

Anthropology 410a: Ethnographic Field Methods & Practicum

Fall 2011

Lecture 10669D

W 4-6:50PM

GFS 217

Professor: Lanita Jacobs

Office: Grace Ford Salvatori Hall (GFS) 128

[Note: To get to my office, you must first enter the Anthropology Department at GFS 120]

Email: jacobshu@usc.edu

Office Hours: M 1-2, W 3-4PM; also by appointment. You can also contact me Monday-Friday via email.

Course Website: ANTH 410a course materials are accessible through Blackboard; to access, click on:
<https://blackboard.usc.edu/>

Required Texts:

1. Anthropology 410a Reader. (*Abbreviated as RDR in Reading Schedule*; (Available in Blackboard under Course Resources; select articles available via Ares Electronic Reserves)
2. Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes. Chicago: Chicago University Press. (*Abbreviated as Emerson in Reading Schedule*)
3. O'Reilly, Karen. 2005. Ethnographic Methods. London: Routledge. (*Abbreviated O'Reilly in Reading Schedule*)
4. Zinsser, William. 1993. Writing to Learn. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. (*Abbreviated as Zinsser in Reading Schedule*)

Highly Recommended Text:

5. Zinsser, William. 2001. On Writing Well. Sixth Edition. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

NOTE: All texts are on reserve in Leavey Library.

Course Description: Ethnography is most commonly understood as anthropology's hallmark methodology. But to its impassioned practitioners, ethnography is much more than that. Ethnography is also a theoretical approach and, *trust*, a dynamic way of seeing and being in the world. In the first installation of this two-part seminar, we will review modes of inquiry and analysis that characterize the practice of ethnography. Special attention will be devoted to the various phases of ethnographic fieldwork, from 'entering the field', collecting data, to writing/representing one's findings. A review of specific case studies will augment this training and illuminate the intersubjective dimensions of ethnographic fieldwork. Throughout this semester, you will gain pilot fieldwork experience, as well as an appreciation for the politics of representation and researcher accountability. You will also learn that while "there is nothing new under the sun," there are (encouragingly) new ways of *unpacking the familiar* and *making the unfamiliar familiar*.

Course Requirements: Anthropology 410a is designed for advanced undergraduates, most likely Anthropology majors, who may progress to graduate work in the discipline. It should be equally useful in any profession since the skills required of ethnographic fieldwork (e.g., cultural sensitivity, an ability to make nuanced observations, a willingness to be present) are particularly useful in our multiracial transnational world. Ideally, students should have some knowledge of anthropological theory. Students need not have extensive fieldwork experience. Consider this course an opportunity to begin a year-long field experience wherein you learn a range of techniques for eliciting, interpreting, and analyzing cultural information.

Class Expectations & Evaluation: Towards this end, class meetings will include a brief lecture with a special emphasis on discussion. (If this fails and conversation proves one-sided, I may ask you to submit a short summary and/or discussion questions for at least FIVE readings to help fuel class discussions.)

Grade Criteria	
Participation/Attendance:	20%
6 Written Fieldwork Exercises:	30%
Research Presentation:	20%
Research Proposal:	30%

Most of the seminar will be devoted to sharing issues/problems/insights about fieldwork; there will also be opportunities to work through some of these issues via written exercises. In addition to completing assigned readings, you will be expected to launch a pilot ethnography (for which some course time is allotted), write ongoing fieldnotes, and, generate a research proposal. Your research proposal will propel you into the second semester's research and writing agenda, which will culminate in a 40-50 page senior thesis. Do keep up with the weekly readings and complete written assignments on time. Late papers will NOT be accepted without official proof of illness or family emergency. Your course grade will be determined by your performance in the following arenas:

Class Participation: Regular attendance is expected as it will enable you to contribute a unique, informed, and collegial verse during class discussions. If you are unable to attend a class, please let me know in advance. *(20 points - 20%)*

Written Fieldwork Exercises: To ensure your steady progress on your pilot ethnography, you will be required to complete SIX written exercises. These exercises are described in detail within the Reading & Exam Schedule (below). They have fixed deadlines and will typically be due in my mailbox by 5PM on Fridays. There are a total of eight assignments; however, you only need to complete six and they can be of your choosing. Each of these written exercises will be worth five points. *(30 points - 30%)*

