

University of Northern Colorado

ANT 350: Field Methods in Cultural Anthropology

Spring 2017

11:00-12:15 AM T/Th, Candelaria 1190

Professor Whitney L. Duncan

whitney.duncan@unco.edu; 970-351-2260

Office: Candelaria 2263

Office Hours: 9:30-11:00am and 2-3:30pm Tues/Thurs and by appointment

Catalog Description

Introduction to fieldwork methods in cultural anthropology. Study ethnographic techniques through first-hand investigation of other cultures.

General Description

This is a hands-on, experiential field course meant to provide students the knowledge and skills to conduct basic anthropological fieldwork using qualitative methods, including participant observation, interviewing, and ethnography. Students will learn by doing—that is, by creating their own research questions; designing their own viable studies of local microcultures; conducting original research in the community; and recording, analyzing, and presenting their findings in writing. We will explore methodological and theoretical issues within anthropology, including debates around positivist and interpretive paradigms, ethical dilemmas and power relations in anthropological fieldwork and ethnographic writing, and reflexivity and responsibility.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, students should have a strong grasp of:

- Cultural anthropological field methods, including participant observation, qualitative interviewing, fieldnotes, and ethnography;
- Basic research design and analysis, including generating a research question, sampling design, theory development, identifying evidence, operationalization, basic coding, and presenting results through ethnographic writing;
- Ethical issues in fieldwork, including an understanding of power relations in fieldwork settings and the politics of representation in ethnographic writing;
- How anthropological theory translates to and informs practice.

Readings

Course readings will consist of articles and chapters provided on Canvas and the following books, which you are required to purchase or check out from a library:

- 1) Murchison, Julian (2010). *Ethnography Essentials*. Jossey-Bass.
- 2) Holloway, Kris (2006). *Monique and the Mango Rains: Two Years with a Midwife in Mali*. Waveland Press.
- 3) Emerson, Robert M.; Fretz, Rachel I.; Shaw, Linda L. (2011). *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, second edition.

Assignments & Grading

For this class, you will complete an original ethnographic field research project at a site of your choosing. This field project and its accompanying assignments form the bulk of your grade and, in addition to reading, should also form the bulk of your workload for the semester. You should plan to spend at least 2

hours per week at your site from Week 6 to Week 13 of the course (8 weeks at 2 hours per week=minimum of 16 hours in your fieldwork setting). You must also conduct a minimum of 4 hours worth of interviews. Completing assigned readings and coming to class prepared to discuss and participate are also crucial. This course depends upon your active involvement and original, creative contributions. The grade breakdown is as follows:

- A. Attendance & participation (10%). Attendance is essential to this course, as we'll be using class time for discussion and interactive exercises to help develop your projects. All students are expected to **complete** all assigned readings prior to the class they are due, **attend** each class session (always bring assigned readings & fieldnote journals), and **participate** regularly in class discussion. Attendance will be taken at random and your participation grade will be lowered 5 points for each unexcused absence. Excused absences are those that have been approved by the instructor ahead of time (except in cases of emergency) and are accompanied by appropriate documentation (e.g. a doctor's note).
- B. In-class Exercises (15%) We will do many important **in-class exercises** and workshopping activities. You must be present in class to get credit for such exercises. If you are not present for an in-class exercise and your absence is excused with appropriate documentation only, you may work with the professor to make up what you missed. If you miss an in-class exercise and your absence is unexcused, you will receive a "o" for the exercise.
- C. Ethnographic Journal Assignments (30%). Throughout the semester you will complete a series of **6 ethnographic journal assignments** intended to help you brainstorm, design your project, hone your observational and writing skills, and get you started on analysis for your mini-ethnography. Details of each ethnographic exercise will be provided in class. *You must upload these assignments to your Canvas journals by gam the day they are due (usually on Thursdays) and must bring hard copies to class on the due date.* Late journal assignments will lose 5 points for each day late and I will not accept them after a week. We will discuss and peer review these assignments in class.
- D. Fieldnotes (15%). You must take **fieldnotes** each time you go to your fieldsite. Your fieldnotes are essential. We will discuss the nature of fieldnotes in class—they involve description and observation of your site and culture, self-reflection, and accounts of conversations and interactions you had there. You should have a separate small notebook dedicated to fieldnotes that you carry with you all semester and that you bring to each class. I will check them at random. In addition to your handwritten journal, you must type out and add to your handwritten fieldnote jottings after leaving your site—both to have electronic copies and to lead you to additional reflection, ideas, hypotheses, and analyses. On days in which fieldnotes are "due" (as per the syllabus), you will upload your fleshed-out fieldnote write-ups to Canvas by gam (you do not need to bring hard copies of typed fieldnotes to class).
- E. Mini-ethnography (25%). Due May 4, the mini-ethnography is the culmination of all your hard work and research. Using your fieldnotes, interviews, participant observation, thick description, article reviews, ethnographic journal assignments, as well as exercises conducted in class, you will write a **12-15 page (double-spaced) ethnography** which describes your fieldsite and microculture and which advances a particular argument about them. You must use at least 5 references from outside class in your ethnography; these sources can supply additional information about your microculture or situate it within the larger society of which it is a part. The goal of the mini-ethnography is for you to put anthropological field methods to use, show the effectiveness of your research design, analyze original data, and present your findings and claims ethnographically. You should aim for clarity, depth, and faithfulness to your data. More information will be provided in class.

