**Researching Environment & Culture**  
ANTH 468O/688O

**When:** Thurs 2:00 – 4:45 pm  
**Instructor:** Dr. L. Jen Shaffer  
**Office:** Woods Hall 0110  
**Phone:** 301-405-1441

**Where:** Architecture Bldg. 1125  
**Office Hours:** Tuesdays 3:30 – 4:30 pm,  
by appointment  
**Email:** lshaffe1@umd.edu

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**Columbia Town Center (Mahan Rykiel Associates 2013)**

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**Course Description**

How do humans shape their surrounding environment? How does the environment shape human communities and culture? In this applied and project-oriented course, students use oral history and related ethnographic methods to research a locally-based, environmental sustainability issue. Classroom time will be split between seminar discussions of theory, anthropological methods, and relevant case studies, and ‘lab’ work focused on project development, data analysis, and report write up. Students are expected to spend additional time outside class conducting interviews, collecting data, text analysis, writing, and cataloging recordings for public access. In the Fall 2015 term our course project focuses on the oral history of Columbia, MD.

More than 50% of the Earth’s population now lives in cities – meaning that humans have a significant influence on shaping their surrounding environment. Planned communities are one way that people have attempted to manipulate living situations to accommodate specific sociocultural, economic, and environmental needs and desires from the very start of settlement. Columbia, Maryland is one such planned community, and in 2017 it will celebrate its 50th anniversary. A sociological approach was used to develop Columbia and help achieve its original goals, including: the creation of a fully, self-sustaining city where residents could both live and work, respecting and integrating the natural environment into the built environment, sustainably accommodating the future growth of the community, integrating mixed income and racially diverse families, and making a profit. Columbia is ranked among the best places to live in the United States today.
Course Learning Outcomes

Anthropologists often work on teams in this capacity for government agencies, non-governmental organizations, corporations, and consultancies. So you will be learning and practicing skills with non-academic value. At the completion of this course, you should be able to...

- Demonstrate the ability to select, critically evaluate, and apply relevant areas of anthropological scholarship.
- Articulate the process required to bring about a successful outcome (i.e. project report) from planning, data collection, and data analysis, to writing, critiquing, and revising.
- Demonstrate an ability to collaborate in order to bring about a successful outcome.
- Recognize how applying anthropology to understanding a real world environmental issue affects or is affected by political, social, cultural, economic or ethical dimensions.
- Produce an original analysis that reflects anthropological scholarship related to climate change, adaptation, human-environment interaction, and behavior/choice.
- Effectively communicate what has been learned through written, visual, and oral materials.
- Develop research team organizational and management skills (graduate students only).

In this course, we use an anthropological lens to assess environmental and community sustainability and change in Columbia, MD over the past half century. Our class will partner with PALS, Howard Community College (HCC), and the Columbia Association. The applied and project-oriented oral history research students will conduct in this course focuses on, but is not limited to, the following questions:

1. What remains of Columbia’s original planning vision and how is it manifested?
2. How, if at all, have the original vision and goals of Columbia changed from the perspective of pioneer residents – people who moved to Columbia when it “opened” in 1965?
3. Do recently settled families still see the original vision and goals at work in Columbia?
4. Were the original vision and goals a factor in choosing to move to Columbia for newcomers?
5. How do the experiences of pioneer residents and newcomers differ?
6. What changes might be necessary in the future to accommodate new populations, economic shifts, environmental and climate transitions, and cultural change?

Classroom time will be split between seminar discussions of theory, anthropological methods, and relevant case studies, and ‘lab’ work focused on project development, data analysis, and report write up. Students are expected to spend additional time outside class conducting oral histories with Columbia residents, transcribing interview text, analyzing results, and writing. This effort will be coordinated with the Columbia Association who will conduct video recordings of the interviews.
Course Materials & Readings

Students may wish to dedicate a spare flashdrive to project work in order to keep recordings and other files in one location. This is highly recommended.

