

Anthropology 4011.001 – Field Methods
Spring 2012, TR, 3:30 - 4:50 PM
Wooten Hall 217

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Office hrs: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, 11:30 AM- 12:30 PM, OR BY APPT.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed as a hands-on introduction to field research methods in anthropology. Though anthropologists use both quantitative and qualitative methods to carry out their research, in this class you will gain skill in qualitative methods and especially in transforming observations into written texts. Like research in the field itself, the course must needs be fluid and flexible – I have some overall aims and objectives but I am also aware of the unexpected twists and turns that occur over the semester and I want to be able to take advantage of these as they emerge. For that reason, I ask that you consider this syllabus a “rough guide.” The major milestones of the course are laid out here, but there will be crossroads to consider and paths to take that are unknowable right now. Therefore, you must come to class unfailingly – promptly, wide awake, having done the reading and writing assignments. You will especially need to keep yourself organized as you receive additional material over the course of the semester. Organization is one of the humble skills/practices I hope to instill in you as budding fieldworkers. No, it’s not glamorous or techno-fancy, but it has served generations of productive anthropologists amazingly well.

COURSE OBJECTIVES (PROCESS AND OUTCOME)

You will note that though there is a sort of order to these objectives, it may not follow what you would have imagined as a logical sequence. Again, this reflects the messy uncertainty often found in the fieldwork itself.

By the end of this course, you will have:

- Conducted your own field research and written an ethnographic account of it
- Practiced “seeing” (and remembering what you see) in a field setting
- Written up field jottings into field notes
- Practiced being collaborative and collegial with your classmates
- Developed your interviewing skills and learned how to transcribe interviews
- Practiced social mapping
- Mastered the differences between research, survey and interview questions (and written some of each)
- Reflected on anthropological ethics in general and in your own research
- Become certified in human subjects research requirements sufficient to meet the requirements to apply for a federal grant.
- Learned how to code and analyze your data
- Learned about the usefulness of field memos
- Considered your analysis in relation to anthropological literature relevant to your project
- Considered the question of “truth” in relation to anthropological data
- Through a variety of techniques, reassured yourself regarding the validity of your data
- Practiced being “reflexive” in relation to your field site, your research participants and your research more generally

REQUIRED READING

- Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I Fretz, and Linda L Shaw (1995). *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (abbreviation will be EFS).
- Bruce L. Berg (2007), *Qualitative Methods for the Social Sciences*, 6th or 7th edition. Boston: Pearson (abbreviation will be Berg).

In addition, I have assigned journal articles and occasional chapters of books that will be available electronically either from online journals available through the Willis Library. Some material which is not available electronically will be posted on our Blackboard Learn course page. Please download and PRINT everything. Plan to bring appropriate readings to class during the week in which they are assigned. **I reserve the right to assign additional required readings beyond the items listed in this syllabus as necessary.**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reading:

1. I expect you to keep up with the reading. I will give you guidance in each class on where to focus for the next class, but for maximum personal benefit you should complete all assigned reading and seek out additional reference materials as necessary for your project.

Research:

2. You are required to spend at least 3 hours (at a bare minimum) each week in the field conducting your research. During the early weeks of the class this time may be spent gaining entrée into a research site, but you should plan to make decide on what that site will be quickly because,
3. You will be asked for weekly written updates on your research progress, including...

Writing Assignments

4. EIGHT SETS OF FIELD NOTES which must be handed in in a timely way (more on definitions of “timely” later).
5. OTHER FREQUENT writing assignments. Individual assignments will vary in worth. In some cases you will receive full credit for completing the assignment and handing it in; for others, you will receive a grade. *In total these assignments (field notes plus “other”) are worth 500 points.*
6. An ethnography based on your field project is due Friday, May 4. This will be a 15 page paper, PLUS additional supplemental material. Particulars for this will be detailed in a separate handout. *This is worth 300 points.*

Oral Presentation

7. You will present your research findings in a 10 minute oral talk to your classmates on either April 19, 24, 26, May 1, or 3. *This is worth 100 points*

Class Attendance

8. Your presence in class is REQUIRED on April 19, 24, 26, May 1, or 3. TEN POINTS WILL BE DEDUCTED from your final grade for any class missed on these dates.

Summary of Grading Scheme

Writing Assignments	500 points	
Oral Presentation	100 points	
Completed Ethnography	400 points	
Total possible	1000 points	(MINUS ANY POINTS DEDUCTED FOR MISSING CLASSES APRIL 19-MAY 3)

Grading Scheme: Total points possible = 1000; 900 or better equals an A, and so on.

