

ANTH 519: Ethnographic & Ethnohistorical Methodologies

Spring 2016

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Office Hours: 11:45-2:45 on Thursdays, other days and times by appointment

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Course Description

How do anthropologists know the world? What are their methods and objects? How does this influence their production of texts and claims to objectivity? In this class we seek answers to these questions through two interrelated tasks: The first is a series of ethnographic modules to direct our attention to anthropological objects and ways of knowing them. The second is close consideration of the form and content of classic anthropological monographs. By juxtaposing these two practices -- one based on student research and the other based on close readings and discussion -- we can come to some preliminary understandings of how and why anthropologists collect the data they do, how they analyze it, and how they contribute to ongoing conversations about culture, society and the qualities of being human.

Students will be tasked to complete a series of interrelated research and writing assignments. Weekly field reports that require students to adapt ethnographic methods to objects in their research sites will be prepared and lay the basis for a research paper. As a result, this course is **incredibly writing intensive** -- students will be turning in approximately 10 pages of writing each week, culminating in a 25-30 page final paper.

Ethnography -- the research and textual practice -- is **the** skill of cultural anthropologists. Only through rigorous attention to both aspects will you emerge from this class successfully. You should also emerge with an article-length manuscript based on original research, and knowledge of necessary ethnographic skills.

Reading List:

Required texts are available at the university bookstore. Readings from the course pack are available online through Blackboard.

Behar, Ruth

2003 [1994] *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story*. New York: Beacon Books.

Clifford, James, and George Marcus, eds.

1986 *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Feldman, Allen

1991 *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Garfinkel, Harold

1984 [1967] *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Malden: Blackwell.

Hebdige, Dick

1979 *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. New York: Routledge.

Helmreich, Stefan

2009 *Alien Ocean: Anthropological Voyages in Microbial Seas*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hill, Jane

2008 *The Everyday Language of White Racism*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.

Hull, Matthew S.

2012 *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Paxson, Heather

2012 *The Life of Cheese: Crafting Food and Value in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wolfe, Thomas C.

2005 *Governing Soviet Journalism: The Press and the Socialist Person after Stalin*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Grading & Assignments:

Attendance & Participation -- Students are expected to attend all classes with the required material having been read. One absence is allowed; each absence beyond the first will reduce the student's final grade by 10%.

Reading Reports (24%; 12 at 2% each) -- Each week, students must turn in a 2-3 page Report based on that week's readings. These are due on Monday and must be submitted as Word documents to the course website before class begins. Reports should identify major themes in the week's readings, and compare and contrast approaches taken by the authors. Reports *can* be a summary statement; however, they *should* be argumentative. Rather than simply reproduce the content of the texts read, the Report will ideally have a thesis statement and base its analysis of the texts on an argument. This can be as straightforward as "Author X's approach to Subject A allows you to see things that Authors Y and Z obscure."

Field Reports (45%; 9 at 5% each) -- At seven points throughout the term, you will have directed field assignments, based upon course reading materials. These are due on the days listed in the syllabus and must be submitted as Word documents to the course website before class begins. These reports must be ~5 pages long, and each will have specific instructions related to empirical and methodological concerns (see Appendix A: Instructions for Field Reports). Again, Field Reports need not be argumentative, but they can be depending on the interests of the researcher.

Paper Brainstorm (6%) -- Your paper brainstorm must be 5-7 pages long and represent your first effort at broadly outlining your paper, *including a thesis and topic sentences*. Each of the subtopics of your paper should be present, and data that corresponds to each of these subsections should be sketched out. This can take the form of the introduction to your paper, followed by an enumerated outline of topic sentences and corresponding data.

Peer Review (10%; 2 at 5%) -- You will be asked to conduct a *blind* peer review of two of your fellow students' final papers. This peer review must be 3-4 pages long, and must identify strengths and weaknesses of the paper. It should, at minimum, summarize the paper and its thesis, analyze the logical structure between the topic sentences, sections and thesis, and consider the relationship between the evidence and the thesis.

Final Paper (15%) -- Final papers should be 25-30 pages long, excluding bibliography. Final papers must have an argument, and their use of evidence must be motivated by this argument. You must identify a journal to submit the journal to and follow that journal's style guide and submission expectations (which must be included with your final paper). Final papers must be submitted through the course website by June 13th at 11:59 P.M.

Policies:

No late work will be accepted for credit.

All assignments must be turned in to receive a passing grade in the course (e.g. a B).