Required Texts:

Required Readings Online:


*Other Useful Readings (provided as linked materials):*

http://www.uwlax.edu/faculty/brooks/bus230/handouts/designing%20graphs.pdf

http://www.americanscientist.org/issues/pub/the-science-of-scientific-writing


The required readings may be found on the course module webpages with other potentially useful texts including reports, book chapters, journal articles, videos, and websites. In order to work effectively and efficiently, we will use a variety of online tools including Dropbox, Google Drive, and UMD’s course platform. The course syllabus, project description, IRB approval, research consent forms, and grading rubrics will be posted to the course webpage for access at any time.

**Grading Criteria**

Your work and participation in this class will be graded by myself AND your peers. Grading rubrics for the short assignments will be posted online when the assignment is posted. Grading rubrics for the participation evaluations, Columbia Oral History Project Booklet, group presentations, and reports will be co-designed through class discussion and the teamwork survey. Individual assignments (starred) will be graded by the instructor. Group assignments will be evaluated by the instructor and peer reviewed by your fellow classmates for a grade.

Class participation will be evaluated three times during the term, by both the students and the instructor, to provide students opportunities to grow their collaboration (and management for grads) skills.

**12 Short Assignments → 10 pts. each**

1. Teamwork Survey*  
2. Student CITI Training*  
3. Columbia Field Trip Report*  
4. Family Oral History  
5. Oral History Online Exhibit  
6. Columbia Background Research Report  
7. Interview Field Notes*  
8. Interview Transcripts  
9. Research Blog Post (topical, 2 citations)  
10. Research Blog Post (field update)  
11. Final Report Outline*
12. Draft Final Report

* Participation → 100 pts. total
  1. Instructor Evaluation (35 pts.)
  2. In-Group Evaluation (35 pts.)
  3. Evaluation by Others (30 pts.)

Columbia Oral History Project Booklet & Recordings → 45 pts.
Interview Summaries → 35 pts.
Final Project Report → 100 pts.

TOTAL → 400 pts.

The points you earn on your assignments, both group and individual, will be added together with your participation grades. The final grade will be calculated using the scale posted below. It may or may not match up 100% with the scale used to calculate grades on CANVAS. Please be advised that I use this scale, I don’t go with the grade automatically calculated on CANVAS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>388-400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>372-387.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>360-371.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>348-359.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>332-347.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>320-331.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>308-319.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>292-307.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>280-291.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>268-279.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>252-267.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>240-251.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 240</td>
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I usually round up if the calculated grade is within 0.5 points of a borderline grade (ex. B+/A- or C-/C). However, when rounding I also take into account participation in course activities and your progress in class. You need to show me that you are giving 100% as a student in this class. If you show poor performance in participation, create conflict with classmates, interviewees, and/or the Columbia Association, and no growth or even negative growth as a learner, you should not count on my good nature to bump you up that 0.5. That would be disrespectful and unfair to your classmates who have put in the effort to learn and contributed to project success.