WEEKLY READING ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK 1: JANUARY 17, 19: GETTING STARTED

- a) Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, Chapter 1
- b) McCurdy, "Microcultures" (on Blackboard)

WEEK 2: JANUARY 24, 26: OBSERVING AND DESCRIBING

- a) Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, Chapter 2
- b) Berg, Chapter 6, focus on pp. 192-top of 204, 6th edition; pp. 195-207, 7th edition (these pages detail the what and how of field notes).
- c) Malcom, Nancy (2006). "Shaking It Off" and 'Toughing It Out': Socialization to Pain and Injury in Girls' Softball," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35(5):495-525 (electronic journal accessible through Willis Library)
- d) Berkowitz, Dana (2006). "Consuming Eroticism," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35(5):583-606 (electronic journal accessible through Willis Library)

Focus on how participant-observation helped the authors do their research – don't worry about theory too much. Take notes. Come to class on Thursday prepared to discuss these articles in detail.

WEEK 3: JANUARY 31, FEBRUARY 2: ETHICS

- a) Berg, chapter 3
- b) Kiefer, pp. 93-96 in *Doing Health Anthropology* (posted on Blackboard)
- c) Fine (1993). "Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas in Field Research," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22(3):267-294 (posted on Blackboard)
- d) Vanderstaay, Steven (2005). "One Hundred Dollars and a Dead Man," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 34(4):371-409 (electronic journal accessible through Willis Library)
- e) Howell, Jayne (2004). "Turning Out Good Ethnography, Or Talking Out of Turn?," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 33(3):323-32 (electronic journal accessible through Willis Library)
- f) AAA Code of Ethics: <http://dev.aaanet.org/issues/policy-advocacy/upload/ethicscode.pdf>

WEEK 4: FEBRUARY 7, 9: ASKING QUESTIONS I – RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- a) Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, Chapter 3
- b) Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design*, Chapter 4 (assigned rdgs. folder-Blackboard)
- c) Berg, pp. 34-37, 6th edition; pp. 37-41, 7th edition

WEEK 5: FEBRUARY 14, 16: ASKING QUESTIONS II – INTERVIEWS

- a) Berg, Chapter 4
- b) Crane and Agrosino, Chapters 4 and 6 (assigned rdgs. folder-Blackboard)
- c) Kaufman, "In Depth Interviewing," IN Gubrium and Sankar, editors, *Qualitative Methods in Aging Research*, 1994. Sage Publications (assigned rdgs. folder-Blackboard)

WEEK 6: FEBRUARY 21, 23: ASKING QUESTIONS II - SURVEYS

- a) Crane and Agrosino, Chapter 11 (assigned rdgs. folder-Blackboard)
- b) Wolfer, Chapter 7, "Survey Research" (assigned rdgs. folder-Blackboard)

WEEK 7: FEBRUARY 28, MARCH 1: SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF SPACE

- a) Berg, pp. 207-215, 6th edition; pp. 230-238, 7th edition
- b) Trotter, "Friends, Relatives and Relevant Others," Pages 1-10 and skim the rest (assigned rdgs. folder-Blackboard)
- c) Cromley, "Mapping Social Data," Pages 59-72 and skim the rest (assigned rdgs. folder-Blackboard)

WEEK 8: MARCH 6, 8: VALIDATION AND MAKING MEANING

- a) Kiefer, Doing Health Anthropology, Chapter 3 (assigned rdgs. folder-Blackboard)
- b) Pyett, "Validation of Qualitative Research in the 'Real World'" (assigned rdgs. folder-Blackboard)
- c) Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, Chapter 4
- d) Gary Fine, "10 Lies of Ethnography" (review)

WEEK 9: MARCH 13, 15: ANALYSIS: GETTING STARTED

- a) Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, Chapter 5

SPRING BREAK – No classes on March 20 and March 22

WEEK 10: MARCH 27, 29 - CODING

- a) Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, Chapter 6
- b) Berg, Chapter 11
- c) Redfern-Vance, "Analyzing Narrative Data" (assigned rdgs. folder-Blackboard)

WEEK 11: APRIL 3, 5: WHAT ABOUT 'THE LITERATURE'?

- a) Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, Chapter 7
- b) Berg, Chapter 2, especially pp. 25-34, 6th edition; 27-36, 7th edition
- c) Redfern-Vance, "Analyzing Narrative Data" (assigned rdgs. folder-Blackboard)

WEEK 12: APRIL 10, 12: THINKING ABOUT WRITING

- a) Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, Chapter 8

WEEK 13: APRIL 17, 19: WRITING WHAT YOU'RE THINKING

- a) Miller, "Not Just Story Collecting: Towards a Critical Ethnography" (Blackboard)
- b) Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, Chapters 7 and 8 (review)
Class presentations may begin April 19

WEEK 14: APRIL 24, 26: FIELD REPORT PRESENTATIONS

Tuesday and Thursday: Class attendance required

WEEK 15: MAY 1, 3: FIELD REPORT PRESENTATIONS

Tuesday and Thursday: Class attendance required.

**PHYSICAL FINAL PROJECT IS DUE IN MY BOX AT THE ANTHRO DEPARTMENT
BY 5 PM MONDAY, MAY 7, 2012**