No Incompletes will be granted except in extraordinary circumstances.

Academic Integrity – Academic misconduct of any sort will not be tolerated. Evidence of plagiarism will result in an immediate failing grade in the course and actions as dictated by university policy regarding academic integrity. Please see <http://libraryguides.binghamton.edu/citation/honesty> if you have any questions about what qualifies as plagiarism and strategies for avoiding such. For a description of the plagiarism and academic misconduct review process, see <https://www.binghamton.edu/grad-school/resources/policies-procedures/manual/rights-responsibilities.html>.

Workload: The expectation at SUNY Binghamton is that for each credit hour of a course, students spend 3 hours in preparation during the week. For a 4-credit course, this means that students should be spending about 12 hours per week preparing for class. I assume that graduate students can read 1 page of academic writing in ~3 minutes; 200 pages of reading should require about 600 minutes, or 10 hours. In most cases, the reading will be less than this; however, students should expect to be reading about 150-200 pages per week in addition to other course requirements, including field research. Expect to spend ~6 hours each week conducting fieldwork and writing fieldnotes.

Style Matters: All submitted work should follow the guidelines set forth in the American Anthropological Association's style guide (available at http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html). All papers should be double-spaced, 12 point font, in Times New Roman, with 1 inch margins on all sides, and page numbers. Citation should look like this: (Author Year: Page), e.g. (Wolf-Meyer 2009: 408). Failure to meet these standards will result in a reduced grade.

Contacting Me: I **only** check my email between 9-11 AM on weekdays and during my office hours. I will always respond to emails within 24 hours, except for emails received on Fridays (which will be responded to on the following Monday). If you plan to stop by my office hours, please contact me ahead of time by email (mwolfmey@binghamton.edu).

Week One (January 28th)

Introduction & Course Overview

Lars von Trier's 'Five Obstructions'

Week Two (February 4th) -- Object: Culture/Method: Participant Observation

Clifford, James, and George Marcus, eds.

1986 *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press. [Fortun, Clifford, Crapanzano, Clifford, Rabinow]

Gupta, Akhil, and James Ferguson

1997 *Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference*. In *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*. A. Gupta and J. Ferguson, eds. Pp. 33-51. Durham: Duke University Press.

Fortun, Kim

2009 *Scaling and Visualizing Multi-sited Ethnography* In *Multi-sited Ethnography: Theory, Praxis and Locality in Contemporary Research*. M. Falzon, ed. London: Ashgate.

Marcus, George E.

1995 *Ethnography in/of the World System*. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24:95-117.

Week Three (February 11th) – Object: Common Sense/Method: Experimentation

Garfinkel, Harold

1984 [1967] *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Malden: Blackwell. [Chapters 2, 3, 1, 8]

Rheinberger, Hans-Jorg

1997 *Toward a History of Epistemic Things: Synthesizing Proteins in the Test Tube*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. [1, 2, Conclusion]

Week Four (February 18th) -- Object: Material Culture/Method: The Senses

Field Report #1: 'Culture' & Common Sense

Bourdieu, Pierre

1979 "The Kayble House" In *Algeria 1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Classen, Constance

1992 *The Odor of the Other: Olfactory Symbolism and Cultural Categories*. *Ethos* 20(2):133-166.

Helmreich, Stefan

2009 *Alien Ocean: Anthropological Voyages in Microbial Seas*. Berkeley: University of California Press. [Intro + Chapters 1, 4-6]

Stoller, Paul

1984 *Sound in Songhay Cultural Experience*. *American Ethnologist* 11(3):559-570.

Week Five (February 25th) -- Object: the Everyday/Method: Rhythmanalysis

Field Report #2: Material Culture

de Certeau, Michel

1988 [1984] *The Practice of Everyday Life*. S. Rendall, transl. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Feldman, Allen

1991 *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Chapters 1, 2, 3 & 5]

Lefebvre, Henri

1987 *The Everyday and Everydayness*. *Yale French Studies* 73:7-11.

Lefebvre, Henri

2004 *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*. G. Moore and S. Elden, transl. New York: Continuum.

Munn, Nancy D.

1996 *Excluded Spaces: The Figure in the Australian Aboriginal Landscape*. *Critical Inquiry* 22:446-465.

Week Six (March 3rd) -- Object: Causality and Change/Method: Life History

Field Report #3: Time and Space

Behar, Ruth

2003 [1994] *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story*. New York: Beacon Books. [Intro + Parts 1 & 4]

Biehl, João

2004 *Life of the Mind: The Interface of Psychopharmaceuticals, Domestic Economies, and Social Abandonment*. *American Ethnologist* 31(4):475-496.