Research Presentation: During our final class meetings, each student will present a brief, polished, five-minute Powerpoint presentation outlining their: a) Research Question, b) Methodology, c) Literature Review, d) Initial Findings, and e) Research Significance. *(20 points - 20%)*

Research Proposal: Your final paper will be a Research Proposal that fleshes out the information conveyed in your Powerpoint presentation. This proposal will enable you to synthesize insights gleaned over the course of the semester. It will also aid your transition to ANTH 410b next semester, during which you will apply for departmental research funding, secure a research advisor (in or beyond Anthropology), continue your fieldwork, and write a 40-50 page senior thesis. Research Proposals must adhere to the following format: 10-12 pages (max), double-spaced with thematic headings, 12 point-font, and 1" top, bottom, right, and left margins. Staple your paper and number your pages in the upper right hand corner (no folders please); also include a title page and bibliography. Bibliographic entries should be formatted according to either MLA or APA format. Sample research proposals from past semesters will also be made available via Blackboard. Final proposals are due in my mailbox by **5PM on Wednesday, December 7th** (Do not email papers; again, late papers will not be accepted). *(30 points - 30%)*

READING SCHEDULE*

[NOTE: Emerson = Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, O'Reilly = Ethnographic Methods, Zinsser = Writing to Learn, RDR = ANTH 410 Reader, TBA=To be announced]

WK 1: 8/24 **Course Introduction**

WK 2: 8/31 **The Practice of Ethnography**

- O'Reilly: Chapters 1-3

Assignment - Choosing a Topic (5 points): Submit a single-spaced paragraph about your chosen field site, using insights from O'Reilly as a model. Your topic statement should address the following points: a) What interests you and why?, b) What do you think you might find?, c) What methods will you employ?, and d) What do you already "know" about this subject? **Due: Friday, 9/2 by 5PM in Jacobs' box in GFS 120.**

WK 3: 9/7 **Ethnographic Fieldwork**

- Agar: Who are you to do this? [in RDR]
- Geertz: Being There [in RDR]
- O'Reilly: Chapter 4

Optional Readings:

- Jacobs-Huey: Introduction [in RDR]
- Sterling: Introduction [in RDR]
- Clifford: Spatial Practices [in RDR]

Assignment – When and Where Do You Enter (5 points): Submit a 1 page typed essay describing when and where you enter this work that draws upon this week's reading and lecture. Your essay should consider the following questions: a) Who are you do to this work? b) How might your positionality inform your relationship with participants?, c) What intersubjective realities might inform your fieldwork? **Due: Friday, 9/9 by 5PM in Jacobs' box in GFS 120.**

WK 4: 9/14 **Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes**

- Emerson: Chapters 1-3
- O'Reilly: Chapter 8

Optional Readings:

- Emerson: Chapter 5

Assignment – Preliminary Observations & Fieldnotes (5 points): Go to your field site, conduct an observation, and submit field notes (1-2 typed pages) that are informed by this week's readings, lecture, and sample field notes in Blackboard. Remember to see, think, and write like an anthropologist. Feel free to describe and/or map the space you are observing. Alternatively, you may elect to delineate the personnel or key figures within your fieldsite, paying particular attention to any discernable hierarchies and/or power relations. You could also detail the meaningful categories, terms, modes of storytelling used by your research participants; the possibilities are many. **Due: Friday, 9/16 by 5PM in Jacobs' box in GFS 120.**

WK 5: 9/21 **Archival and Bibliographic Research**

- **Class Fieldtrip** – We will meet in Leavey Library with a librarian who will give us tips on how to best find sources for your research topic.
- Ehn & Löfgren: Introduction and Appendix [Review]

Archival or Bibliographic Assignment (5 points): You have two options for this week's assignment. A) Archival Exercise: Gather materials from your field site (e.g., journal articles, pamphlets, flyers, website); List, synthesize, and summarize this material in 1-2 typed pages. B) Generate a list of 10-15 sources that are relevant to your research topic; List these sources and provide a 2-3 sentence summary for only the most relevant anthropological article, chapter, and/or book you can find. **Due: Friday, 9/23 by 5PM in Jacobs' box in GFS 120.**

