Course Syllabus

Ethnographic Field Techniques (Decolonizing Methodologies)

ANTH 550

Fall 2016

MW 1:30-3:20

Denny 313

Research is about unanswered questions, but it also reveals our unquestioned answers.

- Shaun Wilson 2008

Instructor: Jean Dennison
Office: Denny 137
E-mail: jden@uw.edu

Office Hours: M/W 9:30-10:30 and by appointment

Course Description

This class seeks to create a collaborative and collective space for students to explore the potential of various ethnographic approaches to research. Instead of grades, this class will be oriented around critical feedback from the instructor and fellow classmates. In signing up for the class, students are committing to their fellow students that they will actively engage in class readings, discussions, and commitments.

The class is divided into three sections:

The Problems of Research: Why should ethnography be ‘decolonized’? What lineages of critique shape the practice and underlying theory of ethnographic research today?
Methods in Practice: What approaches, from interviews to videos, can ethnographers employ to enable greater participatory engagement? What practical issues arise when working with communities to generate knowledge?

- Student Workshops: How can decolonizing research become integrated into graduate-level ethnographic projects? What resources and support, as well as challenges and barriers, do students currently face in doing engaged research?

Objectives

1) Critically assess ethnographic methodologies with attention to problems of power, difference, and colonial structures of knowledge production; 2) analyze and discuss methodological questions and problems; 3) think through strategies for research that acknowledges these problems and structures (even if it does not escape them entirely); 4) proceed with hope and caution in our future research endeavors.

Course Commitments

Readings: The bulk of your time preparing for this class will be spent reading the course materials. If you do not regularly and intensively engage with the course readings, you will get far less from this course. Given the heavy reading load, I have reduced the other course obligations to try and create a balanced course.

Respectful Participation: If you do not attend class regularly or you do not engage in class discussions, you will not only get less out of the class, you will also have less to offer to our community; participation is thus a key commitment you are making to the class. At all times, we need to remember to respect each other's ideas and comments. Learning to be a good ethnographer and writer is about learning to listen and consider other viewpoints carefully and thoughtfully, striving to understand the context of their perspective. During the first class we will establish a set of ground rules that will help facilitate a respectful space, which will be posted under collaborations. These will be revisited regularly throughout the quarter and can be updated as needed. If you don't understand a term or concept, please research it prior to class and bring your findings into class for further clarification and discussion.

Leading Class: Each discussion week, students lead class discussion. When it is your turn, you will be asked to lead class for an hour. Your job will primarily be to craft a list of
discussion questions, or better yet, a class exercise, which brings attention to specific passages from the reading for the week and engages the class in discussion. You should also be able to provide additional background and your own reading of the material to help facilitate the discussion or exercise. Your primary goal should be to engage your fellow students in a productive engagement of the key arguments, ideas, and issues under consideration for that week.

**Constructive Feedback Postings:** Each week you will be asked to provide those leading class and doing presentations with short written feedback on how the presentations went and ideas to improve for the future. The goal of this feedback is to help each other to grow. Learning to provide positive yet critical feedback is also vital to your growth as a scholar. The feedback should be posted on the discussion board on Canvas.

**Inspiration Presentation:** Much of this course is dedicated to addressing the very difficult and painful aspects of ethnographic research, the ones that most challenge us and sometimes seem insurmountable. To counterbalance this aspect of the course, each student should find and present on one source of inspiration; that is, one research method or project (whether academic, artistic, or activist in nature) that can serve as a personal inspiration. This commitment will entail locating something you can share with the class about the project (e.g., a website, video clip, or article), writing up a one single-spaced page description, describing the project and what you find inspiring to the class in a ten-minute presentation (followed by a 5-minute class discussion), and, finally, uploading the link and short description to the designated place on the Canvas discussion board, so we can build a class database of inspirational materials.

**Workshop Proposal:** This one single-spaced page document will serve as a brief introduction to your research for the instructor and for the class, and as the foundation for your workshop presentation. It will include a summary of your research questions, the methods you hope to use to address those questions, and an initial description of the key problem that you hope to work through in this class. A template for this assignment is located here. 📝

**Workshop Presentation:** In the last third of the quarter, we will devote each class to addressing the problems faced by individual students as they navigate the research process. Students should identify one key problem in their research involving ethnographic methods, including: ethics, relationships in the field, theories, or the structure of knowledge production. Students should come to their colleagues ready to work on that particular problem. To prepare for the class, students should find an article that helps them think through this issue.
and post it to Canvas (Discussion, under the class date) at least a week before their presentation. This is an opportunity for each student’s particular interests and needs to shape the focus of class discussion and energy.

