview)
2. *Class participation.* Students are expected to complete all readings and assignments. Student should come to class prepared to discuss them.
3. *Presentations.* Students will give a 15mn presentation of their research during the final class meeting.

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\* This syllabus benefited from related syllabi on ethnographic and qualitative methods by Tom Boellstorff, Phaedra Daipha, Matthew Desmond, Mitch Duneier, Tomas Jimenez, Allison Pugh, Florence Weber, and Robert Wuthnow.

4. *Final research paper.* Students will write a final research paper at the end of the semester. The paper will include: a description of the research site, research questions, and people encountered; a methods section that describes how data was collected; a reflexive account of the student's role in the field; a preliminary findings section; and a discussion of future directions for the project.

The paper should not exceed 7,000 words, including text, references, and footnotes; it should not be shorter than 5,000 words. Students can use the short reports they wrote throughout the quarter in their final paper.

*A note of caution:* it takes time to get access to a site and schedule interviews. The students should plan to start their fieldwork early.

### **Grading**

- Class participation: 20%
- Short reports: 20% total (5% each)
- Final presentation: 20%
- Final paper: 40%

### **Readings**

Please buy the following book online:

Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*.

All other readings will be made available on Canvas.

### **Students with Documented Disabilities**

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066, URL: <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oea>).

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### **Week 1 – January 12. What is Ethnography?**

Geertz, Clifford. 1972. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." *Daedalus* 101(1): 1:37.

Stack, Carol. 1974. Introduction and Chapter 4 in *All Our Kin*. Basic Books.

Goffman, Erving. 1989. "On Fieldwork." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 18: 123-32.

Fine, Gary Alan. 1993. "Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. 22(3): 267-294.

Katz, Jack. 1997. "Ethnography's Warrants." *Sociological Methods & Research*. 25(4): 391-423.

## **Week 2 – January 19. Ethnographic Styles**

- ***First Report Due (Research proposal)***
- ***Fieldwork begins***

Glaser, Barney. 1999. “The Future of Grounded Theory.” *Qualitative Health Research* 9(6): 836-845.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. Chapter 1 in *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*.

Burawoy, Michael. 1998. “The Extended Case Method.” *Sociological Theory* 16(1): 4- 33.

Tavory, Iddo and Stefan Timmermans. 2009. “Two Cases of Ethnography: Grounded Theory and Extended Case Method.” *Ethnography* 10(3): 243-263.

## **Week 3 – January 26. Gaining Entry**

- ***Second Report Due (Describing the setting)***
- ***Presentation by Adam Bailey about the IRB process***

Powdermaker, Hortense. 1966. Pp. 49-60, 108-119 in *Stranger and Friend: The Way of the Anthropologist*. Norton.

Myerhoff, Barbara. 1978. Pp. 1-39 in *Number Our Days*. Dutton.

Bourgois, Philippe. 2003. Chapter 1 in *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*, Second Edition. Cambridge University Press.

Venkatesh, Sudhir. 2002. “‘Doin’ the Hustle’: Constructing the Ethnographer in the American Ghetto.” *Ethnography* 3: 91–111.

Alice Goffman. 2014. “Appendix: A Methodological Note” in *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Chicago University Press.

## **Week 4 – February 2. Interviews and Design**

- ***Third Report due (Interviews)***

Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. Chapter 2 in *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*.

Swidler, Ann. 2001. Pp. 215-35 (“Methodological Appendix”) in *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters*. University of Chicago Press.

Duneier, Mitch. 2011. “How Not to Lie with Ethnography.” *Sociological Methodology* 41: 1-11.

Small, Mario. 2009. “How Many Cases do I need? On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research.” *Ethnography* 10(1): 5-38.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1999. “Understanding.” Pp 607-626 in *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

## **Week 5 – February 9. Observations**

- ***Fourth Report Due (Observations)***

Anderson, Elijah. 1999. Pp. 15-34 in *Code of the Street*. Norton.

Wacquant, Loïc. 2004. Pp. 13-41 in *Body and Soul*. Oxford University Press.

Duneier, Mitchell. 1994. Pp. 3-24 in *Slim’s Table*. University of Chicago Press.