- WK 6: 9/28 ***Native Ethnography***
- Jacobs-Huey: The Natives are Gazing and Talking Back [in RDR]
 - Kondo: The Eye/I [in RDR]
 - Narayan: How Native is a “Native” Anthropologist [in RDR]
 - **Film:** *Papua New Guinea: Anthropology on Trial*
- Optional Readings:*
- Behar: Writing in My Father’s Name [in RDR]
 - Jackson: An Ethnographic Film/Flam [in RDR]
- WK 7: 10/5 ***Ethnography and the Politics of Representation***
- Geertz: I-Witnessing [in RDR]
 - Visweswaran: Betrayal: An Analysis in Three Acts [in RDR]
 - Rosaldo: Subjectivity & Social Analysis [in RDR]
- Optional Readings:*
- Rosaldo: Grief & a Headhunters’ Rage [in RDR]
- Assignment (5 points):** Reflect on your fieldwork thus far and critically discuss how your positionality affects your relationship with research participants. What ethical challenges are you facing? How are you dealing with those challenges? How might emotions and/or expectations impact your burgeoning insights? **Due: Friday, 10/7 by 5PM in Jacobs’ box in GFS 120.**
- WK 8: 10/12 ***Ethnographic Interviews/Life Histories***
- O’Reilly: Chapters 5 and 6
 - Lindquist: Across the Table [in RDR]
- Optional Readings*
- Gwaltney: Introduction, The Many Shades of Black [in RDR]
- Interview/Life History (5 points):** Conduct an ethnographic interview and/or life history with one of your key research participants. Record the interview and transcribe at least 3 single-spaced pages. **Due: Friday, 10/14 by 5PM in Jacobs’ box in GFS 120.**
- WK 9: 10/19 ***Research Day (You will conduct fieldwork in lieu of class.)***
- WK 10: 10/26 ***Ethnographic Writing***
- Emerson: Chapter 7
 - Geertz: Thick Description [in RDR]
 - O’Reilly: Chapter 9
 - Zinsser: On Writing to Learn (Chapters 2, 4, and 10)
- Optional Readings:*
- Rankin: Meeting Readers’ Needs [in RDR]
 - Zinsser: On Writing Well (Chapter 17)
- Assignment (5 points):** Complete one of the following two options. A) Survey relevant anthropological literature concerning your research topic and prepare a preliminary annotated bibliography of at least 5-7 sources. For each citation, write 3-4 sentences synthesizing its methodology, findings, and bearing upon your project. (This exercise will be helpful in generating your Literature Review.) B) Write a 1-2 page essay that pursues a “thick description” of the most compelling aspect of your fieldwork thus far. **Due: Friday, 10/28 by 5PM in Jacobs’ box in GFS 120.**

- WK 11: 11/2 ***Ethnography of Performance***
- Kondo: Introduction, The Narrative Production of Home in Asian American Theater [in RDR]
 - Sterling: Music and Orality
 - Jacobs-Huey: “The Arab is the New Nigger” [in RDR]

Optional Readings:

- Geertz: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight
- Jacobs-Huey: Black/“Urban” Standup Comedy [in RDR]
- Jacobs: How An Anthropologist Writes About A USC Football Game (in RDR)

Assignment (5 points): Conduct an observation of an event, meeting, gathering, ritual, or performance and synthesize your insights in the form of ethnographic field notes (1-2 pages). **Due: Friday, 11/4 by 5PM in Jacobs’ box in GFS 120.**

WK 12: 11/9 ***Class Fieldtrip 5-6:30 USC Fisher Museum of Art***

WK 13: 11/16 ***Research Day (You will conduct fieldwork in lieu of class.)***

WK 14: 11/23 **HOLIDAY (Thanksgiving) – No class**

WK 15: 11/30 ***5-minute Research Presentations***

Research Proposals are due in my box by 5PM on Wednesday, December 7th

*The Reading Schedule may be subject to modification (e.g., trimming, additions, etc.).

