

SOC 419 FIELDWORK WINTER QUARTER, 2002

Professor: Susan Pitchford

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Office hours: Wednesday and Friday 2:00-2:45, and by appointment

Class meets: Monday 3:30-5:20 in Savery 131

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar is a graduate-level introduction to field research. The term “fieldwork” covers a vast array of qualitative methods, from classic “hang-out-and-see-what-you-can-learn”-style ethnography to life histories, narrative and textual analysis, discourse analysis and semiotics, and so on. This being an introductory seminar, we will focus on the basic methods that belong in the repertoire of any field researcher: participant observation, interviewing, archival work and artifact analysis. Seminar participants will have the opportunity to try their hand at each of these methods, in the field setting of their choice. Additionally, we will discuss key issues such as the ethics of covert observation, the politics of cultural interpretation, and how to carry out fieldwork in a hostile environment. Students should emerge from this course with the skills to undertake fieldwork on their own, as well as the beginnings of a serious field research project.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Readings: The three books required for the course are on sale at the University Book Store on the Ave. These are:

Denzin & Lincoln (eds.) *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*

Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*

Hammersley and Atkinson, *Ethnography*

The books provide practical guidance on doing fieldwork, as well as background on the history of qualitative methods and issues such research ethics. Additionally, there will be a series of readings from published books and articles using qualitative methods, so students can see what good work using these methods looks like. These readings will be xeroxed and placed in a file at the reception desk in the Sociology main office.

Weekly assignments: Each week, you will have two assignments to turn in. The first is a response to the readings; you don't need to summarize the readings, just take a page or less to respond to what you've read, and to suggest questions for discussion. The second part is your fieldwork assignment. In the beginning of the course, this will consist mainly of exercises to prepare you for the field. Later, you'll be reporting on the fieldwork you've done during the week. Since this seminar meets on Monday, and there will be a lot of material for me to read before class, I'm going to have to ask you to turn these assignments in to me by 5:00 on Friday (preferably hard copy, but Email if necessary). I'll provide details on these assignments as they come up.

Final paper: Your final paper will pull together and report on the fieldwork you've done throughout the quarter. That is, you will use data collected through participant observation, interviews, archival work and artifact analysis to address your research question. Because of the constraints of the course, you can keep the "literature review" to a minimum: just do enough to make the question meaningful, then move on to the analysis and interpretation of your data. Ideally, the research question you choose to pursue for the course will be one you're serious about, so that the final paper can be the beginnings of a thesis, dissertation, or publishable paper down the road. The final paper will be due on the Monday of finals week (3/18), by 10:00 a.m.

Class participation: Seminars live or die on students' participation; therefore, your participation every week will contribute to your final grade. Additionally, each week one student will be assigned primary responsibility for opening the class discussion. This responsibility will be rotated among students; each student's number of "turns" depends on the course enrollment, and a schedule will be drawn up at the beginning of the quarter.

Grades: The final paper will be worth 45% of your grade. The weekly assignments will add up to another 45%, and your participation and discussion leading will make up the final 10%. All late assignments, including the final paper, will be docked 5% per day, 10% for a weekend.

READINGS SCHEDULE

*These weeks have Monday holidays, so class will have to be rescheduled

WEEK 1 (1/7) INTRODUCTION TO QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Optional readings: D&L Introduction; H&A "What is Ethnography?"

WEEK 2 (1/14) ETHICS AND ENTRÉE

H&A "Ethics," "Access," "Research Design"; Van Zandt Intro, Appendix, ch. 3 from *Living in the Children of God*; Van Maanen "Confessional Tales" from *Tales of the Field*

WEEK 3 (1/21)* FIELDNOTES, INTRO TO PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

H&A "Field Relations," "Recording and Organizing Data," to p. 192 only; EF&S "Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research," "In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes"; Anderson Preface & ch. 1 from *Code of the Streets*

WEEK 4 (1/28) PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION, CONT.

D&L "Observational Techniques"; Patillo-McCoy Intro, Methodological Appendix & ch. 1 from *Black Picket Fences*

WEEK 5 (2/4) INTERVIEWING

D&L “Interviewing”; H&A “Insider Accounts”; Waters Intro, ch. 6 & Appendices from *Ethnic Options*

WEEK 6 (2/11) ARCHIVES/NARRATIVE ANALYSIS

H&A “Documents”; D&L “Narrative, Content & Semiotic Analysis”; Adams “Come to Tana Toraja, Land of the Heavenly Kings”

WEEK 7 (2/18)* ARTIFACTS – PHYSICAL CULTURE

D&L “Documents and Material Culture,” “The Art and Politics of Interpretation”; Graburn “The Evolution of Tourist Arts”; Turner “Contemptible Collectibles”

WEEK 8 (2/25) PHOTOGRAPHY; FIELDWORK IN A HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT

D&L “On the Authority of the Image”; EF&S chs. 3&4 “Writing Up Fieldnotes I & II”, & ch. 5 “Pursuing Members’ Meanings”

WEEK 9 (3/4) SOFTWARE FOR ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

H&A “The Process of Analysis”; D&L “Data Management and Analysis Methods,” “Using Computers in Qualitative Research”; EF&S “Processing Fieldnotes”

WEEK 10 (3/11) WRITING IT UP

EF&S “Writing an Ethnography,” “Conclusions”; H&A “Writing Ethnography”; D&L “Writing: A Method of Inquiry”