Kusenbach, Margarethe. 2003. “Street Phenomenology: The Go-Along as Ethnographic Research Tool.” *Ethnography* 4: 455-485.

- Thorne, Barrie. 1980. "'You Still Takin' Notes?'" Fieldwork and Problems of Informed Consent." *Social Problems* 27: 284-297.
- Jerolmack, Colin and Khan, Shamus. 2014. "Talk Is Cheap: Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy." *Sociological Methods & Research* 43 (2): 1-36.

### **Week 6 – February 16. Getting Out, Writing it up**

- Snow, David. 1980 "The Disengagement Process: A Neglected Problem in Participant Observation Research." *Qualitative Sociology*, 3:100-122.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1989. Pp. 1-24, 73-101 in *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*. Stanford University Press.
- Caulley, Darrel N. 2008. "Making Qualitative Research Reports Less Boring: The Techniques of Writing Creative Nonfiction." *Qualitative Inquiry* 14: 424-49.
- Becker, Howard. 1998. Chapter 4 in *The Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about Your Research while You're Doing It*. University of Chicago Press.
- Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. Chapters 4 and 5 in *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*.

### **Week 7 – February 23. Disputes, claims, and evidence**

- Katz, Jack. 2002. "From How to Why: On Luminous Description and Causal Inference in Ethnography, Part 1." *Ethnography* 2: 443-73.
- Katz, Jack. 2002. "From How to Why: On Luminous Description and Causal Inference in Ethnography, Part 2." *Ethnography* 3: 63-90.
- Symposium on Wacquant, Loïc. 2002. "Scrutinizing the Street: Poverty, Morality, and the Pitfalls of Urban Ethnography," *American Journal of Sociology* 107: 1468-1532, with responses by Elijah Anderson, Mitchell Duneier, and Katherine Newman.

#### *Optional*

- Duneier, Mitchell. 2006. "Ethnography, the Ecological Fallacy, and the 1995 Chicago Heat Wave." *American Sociological Review* 71: 679-88.
- Klinenberg, Eric. 2006. "Blaming the Victims: Hearsay, Labeling, and the Hazards of Quick-it Disaster Ethnography," *American Sociological Review* 71: 689-98.

### **Week 8 – March 2. Subjectivity, Reflexivity, Politics**

- Humphreys, Laud. 1975. Pp. 16-44 "The Sociologist as Voyeur" in *Tearoom Trade*. Aldine.
- Comaroff, Jean and John Comaroff. 2003. "Ethnography on an Awkward Scale: Postcolonial Anthropology and the Violence of Abstraction." *Ethnography* 4:147-1381.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 1992. Prologue, Introduction, and Chapter 7 in *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*. University of California Press.
- Desmond, Matthew. 2007. "Appendix." *On the Fireline*. University of Chicago Press.
- Katz, Jack. 2004. "On the Rhetoric and Politics of Ethnographic Methodology," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 595: 280-308.

#### *Optional*

- Lubet, Steven. 2015. "[Ethics on the Run](#)." *The New Rambler*.
- Goffman, Alice. 2015. "[A Reply to Professor Lubet's Critique](#)."

### **Week 9 – March 9. Digital Ethnography**

- Boellstorff, Tom, Nardi, Bonnie, Pearce, Celia and T.L. Taylor. 2012. Chapter 1 in *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method*. Princeton University Press.
- Howard, Philip N. 2002. “Network Ethnography and the Hypermedia Organization: New Media, New Organizations,” *New Methods in New Media and Society* 4:550-574.
- Lane, Jeffrey. 2016. “The Digital Street: An Ethnographic Study of Networked Street Life in Harlem.” *American Behavioral Scientist* 60(1): 43-58.
- Coleman, E. Gabriella. 2010. “Ethnographic Approaches to Digital Media.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39:487–505.
- boyd, danah. 2015. “Making sense of Teen Life: Strategies for Capturing Ethnographic Data in a Network Era.” in Hargittai, Eszter and Sandvig, Christian. *Digital Research Confidential: The Secrets of Studying Behavior Online*. The MIT Press.

### **Week 10 – March 16. Student presentations.**

### **Final Papers Due (date TBD)**