
QUALITATIVE METHODS IN APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY

ANTH 606 + WOODS HALL 1102 + M/W 5:00-7:45PM



CONTACT INFO

INSTRUCTOR
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an exploration of qualitative research methods through the analytical and practical study of fieldwork and ethnography. In this class, we will attend to questions of knowledge, location, evidence, ethics, power, translation, experience, and the way theoretical problems can be framed in terms of qualitative research using ethnographic sensibility.

The course is designed to provide students with an understanding of the methodological approaches we commonly think of as qualitative research, but through an ethnographic lens. The course will cover the basic techniques for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing ethnographic data. Throughout the semester, the course will operate on two interrelated dimensions, one focused on the theoretical approaches to ethnographic research, the other focused on the practical techniques of conducting a small-scale ethnographic project, such as identifying key informants, selecting respondents, collecting field notes, analyzing data, writing, and presenting findings.

We will consider questions such as the following theoretical dimensions: What is “qualitative” or “ethnographic” research? What work does it do? What is the relationship between ethnographic researchers and research? We will also consider practical questions such as: How do you go about starting a project? How do you connect research design and data collection? How should one structure an interview schedule? How many interviews are enough? How does one write good fieldnotes? What is coding? What are themes? How does one write an ethnographic paper? How does one give a presentation based on interview data?

This course is in large part a workshop in a seminar format. Students will learn and mobilize various ethnographic methods and techniques, engage in ethnographic writing, and actively evaluate and guide one another’s work. Students will work in small groups and individually to apply what they learn during the course in conducting a small-scale ethnographic research of their own choosing.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Provide basic training in qualitative research methods with a foundation in ethnographic principles, including exposure to ethnographic conceptualization, theory, research design, and strategies for framing questions
- To consider the various domains where qualitative work continues to make major contributions within and outside anthropology
- To examine the ethical responsibilities of conducting qualitative work
- To think collectively and critically about field work, analysis, and writing

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments for this course include engaged class participation and several written components of a full research project. Grades will be determined on the basis of the following:

Class Participation: 10%
Personal Statement: 5%
Annotated Bibliography: 5%
Research Proposal: 10%
Field Notes: 30%
Oral Presentation: 10%
Research Paper: 30%

Class Participation (10%)

Since the viability of the seminar depends in large measure on student participation, you are expected to be 1) present in class for the entire period, 2) prepared to discuss the readings and fieldwork issues, and 3) lead a discussion section for at least one class. This means you will need to familiarize yourself with all of the readings assigned each week, even if you aren’t responsible for leading group discussions.

Discussion Leading: Each student is responsible for leading at least one class discussion which involves taking responsibility for the discussion of the week's reading and its relevance to fieldwork experiences and issues. No single topical chapter or article should consume more than 15 minutes of discussion, so you can use this time frame as a guide for thinking about framing the discussion. In leading class discussion, please pay attention to: (a) summary of major points or arguments; (b) relevance to fieldwork; and (c) what you regard as the most important "take away" points or observations. *The key is to generate discussion among the class and incorporate class readings. Students will be graded on the clarity of their presentation and ability to engage others in discussion.*

Brief Writing Assignment (5%)

Personal Statement: Write a statement (1000-word maximum) about why you are interested in qualitative and ethnographic research methods, and describe the field experience that you hope to carry out in the coming year. This can be thought of as a statement of your goals and objectives. What do you plan to do? What topic do you hope to address? What professional skills do you bring and what skills do you hope to develop? How do you expect this experience to affect you as a person? What impact do you think it have on your life and career? What aspect of this experience will be the most challenging for you?