Course Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEPTEMBER</th>
<th>Research Activities</th>
<th>UMD Class Activities</th>
<th>HCC Class Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wk. 1</td>
<td>Identify themes for background research to put oral histories into context</td>
<td>(9/3) Introduction (class, Columbia Oral History Project, oral history research)</td>
<td>(9/4) Background research on Columbia, involving HCC’s archivist.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Portelli (1981); Thompson (1988)</td>
<td>Teamwork Survey DUE 9/6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teamwork Survey DUE 9/6</td>
<td>Teamwork Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wk. 2</td>
<td>Fieldtrip to Columbia, MD</td>
<td>(9/10) Fieldtrip to Columbia, MD</td>
<td>(9/10) Available students join with UMCP students on the Fieldtrip around Columbia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Begin background research on Columbia’s history as a planned community</td>
<td>PALS Howard County Info Packet; Dembner (2013); Shopes (2015)</td>
<td>(9/10) Begin to research Columbia-based organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Establish teams</td>
<td>CITI Training Certification DUE 9/13</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>CITI training on research ethics</td>
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### OCTOBER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Research Activities</th>
<th>UMD Class Activities</th>
<th>HCC Class Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Wk. 1** | • Interviews  
• Background research  
• Transcribe interviews | • (10/1) Camille Westmont guest lecture; Recording & Transcription  
• ROH pp. 351-371  
• Participation Evaluation 1 DUE 10/1 | • (10/2) Interviews begin |
| **Wk. 2** | • Interviews  
• Background research  
• Transcribe interviews | • (10/8) Making Oral Histories Publicly Accessible  
• *Smith (2008)*; *Story Corps*  
• Ask Ennis about possible guest lecture? | • (10/9) Interviews continue. Assistance with interview transcription |
| **Wk. 3** | • Interviews  
• Transcribe interviews  
• Background research | • (10/15) Environment, Planned Communities, & Sustainability (contextualizing oral history research)  
• *Tuan (1977)*; *Birch (1980)*; *Cowan (2012)*  
• Oral History Online Exhibit DUE 10/18 | • (10/16) Format transcription and a contextualization paragraph. |
| Wk. 4 | • Interviews  
• Transcribe interviews  
• Background research | • (10/22) Analysis & Interpretation (include coding); Prep for CA Discussion  
• ROH pp. 319-347; Borland (1991)  
• Columbia Background Research Report DUE 10/25 | • (10/22) Available students attend Analysis & Interpretation class at UMCP or This class is video captured for presentation on (10/23) |
| Wk. 5 | • Interviews finish  
• Transcribe interviews finish  
• Identify themes for analysis | • (10/29) Columbia Association Discussion about findings to date, etc.  
• Interview Field Notes DUE 11/1  
• Interview Transcripts DUE 11/1 | • (10/29) Available students attend CA Discussion either in person or via Adobe Connect |

**NOVEMBER** | **Research Activities** | **UMD Class Activities** | **HCC Class Activities** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wk. 1 | • Code & analyze interview text | • (11/5) Economic class, gender, and ethnicity/race in Oral History (contextualizing oral history research)  
• Shostak (1989); Besen (2006); Pattillo (2013); Colic-Peisker & Robertson (2015)  
• Participation Evaluation 2 DUE 11/5 | • (11/6) Begin analysis of themes evident from interviews |
| Wk. 2 | • Code & analyze interview text  
• Outline Final Report | • (11/12) Environmental Oral History  
• Endres (2011); assigned one of following: McAdoo et al. (2006); Arce-Nazario (2007); Showers & Mahahlala (1992); Shaffer & Naiene (2011); Robertson & McGee (2003)  
• Final Report Outline DUE 11/12 | • (11/13) Continue analysis of themes evident from interviews |
| Wk. 3 | • Analyze text  
• Organize interview texts for booklet  
• Prep recordings for | • (11/19) Oral History Legal & Ethical Issues  
• ROH pp. 141-155, 159-177 | • (By 11/19) Send forward to UMCP class interview transcripts with a |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>DECEMBER</th>
<th>Research Activities</th>
<th>UMD Class Activities</th>
<th>HCC Class Activities</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| **Wk. 1** | • Edit and revise final report  
• Organize oral history texts into booklet for CA  
• Cross reference digital recordings to the booklet | • (12/3) Crafting Professional Oral History Projects  
• Work on Columbia Association project deliverables  
• CA Project Booklet & Recordings DUE 12/7 | • No seminar meeting; exam week |
| **Wk. 2** | • Final draft report due  
• Edit and revise final report | • (12/10) Oral History Project Development as a Professional Applied Anthropologist  
• Mercier & Buckendorf (2007)  
• Participation Evaluation 3 DUE 12/10 | • (12/10) Available students attend UMCP class to provide 10-15 minute presentation of their analysis |
| **Wk. 3** | | • NO CLASS! Exam Week  
• Final Report DUE 12/14 | |
| **Wk. 4** | | | **Happy Holidays!** |

Course schedule is subject to change by course instructor. Students will be consulted in this process to ensure as much fairness and flexibility as possible.

