

Anthropology 410b: Ethnographic Field Methods & Practicum

Spring 2012

Lecture 10672D

W 2-4:50PM

GFS 204

Professor: Lanita Jacobs

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

Email: jacobshu@usc.edu

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

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

Required Texts:

1. Anthropology 410b Reader. (*Abbreviated as **RDR** in Reading Schedule*; (Available in Blackboard under Content [then click on Course Resources])
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: Welcome to the ANTH 410b, the final installment of this two-part series! Last semester, we reviewed ethnographic modes of inquiry and analysis and launched pilot ethnographies in anticipation of your senior thesis. We also honed our appreciation for ethnography's inherent intersubjectivity, the politics of representation and reciprocity, and the imperative of researcher accountability. We will not rehearse these chords at length. Instead, we will privilege them as we pursue a new song concerned with deciphering the "hooks" of your story. This work will entail a more serious engagement in fieldwork and writing. You will thus devote considerable time to deepening your fieldwork engagements and "thickening" your fieldnotes. You will also workshop your data and fieldnotes with each other in the spirit of constructive collaboration. You will be responsible for adding to your literature review and locating your study within a larger anthropological discourse. This seminar will act as a facilitator. We will add to our toolkit of research strategies via several in-class *Ethnographic Practicums*, with the ultimate goal of writing a short ethnography as a final project. These and other lectures will push us further into the heart of our respective studies and coax us to translate our findings on the page. Yes; on the page. We are *writing* in this course in full appreciation of the fact that while *there is nothing new under the sun*, there are (encouragingly) new ways of *unpacking the familiar* and *making the unfamiliar familiar*. Get excited; the responsibility for sharing this discovery is now in *your* hands! As always, practicums like this depend on your active involvement and steady participation. I look forward to an exciting semester of discovery and the consolidation of your projects, and to the mutually supportive, engaged environment we enjoyed last semester.

Course Requirements: Anthropology 410b 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. Some meetings, *Ethnographic Practicums*, involve exercises that enable you to share data, findings, etc. and thus advance your research and writing.

Grade Criteria	
Participation/Attendance:	20%
4 Blackboard Postings:	20%
Research Presentation:	20%
Senior Thesis:	40%

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 posted in Blackboard and discussed in subsequent classes. In addition to completing assigned readings, you will be expected to conduct routine (i.e., weekly or bi-weekly) ethnographic observations (for which some course time is allotted), write ongoing fieldnotes, and, generate a 30-40 page senior thesis. Do keep up with the modest readings and complete written assignments on time. 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, especially during in-class *Ethnographic Practicums*! If you are unable to attend a class, please let me know in advance. **(20 points - 20%)**

Blackboard Postings/Reflections: To augment your steady progress on your ethnography, you will be required to complete FOUR written exercises. These exercises are described in detail within the Reading & Exam Schedule (below). They have fixed deadlines and will typically be due in Blackboard by 5PM on Fridays. There are a total of six assignments; however, you are only required to complete four and they can be of your choosing. Be prepared to discuss your (and other) postings in subsequent meetings. Each of these written reflections/Blackboard postings will be worth five points. (Please note that you are welcome to post fieldnotes and/or thesis section drafts in Blackboard during weeks 6 and 13; while these reflections/drafts will not be tallied in your grade, they will mark your fieldwork progress and inform your final thesis. Take advantage of these writing opportunities.) **(20 points - 20%)**

Research Presentation: During our final class meetings, each student will present a brief, polished, ten-minute Powerpoint presentation outlining their: a) Research Questions and/or Hook, b) Methodology, c) Theoretical Background/Literature Review, d) Key Findings, and e) Research Significance. **(20 points - 20%)**

Senior Thesis: Your final paper will be a thesis that fleshes out the information conveyed in your Powerpoint presentation. This thesis will synthesize insights gleaned over the course of this two-semester practicum – preferably, in the tenor of Zinsser’s Writing to Learn. Theses **must adhere** to

the following format: 30-40 pages (max, less bibliography), double-spaced with the following thematic headings (*Abstract [500-word]*, *Introduction*, *Literature Review/Theoretical Background*, *Research Design/Methods*, *Findings*, *Significance/Conclusion*), 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 and should prioritize scholarly books and articles over websites. Sample senior theses from past semesters will also be made available via Blackboard. Final papers/theses are due in my mailbox by **5PM on Monday, May 7th**. Let it be your best work, proofread and revised multiple times in consultation with your peers, myself, and The Writing Center. (Do not email papers; also, late papers will not be accepted). (**40 points - 40%**)