Field Project Assignments (85%)

1. **Annotated Bibliography:** Identify 5-6 articles that relate to your proposed fieldwork. About half of the articles should describe the nature of the problem, its scope and possible strategies to address it. The other half should explore history, culture or other aspects of the local context with respect to the issue you are addressing. Please list each full reference with a paragraph summary (150 words) about the main points of the article and how it is relevant for your work.
2. **Research Proposal:** You will be required to submit a 5-7 page research proposal, similar to the ones graduate students and researchers use to request funding for fieldwork from government agencies and foundations. Your proposal should clearly and concisely state the topic you will investigate, the methods you will use, the key questions you will ask, and how your research will contribute to the scholarly literature. Proposal guidelines and models will be posted to Canvas and discussed in class.
3. **Field notes:** Throughout the semester, you will keep a "field journal" in which you will record your observations, maps, and interview notes. You may keep the journal in any format that you find convenient for recording things as they occur and for noting down your ideas, but you will then need to "write up" your notes by transforming your journal entries into clear, typewritten prose. For every hour you spend in the field, you should plan to spend no less than an equal amount of time typing up a set of field notes detailing your observations, problems, analytic hunches, and so on. You will provide us with a copy of your field notes for a minimum of 6 weeks over the semester. Your first two sets of field notes will consist of an observational exercise at a generic setting assigned in class and an in-class interview exercise (details of this assignment will be discussed in seminar). Thereafter, your field notes will derive from a setting in which you will undertake research beginning around the 4th-5th week of the semester and concluding around the 12th week of the semester. Field notes are to be posted onto the Class Canvas website by 12PM the day before each seminar period

(Wednesdays). We will read each of the first two sets of field notes, commenting on your observations, things you might have glossed over, things you might follow up on, etc. Then, for the next four sets, you will review each other's notes using the guidelines for evaluating field notes discussed in class. In this way, not only will you receive feedback from us and your peers, but hopefully you will sharpen and refine your observational and informal interviewing skills, as well as learn how to develop rich, detailed, and organized field notes. *The importance of high quality field notes cannot be overemphasized, since oftentimes the*

only data you have once you leave the field are those contained within your field notes. If they are thin, fuzzy, glossy, and disorganized, your analysis will be no better.

4. **Oral Presentations:** All students will be required to present their research results in class. Presentations will consist of oral descriptions of your project and preliminary findings, as well as questions and answers with colleagues. These sessions will be organized much like those at professional meetings. Accordingly, each team of students will have 15 minutes for a presentation, followed by a 5 minute discussion of the research. We will have practice sessions where you will learn about how to organize an effective presentation and design presentation materials.
5. **Research Paper:** You are to prepare a multiple-author paper (8,000 words maximum including bibliography) based on the team field projects conducted throughout the seminar. The paper should be analytical and shed empirical light on a methodological or substantive problem that inspired or emerged from the field work. A purely descriptive paper will not be acceptable. The final paper is to be written as if it were being submitted for publication consideration by an academic journal (examples will be posted on Canvas).

Extra Credit

One of the course goals is to strengthen your ability to write persuasive, informed pieces about specific issues. Op-eds and commentaries are fairly short opinion pieces (500 words) that are intended to reach broad audiences and influential people within your community. You can compose an op-ed or commentary of publishable quality that reviews your research, explains trends in the field, critiques policy decisions, or places our world in a cultural context. Your writing should aim to reach an educated general-interest audience (think Slate, The New York Times, and The Atlantic or perhaps UMD's newspaper, The Diamondback). You can consult newspapers or journals other outlets for examples of excellent op-eds and commentaries. Further details will be discussed in class and made available on Canvas. *Extra credit is only given for pieces considered by the instructor to be of publishable quality. Further credit may be given for published pieces.*

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments must be completed on time. Assignments not turned in on the date they are due will be penalized by a letter grade for each day they are late (for example: a B will become a C if turned in a day late) and may not receive written comments. Assignments that are four or more days late will not be accepted and will receive a failing grade.

GRADES

I do not discuss grades via e-mail; questions about grades need to be discussed in-person. Grades in this course are earned and not negotiated. My grading policies are very transparent and your progress in this course is available on Canvas as assignments are graded. It is your responsibility to keep up with your progress in this course and if you feel that your performance has not been evaluated fairly you must discuss this with me within a reasonable amount of time before the end of the semester.

The Grade Scale for this course:

97- 100 = A+ 87 – 89 = B+ 77 – 79 = C+ 67- 69 = D+ 0 – 60 = F
 94 – 96 = A 84 – 86 = B 74 – 76 = C 64 – 66 = D
 90 – 93 = A- 80 – 83 = B- 70 – 73 = C- 61 – 63 = D-

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular attendance and participation in this class is the best way to grasp the concepts and principles being discussed. However, in the event that a class must be missed, the policy is:

1. **Religious Observances:** it is the student's responsibility to inform the instructor of any intended absences for religious observances *within 2 weeks of the start of class.* Prior

notification is especially important in connection with due dates for course assignments, since failure to reschedule these due dates may result in loss of credits during the semester.