Fabian, Johannes

1983 *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Week Seven (March 10th) -- Object: Power/Method: Institutional Analysis

Field Report #4: Causality and Change

Paper Brainstorm Due

Abu-Lughod, Lila

1990 *The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power Through Bedouin Women*. *American Ethnologist* 17(1):41-55.

Brenneis, Don

2006 *Reforming Promise*. *In Documents: Artifacts of Modern Knowledge*. A. Riles, ed. Pp. 41-70. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Hull, Matthew S.

2012 *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*. Berkeley: University of California Press. [Intro, + Chapters 1-3 + Conclusion]

Rofel, Lisa

1992 *Rethinking Modernity: Space and Factory Discipline in China*. *Cultural Anthropology* 7(1):93-114.

Week Eight (March 17th) -- Object: Language & Speech/Method: Discourse & Textual Analysis

Field Report #5: Power, Institutions & Documents

Briggs, Charles

1984 Learning How to Ask: Native Metacommunicative Competence and the Incompetence of Fieldworkers. *Language and Society* 13(1):1-28.

Hill, Jane

2008 *The Everyday Language of White Racism*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell.

Goodwin, Marjorie, and H. Samy Alim

2010 "Whatever (Neck Roll, Eye Roll, Teeth Suck)": The Situated Coproduction of Social Categories and Identities through Stancetaking and Transmodal Stylization. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 20(1):179–194.

Spitulnik, Debra

1996 The Social Circulation of Media Discourse and the Mediation of Communities. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 6(2):161-187.

Week Nine (March 24th) – Object: Popular Culture/Method: Textual Analysis

Field Report #6: Language & Speech

Ferguson, James

1999 *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hebdige, Dick

1979 *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. New York: Routledge.

Week Ten (March 31st) – Spring Break

Week Eleven (April 7th) -- Object: Agency/Method: Actor-Network Theory

Field Report #7: Textual Analysis

Callon, Michel

1986 Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St. Brieuc Bay. *In Power, Action, and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge*. J. Law, ed. Pp. 196-233. New York: Routledge.

Mitchell, Timothy

2002 "Can the Mosquito Speak?" *In Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Paxson, Heather

2012 *The Life of Cheese: Crafting Food and Value in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press. [Chapters 1-3 & 6-8]

Ries, Nancy

2009 Potato Ontology: Surviving Postsocialism in Russia. *Cultural Anthropology* 24(2):181-212.

Week Twelve (April 14th) – Ethnography and the Archive

Field Report #8: Non-Human Actors

Braudel, Fernand

1958 *History and the Social Sciences: The Longue Duree*. *Annales E.S.C.* 4:725-753.

Ginzburg, Carlo

1992 [1976] *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Wolfe, Thomas C.

2005 Governing Soviet Journalism: The Press and the Socialist Person after Stalin.
Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Week Thirteen (April 21st) – Putting it All Together

Field Report #9: Archival Analysis

[Book determined by course participants]

Week Fourteen (April 28th)

Rough Draft Due Wednesday at 11:59 P.M.

In-Class Peer Review and Workshopping

Week Fifteen (May 5th)

Formal Peer Reviews Due

Final Exam Week

Final Paper Due by May 18th at 11:59 P.M.

Appendix A: Instructions for Field Reports

Your field reports must be ~5 pages long, double-spaced, in 12 point Times New Roman font, and with 1” margins on each side. They must also include page numbers, and following the AAA style guide.

For each of your Field Reports, answer the prompts corresponding to the assignment.

Field Report #1 – ‘Culture’: In thinking about the readings for the week (Clifford & Marcus, Fortun, Garfinkle, Gupta & Ferguson), How are cultural assumptions evident in the everyday actions and beliefs of individuals? How do micro-practices reflect cultural assumptions? How does culture change over time, how does it migrate? How fixed is culture? **For your field report: Describe a dominant cultural assumption of individuals in your fieldsite.** What are the origins of this assumption? How does this assumption shape daily, weekly, and annual practice and for whom? What sorts of rituals relate to this assumption?

