Ethnographic Methods
Anthropology 300/ Spring 2011/ Mon. 1:30-4:00 pm /PNE 349

Professor Deborah Matzner
Office Hours: PNE 344 Wednesdays 3:00-5:00 pm or by appointment
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Course website on Sakai at https://sakai.wellesley.edu

**Course Description**
An exploration of anthropological research and writing through the analytical and practical study of “fieldwork” and “ethnography”, this course examines a variety of anthropological research methods and genres of representation. We will pay particular attention to questions of knowledge, location, evidence, ethics, power, translation, experience, and the way theoretical problems can be framed in terms of ethnographic research.

This course is in large part a workshop in which 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 apply what they learn during the course toward designing their own ethnographic research project.

**Readings**
The following texts are required and available for purchase in the Wellesley College bookstore. Copies are also on reserve in the Wellesley Library:


Other required readings are available for download on the course’s Sakai website under the ‘Resources’ tab.

Students will also select one full-length ethnography of their choice to review.

**Requirements**

**(25%) Class Participation**
Because of its nature as a workshop, this course requires your energetic, thoughtful, and consistent participation. Therefore, a significant portion of your grade will be determined by the quality of your participation in class discussions and exercises, including your peer-review of your classmates’ work.
You must complete the readings assigned for each course meeting and demonstrate your understanding and analysis of these reading in the class discussion and in any assigned written exercises.

Working with a partner (or, in some cases, 2) each student will also work as ‘co-moderator’ of two class discussions of their choosing. You must come to class with at least three thoughtful discussion questions each to pose to your fellow classmates about the readings and lead the discussion of the readings.

Mid-term evaluations of your participation will indicate your performance to date and guide you on ways to improve your participation.

**Ethnographic Methods and Writing Exercises**

The ethnographic exercises will require you to go out into the world—often beyond the Wellesley campus—and conduct ethnography on a nearly weekly basis. During your fieldwork, you will take fieldnotes, which you will then use to write brief ethnographic essays and to make periodic presentations in class.

The essays will be graded by your fellow classmates via peer-review, with close oversight by your professor. They will be evaluated not only for the rigor of your methods, but also for the quality of your writing and thoughtfulness and insight of your analysis. You must properly cite and discuss relevant course readings in your essays. Late assignments will not be accepted.

**Review of Ethnographic Monograph**

Due Mon. April 11 by email before 5:00 pm.

7-10 page essay reviewing a monograph-length ethnography of your choice. Brief proposal specifying the ethnography you will review and explaining your interest in it due in class Mon. March 28.

**Ethnographic Research Proposal Presentation**

In class 20-minute presentation of a research project of your own design. This presentation will be graded by your fellow classmates via peer-review.

**Ethnographic Research Proposal**

Due Mon. May 9th by email before 5:00 pm.

10-15 paged formal proposal for an ethnographic research project of your own design. You will read examples of successful research proposals in class. Brief abstract for this paper due in class Monday April 4.

**Guidelines/Regulations**

- Laptops, iPads/Pods, cell phones, and other electronic devices may NOT be used in the classroom unless a documented handicap requires them. Electronic devices must be switched off for the duration of class (not just silenced).

- Your professor is engaged in active and ongoing ethnographic research and writing. She will only respond to your emails between 9:00 am and 6:00 pm on weekdays.
Please consult your syllabus, relevant assignments, and your classmates before contacting your professor. Formal and respectful email etiquette is required.

• Each absence that is not explained by a doctor’s note or an email from your class dean will result in a three-point reduction in your final grade out of 100. Repeated tardiness will also result in a reduction of your final grade.

• Late work will have 5 points (out of 100) deducted for each day late (a new day begins an hour after the time of the deadline). Incompletes will not be given for this course.