READING SCHEDULE*

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

WK 1: 1/11 **Course Introduction**

Blackboard Assignment – Self Assessment (5 points): Submit a 1 page assessment that outlines the research you will need to do this semester to complete your project. In the assessment, address what you need to do first, how long each part of the research will take, what problems you anticipate, and, most importantly, how you will isolate your “hook” – or the crux of the matter as it pertains to your fieldwork. **Due: Post in Blackboard under “Discussions – Week 1” by Friday, 1/13 by 5PM.**

WK 2: 1/18 **No class, Martin Luther King Jr. Day**

WK 3: 1/25 **Revisiting Thick Descriptions & Failures in the Field:** Can researchers “fail”? What can we learn about the intersubjective dimensions of fieldwork, politics of representation, complexities of reciprocity, etc. from their failures? How can “thick description” be used to convey these lessons?

- Geertz: Thick Description [*Optional*; in RDR]
- Jacobs-Huey: Learning through the Breach [in RDR]
- Kent: Fieldwork that Failed [in RDR]
- Visweswaran: Betrayal: An Analysis in Three Acts [*Optional*; in RDR]

Blackboard Assignment – Thick Description of Failures in the Field (5 points): Submit a 1-2 double-spaced essay that pursues a “thick” account of a failure in the field. Remember the components and goals of thick description as you outline your essay. Aim to “write to learn” and be prepared to discuss in next class. **Deadline: Post in Blackboard under “Discussions – Week 3” by Friday, 1/27 by 5PM.**

WK 4: 2/1 **Voice & Accountability:** How can researchers “speak” in more accountable ways? How do notions of loss, death, or grief inform your work? What can “loss,” “death” or “grief” signify in the context of your fieldwork/fieldsite?

- Jacobs-Huey: Negotiating Multiple Accountabilities and Positionalities in *Boundary Crossing* [in RDR]
- O’Reilly: Revisit Chapter 9
- Rosaldo: Grief and a Headhunter’s Rage [in RDR]

Blackboard Assignment – Voice & Accountability (5-points). Submit a 1-2 double-spaced essay that considers how your work is informed by questions of loss, death, and/or grief, or, alternatively, how critical subjectivity might inform your work. Think imaginatively, “write to learn,” and be prepared to discuss in our next class. **Deadline: Post in Blackboard under “Discussions – Week 4” by Friday, 2/3 by 5PM**

- Wk 5: 2/8 ***Ethnographic Practicum: Distilling Your Hook/Crux of Your Story/Fieldwork/Data***
- Emerson: Chapter 7 and 8
 - O'Reilly: Chapter 8
 - Revisit Zinsser: On Writing to Learn (Chapters 2, 4, and 10)
- In-Class Assignment:** Home in – (yes home in *not* hone in) on the “hook” of your fieldwork. What is the more focused story within your overall story? What nuanced and more specific finding does your fieldwork reveal? Ponder this question after pouring over your fieldnotes and other ethnographic reflections and be prepared to discuss in class.
- Wk 6: 2/15 **No Class; Research and Writing Day**
(You will conduct fieldwork and/or write in lieu of class and post fieldnotes or thesis section drafts (e.g., Intro, Lit Review, Methods, Findings, Significance) in Blackboard under “Discussions – Fieldnotes/Research.”)
- Wk 7: 2/22 ***Ethnography of Popular Texts:*** How might we study popular texts using ethnographic insights? How might we articulate the thematic intersections between popular culture/popular texts and our ethnographic research?
- Jacobs-Huey: Moralizing Whiteness in Joan of Arcadia [in RDR]
 - Additional Readings: TBA
- Blackboard Assignment – Ethnography of Popular Texts (5 points):** Conduct an observation of an event, meeting, gathering, ritual, or performance and synthesize your insights in the form of ethnographic fieldnotes (1-2 pages). Alternatively, analyze a popular text (e.g., movie, play, song, comedy sketch, poem, etc.) that bears upon your research and articulate their thematic and cultural intersections. Be prepared to discuss in our next class. **Deadline: Post in Blackboard under “Discussions – Week 7” by Friday, 2/24 by 5PM**
- Wk 8: 2/29 ***Ethnographic Practicum: Deciphering Members Meanings re: Race, Gender, Class, Sexuality, etc.***
- Emerson et al.: Chapters 5 and 6
 - Additional Readings: TBA
- In-Class Assignment:** Identify moments in your fieldwork (e.g., observations, interviews, archival research, etc.) where members index and/or inflect notions of race, gender, class, sexuality – or their complex intersections. Bring excerpts and/or insights to class and be prepared to discuss. Also be prepared to discuss the potential absence of such references/markers and what that might mean in the context of your work.
- Wk 9: 3/7 ***Ethnographic Practicum: Outlining Your Thesis***
- Booth et al.: Pre-Drafting and Drafting [in RDR]
- In-Class Assignment:** Outline your thesis *rigorously* per Booth et al.'s instructive and be prepared to discuss in class. Also feel free to post in Blackboard under Discussions – Week 9.
- SPRING BREAK 3/12-3/16**
- Wk 10: 3/21 ***Revisiting the Politics of Representation:*** What aspects of your research remain untold given fears about “airing dirty laundry,” anxieties about *voice*, and/or a desire to honor the fact that some aspects of culture should remain private?
- Jacobs-Huey: Into the Breach: Representing the Messy Truths of African American Women’s Hair Care Practices
 - Additional reading(s): To be announced (TBA)
 - Film: *A Question of Color*
- Blackboard Assignment – Politics of Representation (5 points).** Submit a 1-2 double-spaced essay that considers what stories remain untold in your own work. Ask yourself “why?” and consider in light of prior discussions re: the politics of representation. (Write about it and let it inform your thesis). **Deadline: Post in Blackboard under “Discussions – Week 10” by Friday, 3/23 by 5PM.**