- F. *Presentations* (5%). Brief (ten-minute max) **presentation** describing your fieldsite and microculture, your main findings, your argument, and your experience. Presentations will begin Week 12; I'll pass around a sign-up sheet.

****You must turn in a mini-ethnography to pass the course.****

Grading Scale:		
93-100	A	4.000
90-92	A-	3.667
88-89	B+	3.334
83-87	B	3.000
80-82	B-	2.667
78-79	C+	2.334
73-77	C	2.000
70-72	C-	1.667
68-69	D+	1.334
63-67	D	1.000
60-62	D-	0.667
0-59	F	0.000

Expectations & Policies

- Complete all readings prior to class and bring readings to class
- Arriving late/leaving early will result in lowered participation grade
- Active participation, involvement in discussion
- Respect for others
- Cell phones off! No checking email, Facebook, texting
- You may use laptops/tablets for notetaking and referring to class readings ONLY. If I see you are using one for non class-related activities I will have you turn it off and may ban them in class altogether
- Appropriate email etiquette, including salutation and signature (for tips on emailing professors, see <http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>)
- Always feel free to ask questions in class and to visit me in office hours

Administration

Academic Dishonesty (source: *CSU-Pueblo Catalog*): Academic dishonesty is any form of cheating which results in students giving or receiving unauthorized assistance in an academic exercise or receiving credit for work which is not their own. Any academic dishonesty is grounds for dismissal. Any student judged to be engaged in cheating or plagiarizing may receive a failing grade for the course, or any other penalty which the instructor finds appropriate. Academic dishonesty is a behavioral issue, not an issue of academic performance. As such, it is considered an act of misconduct and is also subject to UNC disciplinary process.

Acts of Dishonesty include:

1. Cheating—intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise. The term academic exercise includes all forms of work submitted for credit or hours.
2. Fabrication—intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of information or citation in an academic exercise.

3. Facilitating Academic Dishonesty—intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to violate a provision of the institutional code of academic integrity.
4. Plagiarism—the deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, or statements of another person as one’s own without acknowledgement.
5. Unauthorized Collaboration—intentionally sharing information or working together in an academic exercise when such actions are not approved by the course instructor.

In short, any research or work you do must be yours, and that means proper credit must be given to the work and scholarship of those whom you use in your assignments. I will accept any recognized form of citation (eg, Chicago, MLA, etc.).

ADA Statement:

Any student requesting disability accommodation for this class must inform the instructor giving appropriate notice. Students are encouraged to contact Disability Support Services at (970) 351-2289 to certify documentation of disability and to ensure appropriate accommodations are implemented in a timely manner.

Assignments and reading schedule are subject to change.

Have all readings for the week completed by class on Thursday at the latest

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 (1/10-1/12): What is Ethnography?

- Readings
 - Murchison Ch. 1
 - CANVAS: Kahn, Seth, "Putting Ethnographic Writing in Context"
 - CANVAS: Malinowski, "Subjects, Method and Scope of this Inquiry," from *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, pgs. 1-25

** *Begin thinking about what ethnographic site/microculture you would like to investigate*

Week 2 (1/17-1/19): What is fieldwork?

Experiences & challenges in the field, plus rapport & trust

- Readings
 - *Mango Rains* pgs. 1-102 (Chapters 1-5)
 - Murchison Ch. 2
 - CANVAS: Hoffman, "Swimming Through Fieldwork"

Week 3 (1/24-1/26): Ethics in the Field

Cultural relativism & Responsibility in Research

- Readings
 - *Mango Rains* pgs. 103-208 (Chapters 6-11)
 - CANVAS: Shweder, Richard (2000). "What about 'Female Genital Mutilation'? And Why Understanding Culture Matters in the First Place." *Daedalus* 129(4): 209-232.
 - *Handbook on Ethical Issues in Anthropology* (selections)
<http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/toc.htm>

- ****Due Thursday, 1/26: Ethnographic Journal Assignment #1: Finding a Fieldsite****
You should have narrowed your research sites/microcultures down to two possibilities by now.