• Students must abide by the Wellesley Honor Code. Plagiarism will be strictly punished. Please be aware that improper citation can constitute plagiarism. Take care to learn and follow the proper citation practices of the discipline of anthropology. See the AAA Style Guide in the Resources folder of this course’s Sakai website and Carleton College’s helpful online citation guide for anthropology at http://apps.carleton.edu/curricular/soan/resources/citation/

• Students with disabilities who require disability-related accommodations are encouraged to work with Jim Wice, the Director of Disability Services. Find Jim on the third floor of Clapp Library. If you have a disability, including a learning disability, that is undocumented, Jim will arrange for you to be tested, and for appropriate accommodations to be made.

Course Schedule
1. Mon. Jan. 24  Introduction

2. Mon. Jan. 31  What is Ethnography?

Readings for today:


Recommended:

Ethnographic Exercise 1: Ethnographer in an Elevator handed out.

3. Mon. Feb. 7  Taking Ethnographic Fieldnotes

*Ethnographic Exercise 1: Ethnographer in an Elevator* due. Discuss experience and peer-review resulting essay in class.

In-class exercise: *Defining a Research Topic* conducted.

*Readings for today:*

- Beginning through ch. 5, Emerson et al. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*

*Ethnographic Exercise 2: Mapping Private Space* handed out.


*Ethnographic Exercise 2: Mapping Private Space* due to be discussed and peer-reviewed in class.

In-class exercise *Locating Your Field Sites* conducted.

*Readings for today:*


  **Access the Miller reading via E-book in the Wellesley College Library’s online catalogue.**

*Recommended:*


*Exercise 3: The Production of Authority in Malinowski’s *Argonauts* handed out.*
Mon. Feb. 21  
No Class Presidents’ Day --  
Use this time to *read rest of *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* book* and write *The Production of Authority in Malinowski’s Argonauts* assignment.

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5. Mon. Feb. 28  
The Constructed Nature of Ethnographic Writing

*Writing Exercise: Authority in Malinowski's Argonauts* due to be discussed and peer-reviewed in class.

Readings for today:


Van Maanen *Tales from the Field* ch. 3

Re-read Malinowski's introduction and read the rest of *Argonauts*, skimming where necessary.

Recommended:

6. Mon. March 7  
Positions and Reflexivity: Articulating Our Relationships with Our “Subjects”

In-class exercise: *Defining Our Positionality at Home and in the Field*.
Mid-term evaluations of your participation handed out.

Readings for today:


Van Maanen *Tales from the Field* ch. 4

7. **Mon. March 14**  **Ethical dilemmas and possible solutions**

In-class exercise: *Locating Our Fieldsites* in various forces, and addressing the ethical questions that arise.

**Readings for today:**

AAA code of Ethics


Van Mannen, *Tales from the Field* ch. 6

**Recommended:**


Screening: Jean Rouch’s *Jaguar* 1965, 93 min.

*Ethnographic Exercise 4: Interviewing for Indigenous Meanings* assignment and *5: Collecting Life History* assignments both handed out.

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**Mon. March 21**  **No Class—Spring Break**

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8. **Mon. March 28**  **Ethnographic Interviews**

*Ethnographic Exercise 4: Interviewing for Indigenous Meanings* due and peer-reviewed.

Proposal of Ethnographic Monograph you will review due.

**Readings for today:**


*Review of Ethnographic Monograph* assigned.

9. Mon. April 4  Collecting Life Histories

Brief abstract of final project proposal due at the beginning of class.

*Ethnographic Exercise 5: Collecting Life Histories* due and peer-reviewed.

**Readings for today:**

10. Fri. April 15  ***Note special meeting day
Attend Faye Ginsburg lecture. Time TBA.

11. Tues. April 19  ***Note special meeting day due to Patriot’s Day holiday
Crafting Research Proposals and Articulating Research Methods

In class exercise: *Articulating your Methods, Selling your Project.*

**Readings for today:**
12. Mon. April 25  Presentations

13. Mon. May 2  Presentations

Final Research Proposals due Monday May 9th by 4:00 p.m.