Field Report #2 – Material Culture: In thinking about the readings for the week (Bourdieu, Classen, Helmreich, Stoller), How does the material environment reflect expectations of the people who inhabit it? In other words, what cultural ideas about space, place and material culture inform the way people organize their lives? How do these everyday spaces affect people’s senses -- vision, touch, smell, taste, balance, and hearing? **For your field report: Map your fieldsite, both its spatial arrangement and its sensory experiences, and provide a copy of the map.** Describe the space and its arrangement. Describe the kinds of sensory experiences you have while in that space. What cultural ideas are reflected in the arrangement of space, place and sensory experience?

Field Report #3 – Time & Space: In thinking about the readings for the week (de Certeau, Feldman, Lefebvre, Munn), How do everyday patterns of behavior shape ideas about time and space, and how do spaces and temporal orders affect behavior? What sorts of daily, weekly, monthly, seasonal and annual rhythms exist? How do individuals and the community coordinate these practices and make them significant? **For your field report: Ask individuals to keep a time diary of their daily activities for a week. Reproduce the relevant data from the time diaries.** What kinds of spatiotemporal practices are grouped together? Which are opposed to one another? How are individuals similar to one another in their daily and weekly rhythms? How are they different, and how can you account for these differences?

Field Report #4 – Causality & Change: In thinking about the readings for the week (Behar, Biehl, Fabian), How do individuals metonymically represent more general social concerns and experiences? How do individuals narrate change and causation in their lives? How do they ascribe agency to forces that change their lives? How does this affect their understandings of themselves and others? **For your field report: Conduct a life history interview with at least one individual in your fieldsite. Transcribe the relevant portions of it.** What are the major events of your subject’s life? How do they narrate them as different from other events? How do they ascribe motive and agency in accounting for the events in their lives? How is your subject representative (or not) of other people in your field site?

Field Report #5 – Power, Institutions & Documents: In thinking about the readings for the week (Abu-Lughod, Brenneis, Hull, Rofel), How does power shape social relationships between individuals and groups? What forms of power are there, and how do they differ in their effects?

How is power materialized? How is power made evident -- in speech, material conditions, everyday practices, etc.? **For your field report: Account for decision making in your fieldsite. Who makes what decisions and how? And how are these decisions documented? Provide detailed examples based on documents.** On what basis are individuals empowered to make decisions? What kinds of difficulties do they face in the decisions they have made? What kinds of consequences (interpersonal, economic, institutional, etc.) do these decisions have, and for whom?

Field Report #6 – Language & Speech: In thinking about the readings for the week (Briggs, Hill, Goodwin & Alim, Spitulnik), How do people use other people’s speech to communicate themselves? In other words, how does social interaction necessitate compromise through speech? How do popular ideas get expressed in speech and through its circulation and its appropriation? How are other material forms of expression important, and shaped by language? **For your field report: Record at least one conversation for analysis. Transcribe the relevant portions of the conversation.** How do people change their language to facilitate communication? How does popular language get appropriated (or contested) in your fieldsite? How do people respond to your language and the language of others they come into occasional contact with?

Field Report #7 – Textual Analysis: Ferguson & Hebdige both think about texts broadly – not just writing, but fashion, spaces, even social interactions; Consider: How do people use symbolism and textuality in their everyday interactions? What does style index, both for the sender and receiver? Are texts – whether musical, written, fashion – wholly consistent in their messaging? **For your field report: Choose a textual form (broadly conceived) from your fieldsite. Describe it as precisely as you can, including the messages that are explicitly and implicitly conveyed through the text.** What are the social histories of these texts? How do the texts enact power relations between individuals? How do audiences respond to the text?

Field Report #8 – Non-Human Actors: In thinking about the readings for the week (Callon, Mitchell, Paxson, Ries), How do non-human actors exhibit their agentic qualities, and what are the effects of these agencies? How do humans attempt to tame non-humans, and how do non-humans shape human experiences of time, space, and society? **For your field report: Describe your fieldsite from a non-human’s point of view.** How do non-humans participate in your fieldsite, or how are they precluded from participation? What efforts towards inclusion or exclusion do the humans participate in to facilitate or disallow non-human agencies? What are the consequences of these inclusive and exclusive practices?

Field Report #9 – Archival Analysis: Braudel, Ginzburg, and Wolfe, provide three very different ways to think about history and what it is composed of and how it is written. Consider: What kinds of sources do each use to frame their historical stories? How do they establish the credibility of their sources? At what scale are they pitching their analysis? **For your field report: Choose a sequence of historical sources and construct a narrative based on their content.** What scalar level of analysis do your sources allow you to analyze? What voices are apparent in the texts, and which are silent? What events are indexed by the texts, and which events are obfuscated? How complete is the narrative, and what might flesh it out?