2. Medically Necessary Absences: Students who miss a single class for a medical reason must contact the instructor in advance, and upon return to class, present the instructor with a self-signed note which acknowledges that the information provided is accurate. A student's failure to provide an accurate statement is a violation of the Honor Code. Students who have a prolonged absence due to illness (multiple consecutive absences) are required to provide written documentation from a health care provider specifying the dates that they were in the provider's care.

In the event a student is absent for a Major Grading Event (discussion leading or oral presentation), he or she must provide documentation of illness from a health care professional, as well as notify the instructor in advance. All health care professional documentation must include exact dates of absence and must be turned in within one week of the missed grading event.

COMMUNICATION

Turn on notifications for the course in Canvas and check your Email regularly, as this will be the main way that I communicate regarding updates or course news. You should attend class regularly. You can also attend office hours or contact me via email. Keep in mind, however, that after 5pm on weekdays, I am unlikely to respond to your email until the following morning.

WRITING ASSISTANCE

An essential part of scholarship is having others review and comment on your written work. Therefore, I highly encourage you to use the University's Writing Center. The Writing Center works with students offering individual consulting on writing as well as workshops on writing and related issues in communication. Services are free to the university community.

HONOR CODE

UMD is an academic community that assumes personal and professional integrity on the part of all its members. Supporting these values in word and deed is the responsibility of each member of the community and alleged acts of academic misconduct should be taken seriously and dealt with according to the university's policy, <http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/iii100a.html>. UMD's student-administered Honor Code and Honor Pledge prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents and forging signatures.

This course adheres to the policies of the University of Maryland's Honor Code which applies to all work submitted for academic credit. For assignments, you must cite all written sources that you consulted, whether you quote directly or paraphrase. This is true whether you are using electronic or printed materials. Incomplete or improper citations are a form of plagiarism. If you are unfamiliar with proper citation formats, or have questions please consult me, a reference librarian, or a style manual. Lack of familiarity with proper procedures is not a defense.

CLASSROOM ELECTRONICS POLICY

Laptops or tablets are allowed in the classroom for note-taking only. Cell phones and any other noisemakers are to be completely turned off. If violations occur, electronic devices will be banned.

ACCOMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES

UMD has long been committed to providing instruction and services that help students achieve academic success. While students with disabilities have always been a part of our student body, we understand better now the difficulties they encounter while in college and the ways in which we can provide effective support. Students are required to provide documentation of a disability before we may provide reasonable accommodations.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) ONLINE TRAINING

Prior to undertaking participant observation, all students will need to complete an online training program on ethics and human subject protection. The program is available from the Collaborative Institutional Training Program (www.citiprogram.org). Additionally, prior to beginning research projects required for this class, all students must have IRB approval. For instructions on how to submit proposals for IRB review, please consult UMD's IRB page (<http://www.umresearch.umd.edu/RCO/New/>). Dr. Thurka Sangaramoorthy serves as the Department of Anthropology's IRB liaison.

REQUIRED BOOKS

- H. Russell Bernard, 2011, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods, Fifth Edition*. Altamira Press. (You can also purchase the 4th edition or access it online on Canvas)
- Emerson, Robert M, Rachel I. Fretz and Linda Shaw, eds. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Bourgois, Phillipe and Jeff Schonberg. *Righteous Dopefiend*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009.
- Livingston, Julie. *Improvising Medicine: An African Oncology Ward in an Emerging Cancer Epidemic*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012.
- Articles and supplementary material are available through Canvas.

Readings are due on the day they are listed in the week-by-week outline. It is your responsibility to read the syllabus carefully and come to class prepared. I reserve the right to slightly modify the syllabus depending on how the class is progressing.

OTHER RESOURCES

1. *Social Science Research Council*, readings on research methods (archival research, case studies, ethnographic methods, focus group interviews, oral histories, quantitative methods, survey research, research ethics).