Course Bibliography

- Agar, Michael. 1996. Who Are You To Do This? *In The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography*, 2nd Edition (91-111). New York: Academic Press.
- Behar, Ruth. 1995. Writing in My Father's Name: A Diary of Translated Woman's First Year. In R. Behar and D.A. Gordon (Eds.) *Women Writing Culture* (65-82). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Casey, Edward. 1996. How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena. In S. Feld and K. Basso (Eds.) *Senses of Place* (13-52). Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Clifford, James. 1997. Spatial Practices: Fieldwork, Travel, and the Disciplining of Anthropology. In A. Gupta and J. Ferguson (Eds.) *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science* (185-222). Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Ehn, Billy and Orvar Löfgren. 2010. Introduction. *In The Secret World of Doing Nothing* (1-8). Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Ehn, Billy and Orvar Löfgren. 2010. Appendix: Doing an Ethnography of "Non-Events." *In The Secret World of Doing Nothing* (217-227). Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes. Chicago: Chicago University Press.**
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- Geertz, Clifford. 1988. Being There: Anthropology and the Scene of Writing. *In Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (1-24). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
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- Gwaltney, John Langston. 1993. Introduction and A Nation within a Nation. *In Drylongso: A Self Portrait of Black America* (xix-23). New York: The New Press.
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- Jackson, John L. 2004. An Ethnographic *Film/Flam*: Giving Gifts, Doing Research, and Videotaping the Native Subject/Object. *American Anthropologist* 106(1): 32-42.
- Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2006. Introduction. *In From the Kitchen to the Parlor: Language and Becoming in African American Women's Hair Care* (3-15). London: Oxford University Press.
- Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2002. The Natives are Gazing and Talking Back: Reviewing the Problematics of Positionality, Voice, and Accountability among "Native" Anthropologists. *American Anthropologist* 104(3): 791-804.
- Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2003. Black/"Urban" Standup Comedy: A Performance by Brandon Bowlin. *Theatre Journal* 55(3): 539-541 (October).
- Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2006. "The Arab is the New Nigger": African American Comics Confront the Irony and Tragedy of September 11. *Transforming Anthropology* 14(1): 60-64.
- Jacobs, Lanita. 2007. How An Anthropologist Writes about a USC Football Game. Unpublished Ethnographic Notes.
- Kondo, Dorinne. 1997. Introduction. *In About Face: Performing Race in Fashion and Theater* (3-28). London: Routledge.
- Kondo, Dorinne. 1997. The Narrative Production of Home in Asian American Theater. *In About Face: Performing Race in Fashion and Theater* (189-209). London: Routledge.
- Kondo, Dorinne. 1990. The Eye/I. *In Crafting Selves*: Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lindquist, Julie. 2002. Across the Table: Walter, Joe, Arlen, Maggie, and Perry. *In A Place to Stand: Politics and Persuasion in a Working Class Bar* (57-72). London: Oxford University Press.
- Narayan, Kirin. 1997. How Native is a "Native" Anthropologist? In L. Lamphere, H. Ragone, and P. Zavella (Eds.) *Situated Lives: Gender and Culture in Everyday Life* (23-41). London: Routledge.
- O'Reilly, Karen. 2005. Ethnographic Methods. London: Routledge.**
- Rankin, Elizabeth. 2001. Meeting Readers' Needs. *In The Work of Writing: Insights and Strategies for Academics and Professionals* (27-51). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Rosaldo, Renato. 1993. Subjectivity and Social Analysis. *In Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (168-195). Boston: Beacon Press.
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- Sterling, Marvin D. 2010. Introduction. *In Babylon East: Performing Dancehall, Roots Reggae, and Rastafari in Japan* (1-34). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Sterling, Marvin D. 2010. Music and Orality: Authenticity in Japanese Sound System Culture. *In Babylon East: Performing Dancehall, Roots Reggae, and Rastafari in Japan* (61-99). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Visweswaran, Kamala. 1994. Betrayal: An Analysis in Three Acts. *In Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (40-59). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Zinsser, William. 1993. Writing to Learn. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.**
- Zinsser, William. 2001. *On Writing Well*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.