Week 4 (1/31-2/2): Nuts and Bolts of Research Design

From topics to questions to problems; linking problems and methods

- Readings
 - Murchison Chapter 3
 - CANVAS: Booth, *The Craft of Research*, Chapter 4: From Questions to Problems
 - CANVAS: Excerpt from *Sidewalk*, by Mitchell Duneier
- ****Due Thursday, 2/2: Ethnographic Journal Assignment #2: Developing a Research Problem****
*You should have chosen a research site and microculture by now. Must have formal approval from professor via email or in office hours***

Week 5 (2/7-2/9): Writing Research Proposals & Finding Sources

Components of a proposal

- Readings
 - Murchison Chapter 4
 - CANVAS: Booth, *The Craft of Research*, Chapter 5: From Problems to Sources
 - CANVAS: Excerpt from *Righteous Dopefiend*, by Phillipe Bourgois and Jeffrey Schonberg
- *You should have made contact with and finalized your site/culture by now (e.g. you have permission to conduct research in this site and can begin making visits and conducting interviews)*

Week 6 (2/14-2/16): The Field and What You Do There, Part I

Collecting Data, Taking Notes

- Readings
 - Murchison Ch. 5
 - *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chapters 1, 2, & 3
- ****Due Thursday, 2/16: Ethnographic Journal Assignment #3: Field Proposal (including brief lit review) & Methodological Plan****

Week 7 (2/21-2/23): The Field and What You Do There, Part II

"The ethnographer seeks a deeper immersion in others' worlds in order to grasp what they experience as meaningful and important. With immersion, the field research sees from the inside how people lead their lives, how they carry out their daily rounds of activities, what they find meaningful, and how they do so" (Emerson et al. 1995: 2).

***Tuesday class: meet at the UC for fieldwork exercise**

Participant Observation

- Readings

- Murchison Ch. 6
- CANVAS: Tierney, "Becoming a Participant Observer"
- CANVAS: Excerpt from *Labor and Legality*, by Ruth Gomberg-Muñoz
- CANVAS: Drybread: Sleeping with One Eye Open: The Perils of Fieldwork in a Brazilian Juvenile Prison
- ****DUE Thursday, 2/23: Fieldnotes #1****
 - *You are to bring your handwritten fieldnotes journal to every class; at class meetings where fieldnotes are "due," you will upload your fleshed-out fieldnotes to Canvas under your Fieldnotes Journal by 9am. I will check for thoroughness and depth and we may use them for in-class exercises.*

Week 8 (2/28-3/2): The Field and What You Do There, Part III

Interviews, Narrative, Talk, & Life History

- Readings
 - Murchison Chs. 7 & 8
 - CANVAS: Spradley, "Asking Descriptive Questions" and "The Ethnographic Interview"
 - CANVAS: Excerpt from *Living Narrative*, by Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps

Week 9 (3/7-3/9): Ethnographic Writing & Description, Part I

Emic & Etic: determining & representing members' meanings

- Readings
 - *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* Ch. 5, "Pursuing Members' Meanings"
 - CANVAS: Desjarlais, Robert (1994). Struggling Along: The Possibilities for Experience Among the Homeless Mentally Ill. *American Anthropologist* 96(4): 886-901.
- ****Due Thursday, 3/9: Ethnographic Journal Assignment #4: Interview Questions****

Week 10: Spring Break

Week 11 (3/21-3/23): Ethnographic Writing & Description, Part II

Creating ethnographic texts

- Readings
 - *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* Ch. 7, "Writing an Ethnography"
 - CANVAS: Mead, Margaret (1928). "A Day in Samoa," from *Coming of Age in Samoa*
 - CANVAS: Excerpt from *Never in Anger*, by Jean Briggs
- ****Due Thursday, 3/23: Fieldnotes #2****

Week 12 (3/28-3/30): What do I do with my data?

Presentations begin this week; 2-3 per class

Analysis; Generating Theory and Making Claims

- Readings

- Murchison Chs. 12, 13
- *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* Ch. 6, "Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing"
- ****Due Thursday, 3/30: Ethnographic Journal Assignment #5: Thick Description of Site, Symbols, & Ritual****

Week 13 (4/4-4/6): Putting it all Together: The Ethnographic Project

Analysis, argument, organization, & style

- Readings
 - Murchison Ch. 14, 15
 - CANVAS: Excerpt from *Disciplined Hearts*, by Teresa O'Neil
- ****Due Thursday, 4/6: Ethnographic Journal Assignment #6: Interview Write-up****

Week 14 (4/11-4/13): Culture, Relationships, & The Politics of Representation

- Readings
 - CANVAS: Lassiter, "From 'Reading over the Shoulders of Natives' to 'Reading Alongside Natives,' Literally: Toward a Collaborative and Reciprocal Ethnography"
 - CANVAS: Garcia, Angela (2010). "Graveyard." From *The Pastoral Clinic: Addiction and Dispossession along the Rio Grande*

Week 15 (4/18-4/20): Writing Culture & Reflexivity

- Readings
 - You will read and give feedback on a partner's ethnography draft
 - CANVAS: Excerpts from *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*
- ****Due TUESDAY, 4/18: Fieldnotes #3 and Draft of Ethnography for peer feedback****

Week 16 (4/25-4/27): Finalizing Your Ethnography

We will clarify any remaining questions you have and continue to workshop your ethnographies

- Readings:
 - CANVAS: Ethnographic Excerpts TBA

Week 17: Finals Week

****FINAL MINI-ETHNOGRAPHY DUE THURSDAY, MAY 4; COME BY MY OFFICE TO TURN IT IN ****