- WK 11: 3/28 **Writing Day (No class)**
Required Assignment: Post a preliminary draft of your thesis on Blackboard under “Discussions – Senior Thesis Drafts” by **Friday, March 30th**. Also deliver a hard copy to Jacobs’ box in GFS 120! Read your buddy’s draft [buddies will be assigned randomly] and post comments by **Tuesday, April 3rd**.
Recommended Reading
- Booth et al.: *Revising Style: Telling Your Story Clearly* [in RDR]
 - Booth et al.: *Introductions* [in RDR]
 - Note: Consult Sample Senior Theses in Blackboard under “Content” (then click on “Course Resources”) and Zinsser’s *On Writing Well*
- WK 12: 4/4 ***Ethnographic Practicum:*** Theses Drafts returned and discussed in class
- WK 13: 4/11 **Writing and Research Day** (No class; use this time to conduct final fieldwork and/or revise your thesis with the aid of The Writing Center [<http://domsife.usc.edu/writingcenter/>])
Recommended Reading
- Rankin: *Meeting Readers’ Needs* [in RDR]
- WK 14: 4/18 **Group 1: 10-minute Research Presentations**
- WK 15: 4/25 **Group 2: 10-minute Research Presentations**

Senior Theses are due in my box in GFS 120 by 5PM on Monday, May 7th

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

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY (Books in bold)

- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 1995. Pre-Drafting and Drafting. *In The Craft of Research* (155-174). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 1995. Revising Style: Telling Your Story Clearly. *In The Craft of Research* (215-233). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. 1995. Introductions. *In The Craft of Research* (234-254). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes. Chicago: Chicago University Press.**
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973 [2000]. Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture. *In The Interpretation of Culture* (3-30). New York: Basic Books.
- Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2010. Negotiating Multiple Accountabilities & Positionalities in *Boundary Crossing*. Paper presented at the 22nd Annual Occupational Science Symposium (March), Los Angeles, CA.
- Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2009. Into the Breach: Representing the Messy Truths of Black Women's Hair and Language Politics. In Sonja L. Lanehart (Ed.) *African American Women's Language: Discourse, Education, and Identity* (262-275). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2009. Moralizing Whiteness in *Joan of Arcadia*. In Diane Winston (Ed.) Small Screen Big Picture: Television and Lived Religion (233-258). Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.
- Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2007. [Learning through the Breach: Language Socialization among African American Cosmetologists](#). *Ethnography* 8(2): 171-203.
- Kent, Linda L. 1992. Fieldwork that Failed. In P.R. DeVita (ed.) *The Naked Anthropologist: Tales from Around the World* (17-25). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- 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.
- Rosaldo, Renato. 1994. Grief and a Headhunter's Rage. In E. Bruner (ed.) *Text, Play, and Story: The Construction and Reconstruction of Self and Society* (178-195). Washington, D.C.: American Ethnological Society.
- Visweswaran, Kamala. 1994. Betrayal: An Analysis in Three Acts. *In Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (40-59). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Zinsner, William. 2001. On Writing Well. Sixth Edition. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.**
- Zinsner, William. 1993. Writing to Learn. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.**