Students will also write a two-page single spaced description of the problem that they want to work on. Students should write two paragraphs describing the larger research questions, methods, and goals. The remainder of the paper should be comprised of a frank assessment of the specific problem they would like the class to discuss (in bold), drawing on class materials and situating the article they have chosen to assign. This paper should also be posted on Canvas (Discussion) at least a week before the class date.

Come to class prepared to talk informally for five minutes about the issue and answer questions as needed. Students will be asked to fill out this form during class.

Course Schedule (subject to change)


All other readings will be provided on Canvas.

UNIT 1: THE PROBLEMS OF RESEARCH: Why should ethnography be ‘decolonized’? What lineages of critique shape the practice and underlying theory of participatory research today?

9.28: Introduction

Introduce course and discuss syllabus. Introduce research interests. Class ground rules developed and posted under collaborations on Canvas.

10.3: Ontologies, Epistemologies, and Methodologies
Sign-up for leading class AND inspiration presentation will be made available in the collaborations section of Canvas.


### 10.5: Imperialism and the Production of Knowledge
Inspiration Presentations. Discuss readings.


**View:**
[Wounded White Warrior Savior Photographer](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rdy5XSdCkz0)

**Due:** Constructive Feedback Postings from previous class

### 10.10: Workshop Brainstorming
Meet in groups of three-four to discuss workshop ideas.

**Due:** Constructive Feedback Postings from previous class

### 10.12: Reframing Power
Inspiration Presentations. Discuss reading.

**Readings for class:**


Due: Constructive Feedback Postings from previous class

10.17: Reframing Relationships

Inspiration Presentations. Discuss reading.


Due: Constructive Feedback Postings from previous class

UNIT 2: METHODS IN PRACTICE: What approaches, from interviews to videos, can ethnographers employ to enable greater participatory engagement? What practical issues arise when working with communities to generate knowledge?

10.19: Observation

Inspiration Presentations. Discuss reading.


Due: Constructive Feedback Postings from previous class

10.24: Interviews

Inspiration Presentations. Discuss reading.


Due: Workshop Proposal and Constructive Feedback Postings from previous class

10.26: Collaboration
Inspiration Presentations. Discuss reading.


Due: Constructive Feedback Postings from previous class

10.31: Critical Arts-Based Inquiry
Inspiration Presentations. Discuss reading.


Due: Constructive Feedback Postings from previous class

11.2: Resistance
Inspiration Presentations. Discuss reading.


Due: Constructive Feedback Postings from previous class

11.7: Analysis and Writing
Inspiration Presentations. Discuss assigned readings.


Due: Constructive Feedback Postings from previous class

Unit 3: STUDENTS WORKSHOPS: How can decolonizing research become integrated into graduate-level ethnographic projects? What resources and support, as well as challenges and barriers, do students face in doing engaged research currently?

11.9: Student Workshops
Jeff Smith (AFSC NW Indian Program Director) visit. Workshop student problems.

Due: Constructive Feedback Postings from previous class and Workshop Paper/Reading (from presenters)

Readings for class: Student papers and student-selected articles posted on Canvas (under discussions).

11.14: Student Workshops
Workshop student problems

Due: Workshop Paper/Reading (from presenters)

Readings for class: Student papers and student-selected articles posted on Canvas (under discussions).
11.16: Student Workshops
Workshop student problems

Due: Workshop Paper/Reading (from presenters)

Readings for class: Student papers and student-selected articles posted on Canvas (under discussions).

11.21: Student Workshops
Workshop student problems

Due: Workshop Paper/Reading (from presenters)

Readings for class: Student papers and student-selected articles posted on Canvas (under discussions).

11.23: Student Workshops
Workshop student problems

Due: Workshop Paper/Reading (from presenters)

Readings for class: Student papers and student-selected articles posted on Canvas (under discussions).

11.28: Student Workshops
Workshop student problems

Due: Workshop Paper/Reading (from presenters)

Readings for class: Student papers and student-selected articles posted on Canvas (under discussions).

11.30: Student Workshops
Workshop student problems

Due: Workshop Paper/Reading (from presenters)
Readings for class: Student papers and student-selected articles posted on Canvas (under discussions).

12.05: Student Workshops
Workshop student problems

Due: Workshop Paper/Reading (from presenters)

Readings for class: Student papers and student-selected articles posted on Canvas (under discussions).

12.07: Student Workshops
Workshop student problems

Due: Workshop Paper/Reading (from presenters)

Readings for class: Student papers and student-selected articles posted on Canvas (under discussions).

Assignments Summary:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon Oct 24, 2016</td>
<td><a href="https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1062926/assignments/3450950">Workshop Proposal</a> due by 1:30pm</td>
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<td></td>
<td><a href="https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1062926/assignments/3465414">Workshop Papers and Reading</a></td>
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