[SSRC research matters](#)

[SSRC Art of Writing Proposals](#)

2. *Institute of International Studies, University of California (Berkeley)*, "Dissertation Proposal Workshop": This site offers a detailed guide to stages of proposal writing, recommended timeline for proposal development, funding sources, ethics, defining research questions, proposal writing style tips, and components of a successful proposal (theory, research question, research design, budgets, concepts and terminology). It includes samples of proposals funded by NSF and Fulbright, along with George Orwell's 1945 essay on "Politics and the English Language," Michael Watts' essay "The Holy Grail: In Pursuit of the Dissertation Proposal," and recommended readings on research methods.

[UC Berkeley Dissertation Proposal Resources](#)

3. Arthur Aaron, Elaine N. Aron, and Elliot J. Coups, 2005, *Statistics for the Behavioral and Social Sciences: A Brief Course*. Pearson/Prentice Hall.
4. Michael Agar, 1996, *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography*. New York: Academic Press.
5. M. Bakardjieva and A. Feenberg, 2001, "Involving the virtual subject: Conceptual, methodological and ethical dimensions," *Journal of Ethics and Information Technology* 2(4):133-140.

6. Howard S. Becker, 1998, *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think about Your Research While You're Doing It*. University of Chicago Press.
7. H. Russell Bernard, ed., 2000, *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Lanham, MD: Altamira.
8. Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb and Joseph M. Williams, 1995, *The Craft of Research*. University of Chicago Press.
9. Michael Chibnik, 1985, "The Use of Statistics in Sociocultural Anthropology." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 14:135-57.
10. John W. Cresswell, 2008, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, Third Edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
11. Jeffrey C. Johnson, 1990, *Selecting Ethnographic Informants*. Qualitative Research Methods Series, Vol. 22. Sage Publications.
12. Michele Lamont, 2009, *How Professors Think: Inside the Curious World of Academic Judgment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
13. Roger Sanjek, ed., 1990, *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
14. Zachary M. Schrag, 2010, *Ethical Imperialism: Institutional Review Boards and the Social Sciences, 1965-2009*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
15. David H. Thomas, 1986, *Refiguring Anthropology: First Principles of Probability and Statistics*. Waveland Press.
16. D. Waskul, 1996, "Ethics of online research: Considerations for the study of computer-mediated forms of interaction," *The Information Society* 12(2):129-140.

DETAILED COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1, 8/31: What is Qualitative Research/ Ethnography? When, Where and By Whom Should it be used?

Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths" (Canvas)

LeCompte and Schensul. "Designing and Conducting Ethnographic Research." Pp 1-53 (Canvas)

Sept 6, 12PM: PERSONAL STATEMENT DUE on CANVAS

Sept 7, 12PM: ALL IRB TRAININGS MUST BE COMPLETED AND ACCOUNTS ESTABLISHED

WEEK 2, 9/7: Entering the Field and Research Design

Bernard, Chapters 3-5

LeCompte and Schensul. Pp 129-169, 227-249 (Canvas)

Anthony P. Cohen, 2007 [1992], "Self-Conscious Anthropology," pp 108-119, in *Ethnographic Fieldwork*. (Canvas)

Jeffrey A. Sluka, 2007, "Fieldwork Relations and Rapport: Introduction," pp. 121-125, in *Ethnographic Fieldwork*. (Canvas)

Jeffrey A. Sluka, 2007, "Fieldwork Conflicts, Hazards, and Dangers: Introduction," pp. 217-222, in *Ethnographic Fieldwork*. (Canvas)

Antonius G.C.M. Robben, 2007, "Reflexive Ethnography: Introduction," pp. 443-446, in *Ethnographic Fieldwork*. (Canvas)

Jeffrey A. Sluka, 2007, "The 'Other' Talks Back: Introduction," pp. 177-182. In *Ethnographic Fieldwork*. (Canvas)

Johnson, "[The Self at Stake: Thinking Fieldwork and Sexual Violence](#)," *Savage Minds* (online)

Sept 13, 12PM: BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE on CANVAS

Sept 14, 12PM: ALL IRB MATERIALS MUST BE SUBMITTED FOR REVIEW TO UMD IRB

WEEK 3, 9/14: Participant Observation and Mapping (outside assignment, no class)