**My Expectations of Students in this Course**

**Participation & Attendance**

Everyone’s learning, and completion of the final project, depends on your participation in class discussions and activities. Either you participate or you don’t. If you are not present for scheduled class time or for research activities where you are expected, it makes class participation impossible. Medical excuses, religious observance, obituaries (need evidence), and attendance at an academic conference (need evidence) are justifiable excuses for missing class, and thus not participating. If weather (beyond emergency closings), vehicle maintenance, heartache, savage attack by angry Neanderthals, etc. interferes with your class participation, I will be sympathetic, but you will not earn any participation points. Please remember that you are working on a team in this course. Your participation affects your classmates.
Conduct
Students are expected to treat each other with respect. Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. Students who are unable to demonstrate civility with one another or me will be subject to referral to the Office of Student Conduct or to the University Campus Police. You are expected to adhere to the Code of Student Conduct.

Human Subjects Research Training
All students will be expected to complete the student training for Human Subjects Research through the CITI website (www.citiprogram.org). Students are expected to keep research participant information private and confidential, and abide by the strictures outlined in the class project’s IRB approval. A copy will be provided on the course website. This is a legal issue that affects everyone in the class, but also goes beyond this course and affects the University of Maryland. Every effort will be made to reduce opportunities to breach confidentiality and breach the guidelines of the IRB approval. Please don’t mess around. Violation of participant confidentiality or the IRB approval guidelines will result in an F grade.

Technology
In this class, students may bring their laptop to class to take notes, look up relevant information during class activities, and work on data analysis only. If a student is found to be using a laptop for any other reason, then, that student will lose the privilege of bringing their computer to class. Digital cameras may be used if they are part of data collection activities. All technological devices, except a laptop computer or digital camera are prohibited in this class including MP3 devices, smart phones and phones (for making calls or texting), gaming devices, etc. If these devices are seen and/or used during the class, the student will be asked to leave the class immediately.

Online & Email communication
Please remember that what you write and the images that you post provide the rest of us – your fellow classmates and I – an image of who you are. We’d love to think the world of you, so show us your best. Use good spelling and grammar. Be kind. DON’T SHOUT!! Open and close emails with proper greetings and regards. Choose your words and images carefully. Give credit where credit is due – either to a fellow student, the writer or producer of course materials, or your professors. Lastly, humor doesn’t always transmit well through the internet – jokes, and especially satire, can be easily lost by a reader and taken seriously. Use emoticons if you feel the need for humor. ;-) 😊 : / ^_^ : ( 

Plagiarism
I have no expectation of encountering plagiarism in this class. Sometimes, however, people unintentionally plagiarize because they do not know what actually constitutes plagiarism. To minimize the possibility, let me briefly clarify the issue. Stealing others’ work (for example, copying others’ test answers) and passing it off as your own is an example of plagiarism that everyone knows. It is also plagiarism in academic writing to present others’ ideas as if they were your own. To avoid the appearance of plagiarism in written work, it is important to reference the sources of your ideas so as to keep the difference between others’ ideas or arguments and the ideas or arguments that are uniquely yours. You cannot reference too many sources, although you are expected to be creative and generate
some of your own ideas in your papers. Plagiarism and cheating in any form will not be tolerated. More information about properly citing your sources is provided in a handout on ELMS.

**Academic Integrity**

Please remember that you need to write out, sign, and date the honor pledge on all assignments and the final project (www.studenthonor council.umd.edu/code). Basically,

“I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/paper/examination. **Signature MM/DD/YYYY**”

Plagiarism, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents, forging signatures, and cheating on assignments are all forms of academic dishonesty and punishable. Please don’t pull this sort of thing. I don’t cut deals. If you are discovered violating the Code of Academic Integrity (www.president.umd.edu/policies/docs/III-100A.pdf), you will be referred to the Student Honor Council/Office of Student Conduct for investigation and possible disciplinary action. If you are found in violation of the Code of Academic Integrity, the usual penalty is an F for the course.

