Ethnographic Methods*

COMM 314 / SOC 319
Wednesday, 12:30-3:20pm
Fall 2019
Classroom: 200-217

Instructor: Angèle Christin
Rm 334, Building 120
Office hours: Weds 3:30-5:30pm
Email: angelec@stanford.edu

Course description
This course offers an introduction to the practice and politics of ethnographic fieldwork. It provides a “how-to” of ethnographic research, offline and online. Students will conduct an ethnographic project of their own, complemented by weekly readings and discussions. The first half of the course will cover the basics of ethnographic research: we will examine different styles of ethnographic work as well as different methods (observations, interviews, “going along,” and so on). The second half of the course will focus on “mediated” forms of fieldwork, from the study of artifacts and machines to digital and virtual ethnographies. The course will also serve as a participative workshop for graduate students to exchange field notes, share practical advice, and develop 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 at that site, to write field notes after each visit there, 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 three short (approximately 1,000 words) reports about their research project (due by 3pm Tuesday, the day before class):*
   - Week 2 (Research proposal)
   - Week 4 (Transcribed interview)
   - Week 6 (Observation notes)

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 15-minute presentation of their research during the*

*This syllabus benefited from related syllabi by Phaedra Daipha, Tom Boellstorff, Matthew Desmond, Mitch Duneier, Tomas Jimenez, Allison Pugh, Florence Weber, and Robert Wuthnow.
final class meeting.

4. Final research paper. Students will write a final research paper that 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 final paper is due on December 12 at 6pm via email as a MS Word document.

The paper should not exceed 6,000 words, including text, references, and footnotes. 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: 15% total (5% each)
- Final presentation: 15%
- Final paper: 50%

Readings
All the readings will be made available on Canvas.

Cell Phones, Laptops, Tablets, and other Electronic Devices

Respect privacy and do not make digital recordings of others without their consent
It is essential to the success of this class that participants feel comfortable sharing questions, ideas, concerns, stories, and experiences during class discussions. Therefore, you may not create any audio, photographic, or video recordings during class time.

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/oae).

Well-Being, Stress Management, & Mental Health
If you or someone you know are experiencing personal, academic, or relationship problems and would like someone to talk to, reach out to the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
on campus. CAPS is the university’s counseling center dedicated to student mental health and wellbeing. As specialists working with undergraduate and graduate students, CAPS staff will work to address your needs through an initial CAPS phone screen appointment. CAPS provides a broad range of services including: crisis counseling, individual therapy, medication assessment and management, and group therapy. These services are provided by a diverse and multicultural professional staff. Many services are available without additional charge for students who have paid the Campus Health Service Fee. Phone assessment appointments can be made at CAPS by calling 650-723-3785, by accessing the VadenPatient portal through the Vaden website, or by coming to the second floor of the Vaden Health Center from 8:30 am–5 pm Monday through Friday. For more information about CAPS services, visit: https://vaden.stanford.edu/caps-and-wellness

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Week 1 – September 25. What is Ethnography?


Week 2 – October 2. Theory and Fieldwork


➢ First report due (Research proposal) 
➢ Fieldwork begins

Week 3 – October 9. Interviews and Design


➢ Presentation by Adam Bailey about the IRB process

Week 4 – October 16. Observations and Descriptions

➢ Second report due (Interview transcript)

Week 5 – October 23. Reflexivity and Embodiment

Week 6 – October 30. Complex Organizations, Materiality, and Machines

➢ Third report due (Observation notes)

Week 7 – November 6. Global, Multi-Sited, and Networked Ethnographies

**Week 8 – November 13. Online/offline**

**Week 9 – November 20. Virtual Ethnographies**

*No class on November 27 (Thanksgiving)*

**Week 10 – December 4. Student presentations**

Additional date for student presentations TBD

Final Papers Due on December 12