Bernard, Chapter 13

LeCompte and Schensul. "Essential Ethnographic Methods." Pp 112-133. (Canvas)

Roger Sanjek, 1990, "A Vocabulary for Fieldnotes." AND "Examples of Fieldnotes," (Canvas)

Tripathi et al., "Ethnographic Mapping of Alcohol Use and Risk Behaviors in Delhi." (Canvas)

Sept 20, 12PM: 1st FIELD NOTE ENTRY DUE on CANVAS

WEEK 4, 9/21: Participant Observation and Mapping

Bourgois, "In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio," Intro and Chapter 1 (Canvas)

Raybeck, "Beginning to Tan," Pp 53-68 (Canvas)

Loftsdottir, "Never forgetting? Gender and racial-ethnic identity during fieldwork" (Canvas)

WEEK 5, 9/28: Semi-Structured Interviews (in-class exercise)

Bernard, Chapters 8-9

LeCompte and Schensul. "Essential Ethnographic Methods." Pp 171-194, 280-318. (Canvas)

Guest et al., "How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability." (Canvas)

Antonius C. G. M. Robben, "Ethnographic Seduction, Transference, and Resistance in Dialogues about Terror and Violence in Argentina" (Canvas)

Oct 4, 12PM: 2nd FIELD NOTE ENTRY DUE on CANVAS

WEEK 6, 10/5: Writing Field Notes

Emerson, Robert et al, "Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes." Chapters 1-4.

Bernard, Chapter 14

Jean E. Jackson, 1990, "'I Am a Fieldnote': Fieldnotes as a Symbol of Professional Identity," pp. 3-33, in Roger Sanjek, ed., Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology, Roger Sanjek, ed. Cornell University Press (Canvas)

WEEK 7, 10/12: Contemporary Ethnographic Writing

Improving Medicine: An African Oncology Ward in an Emerging Cancer Epidemic

Oct 14, 5PM: RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE through CANVAS

Oct 18, 12PM: 3rd FIELD NOTE ENTRY DUE on CANVAS

WEEK 8, 10/19: Contemporary Ethnographic Writing II

Bourgois and Schonberg, Righteous Dopefiend.

Oct 25, 12PM: 4th FIELD NOTE ENTRY DUE on CANVAS

WEEK 9, 10/26: Qualitative Data Analysis

Bernard, Chapters 17-18

Emerson et al., Chapters 5-6.

LeCompte and Schensul. "Designing and Conducting Ethnographic Research." Pp 195-226. (Canvas)

La Pelle, "Simplifying Qualitative Data Analysis Using General Purpose Software Tools." (Canvas)

Nov 1, 12PM: 5th FIELD NOTE ENTRY DUE on CANVAS

WEEK 10, 11/2: Qualitative Analysis Software and Project Debriefing

Nvivo and Atlas. Ti

Nov 8, 12PM: FINAL FIELD NOTE ENTRY DUE on CANVAS**WEEK 11, 11/9: Reflexivity, Representation and the Ethical**

Fleuhr-Loban, "Informed Consent in Anthropological Research: We are not Exempt." (Canvas)

Christians, "Ethics and Politics in Qualitative Research." (Canvas)

Salzman, "On Reflexivity." (Canvas)

Kobayshi, "Coloring the Field" (Canvas)

Sluka, Jeffrey, "Fieldwork Ethics: Introduction," 2007, in *Ethnographic Fieldwork*, pp. 271-276 (Canvas)Philippe Bourgois, 1990, "Confronting Anthropological Ethics: Lessons from Fieldwork in Central America," in *Ethnographic Fieldwork*, pp. 288-297 (Canvas)Elizabeth Smith Parrott, 2002, "Ethnographic Research," pp. 407-414, in *Institutional Review Board Management and Function*, Robert J. Amdur, and Elizabeth A. Bankert, eds. (Canvas)**WEEK 12, 11/16: NO CLASS, American Anthropological Association Meetings****WEEK 13, 11/23: Thanksgiving Break, NO CLASS** (please use this time to meet/debrief with group members, catch up, conduct fieldwork)**WEEK 14, 11/30: Team Discussions of Final Projects****DEC 7: FINAL ORAL PRESENTATIONS****DEC 12: FINAL PAPERS DUE through CANVAS**