Ethnographic Methods[*]

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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 <u>pick a particular fieldwork site by the second week</u>. 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 <u>3pm Thursday</u>, the day before class):*
    o Week 2 (Research proposal)
    o Week 4 (Transcribed interview)
    o 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 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.

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.

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[*] This syllabus benefited from related syllabi by Phaedra Daipha, Tom Boellstorff, Mitch Duneier, Tomás Jiménez, Allison Pugh, Florence Weber, and Robert Wuthnow. The syllabus has been edited for public circulation.

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<div align="center">**Part I. Doing Ethnographic Research**</div>

Week 1 – January 7. What is Ethnography?

Geertz, Clifford. 1972. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." *Daedalus* 101(1): 1:37.
Fine, Gary Alan. 1993. "Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. 22(3): 267-294.
Lareau, Annette. 2021. Chapter 2, "Before You Begin: Dreaming and Thinking" in *Listening to People. A Practical Guide to Interviewing, Participant Observation, Data Analysis, and Writing It All Up.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Week 2 – January 14. Theory and Fieldwork

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.
Timmermans, Stefan, and Iddo Tavory. 2012. "Theory Construction in Qualitative Research. From Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis." *Sociological Theory* 30(3): 167-186.
➢ *First report due (Research proposal)*
➢ *Fieldwork begins*

Week 3 – January 21. Interviews and Design

Lareau, Annette. 2021. Chapter 5, "How to Conduct a Good Interview," in *Listening to People.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. Chapter 2 in *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*.
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.
➢ *Presentation about the IRB process*

Week 4 – January 28. Observations and Descriptions

Myerhoff, Barbara. 1978. Pp. 1-39 in *Number Our Days*. Dutton.
Wacquant, Loïc. 2004. Pp. 13-41 in *Body and Soul*. Oxford University Press.

Trouille, David, and Iddo Tavory. 2019. "Shadowing: Warrants for Intersituational Variation in Ethnography." *Sociological Methods and Research* 48(3): 534-560.

Jerolmack, Colin and Khan, Shamus. 2014. "Talk Is Cheap: Ethnography and the Attitudinal Fallacy." *Sociological Methods & Research* 43 (2): 1-36.

Lamont, Michèle, and Ann Swidler. 2014. "Methodological Pluralism and the Possibilities and Limits of Interviewing." *Qualitative Sociology* 37: 153-171.

➢ *Second report due (Interview transcript)*

Week 5 – February 4. Positionality, Reflexivity, and Embodiment

Hoang, Kimberly Kay. 2015. "Introduction" and "Appendix" in *Dealing in Desire*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Stuart, Forrest. 2020. "Introduction" and "Author's Note" in *Ballad of the Bullet: Gangs, Drill Music, and the Power of Online Infamy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hanson, Rebecca, and Patricia Richards. 2017. "Sexual Harassment and the Construction of Ethnographic Knowledge." *Sociological Forum* 32(3): 587-609.

Pillow, Wanda. 2003. "Confession, Catharsis, or Cure? Rethinking the Uses of Reflexivity as Methodological Power in Qualitative Research." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 16(2): 175-196.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1994. "The Scholastic Point of View." Pp. 117-140 in *Practical Reason*.

Part II. Mediated Field Sites

Week 6 – February 11. Complex Organizations, Materiality, and Machines

Latour, Bruno, and Steve Woolgar. 1986. Chapter 2 in *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Orr, Julian. 1996. Introduction and Chapter 2, *Talking about Machines: An Ethnography of a Modern Job*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Leigh Star, Susan. 1999. "The Ethnography of Infrastructure." *American Behavioral Scientist* 43(3): 377-391.

Suchman, Lucy, Jeanette Blomberg, Julian E. Orr, Randall Trigg. 1999. "Reconstructing Technologies as Social Practice." *American Behavioral Scientist*, *43*(3), 392–408.

Vertesi, Janet. 2012. "Seeing Like a Rover: Visualization, Embodiment, and Interaction on the Mars Exploration Rover Mission." *Social Studies of Science* 42(3): 393-414.

➢ *Third report due (Observation notes)*

Week 7 – February 18. Online/Offline

Burrell, Jenna. 2009. "The Field Site as a Network: A Strategy for Locating Ethnographic Research." *Field Methods* 21(2): 181-199.

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.

Lane, Jeffrey. 2016. "The Digital Street: An Ethnographic Study of Networked Street Life in Harlem." *American Behavioral Scientist* 60(1): 43-58.

Hine, Christine. 2015. Introduction and Chapter 4 in *Ethnography for the Internet*. London: Bloomsbury.

Christin, Angèle. 2020a. "The Ethnographer and the Algorithm: Beyond the Black Box." *Theory & Society*. Online First, 1-22.

Week 8 – February 25. Fully Online: Virtual Fieldworks and Related Methods

Boellstorf, Tom, Bonnie Nardi, Celia Pearce, and T.L. Taylor. 2012. Chapter 5, "Participant Observation in Virtual Worlds," in *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Coleman, E. Gabriella. 2014. Introduction and Chapter 1 in *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy. The Many Faces of Anonymous*. Verso.

Geiger, R. Stuart, David Ribes. 2011. "Trace Ethnography: Following Coordination Through Documentary Practices." *HICSS '11 Proceedings of the 2011 44th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, 1-10.

Light, Ben, Jean Burgess, and Stephanie Duguay. 2016. "The Walkthrough Method: An Approach to the Study of Apps." *New Media & Society* 20(3): 881-900.

Christin, Angèle. 2020b. "Algorithmic Ethnography, During and After Covid-19." *Communication and the Public*. Online First.

Kraemer, Jordan. 2021. "Situated Immersion: Reimagining Remote Methods." *Points*, Data & Society Research Institute. https://points.datasociety.net/situated-immersion-8a7bdb47d506

Week 9 – March 4. Ethics, Revisited

Humphreys, Laud. 1975. Pp. 16-44 "The Sociologist as Voyeur" in *Tearoom Trade*. Aldine.

Stark, Laura. 2012. "Introduction" in *Behind Closed Doors: IRBs and the Making of Ethical Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Driscoll, Jesse, and Caroline Schuster. 2017. "Spies Like Us." *Ethnography* 19(3): 411-430.

Shkovski, Irina, and Janet Vertesi. 2013. "Un-Googling Publications: The Ethics and Problems of Anonymization." CHI 2013 Extended Abstracts, April 27–May 2, 2013, Paris, France.

boyd, danah. 2016. "Untangling Research and Practice: What Facebook's 'Emotional Contagion' Study Teaches Us." *Research Ethics* 12(1):4–13.

Week 10 – March 11 and March 18. Student Presentations

Final Papers Due on <u>March 18</u> at 6pm