**Students with Disabilities**

I will make every effort to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Service (DSS) Office and who provide me with a University of Maryland DSS Accommodation form which has been updated for the Fall 2015 semester. Only written DSS documentation of the accommodation will be considered. This form must be presented to me no later than 11 September 2015. I am not able to accommodate students who are not registered with DSS or who provide me with documentation which has not been reviewed and approved by UM’s DSS Office after 11 September 2015.

**Medical Excuses**

In my class, you or a guardian must email me or call me PRIOR to class to inform me that you will not be in attendance due to injury or serious illness, and thus will miss the class participation or an assignment/exam deadline. At the very next class session that you are in attendance, you must present me with a medical note or self-signed note (only once) for missing one single lecture. This note must include the date of illness and a statement that the information you have provided is true. You must also state that if your absence is found to be false, you understand that you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. The statement must be signed and dated. Please understand that only one self-signed note for one absence will be allowed. For non-consecutive absences or your final paper, I will require a Health Center or medical doctor’s health excuse. If you do not inform me or if you do not give me timely documentation, 0 points will be given to you for class participation and points will be docked from your assignment. Please note that in the case you are unable to get a written medical excuse, you may ask your provider for a copy of your medical notes for the specific visit/s in question.

**Student Athletes**

Please refer to the Maryland Student-Athlete Code of Conduct regarding expected class absences due to official intercollegiate competitions. Essentially,
"Properly inform instructors (provide authorized team travel letter), by the 10th day of fall and/or spring semesters, of expected class absences due to travel to official intercollegiate competitions."

The 10th day of Fall 2015 semester is Friday, 11 September 2015. Letting me casually know after this date that you cannot attend lab due to a religious holiday or athletic event is unacceptable.

**Religious Observances**

If there is a specific day you will not be able to attend class or turn in a particular assignment, you must provide me, in writing, the day and specific religious observance by **11 September 2015**. Please remember that accommodations are NOT made for travel to and from the religious observance. This is a hard deadline so that I can develop a plan that will fit within the project timeline. Letting me casually know after this date that you cannot attend lab due to a religious holiday or athletic event is unacceptable.

The University of Maryland recognizes many students have religious observances they must attend to during the school term. When the nature of the observance prevents the student from being present during the class period, students are allowed an excused absence so that they may participate. Remember that your freedom to practice your religion also requires you to take some responsibility and inform your instructor that you will be absent that day or unable to make an assigned deadline. I have made every attempt to incorporate flexibility in the project. This flexibility requires you, the student, to be aware of assignments, interview appointments, and if there is a significant conflict let me know well in advance.

**University Emergency Closing**

In the event that the University is closed for an emergency or extended period of time because of inclement weather and campus emergencies, I will communicate to you via ELMS or email to make schedule adjustments, including rescheduling of assignment due dates. Official closures and delays are announced on the campus website [http://www.umd.edu](http://www.umd.edu). The snow phone line is 301-405-SNOW, as well as local radio and TV stations.

**Course Evaluation**

I take course evaluations very seriously. Each year I revise my syllabus, readings, course assignments, and exams based on your feedback. I am not just interested in the scores you give this course, but also very interested in your specific comments. I will provide a couple of opportunities during the course to give me anonymous feedback. I would like to encourage each and every one of you to evaluate this class as well as your other courses. One important campus-wide evaluation is the online evaluation at the end of the semester. **Course Evaluation UM** will be open to students to complete their evaluation for Fall 2015 courses starting at the end of November 2015. Students can go directly to the website to complete their evaluations ([www.courseevalum.umd.edu](http://www.courseevalum.umd.edu)).