The core idea behind fieldwork research is the observation of human behavior in a specific social setting. In this class, students will be given an overview of the strategies, issues and challenges entailed in conducting this type of research. Students will learn by doing: each class member is required to conduct participant observation at a field site (mediated or face-to-face) of his/her choosing each week throughout the quarter.

As the quarter progresses, students will develop techniques to observe behavior and ask questions, as well as produce and analyze fieldwork data. By the quarter’s end, each student will produce an ethnographic account of behavior, sense-making and/or meaning construction within that field site. This account will be based on the close study of communication in a given community through extensive time at the site - observing, talking with members, taking notes, interviewing, and perhaps participating in activities alongside members. In order to allow students greater flexibility in conducting their fieldwork, the class will meet once a week.

This class will be both fieldwork and writing-intensive, requiring many hours at both the site and the computer each week. Fieldwork and writing assignments will begin the first week of class and develop iteratively. During the quarter, students will exchange and review fieldnotes within groups of 2-3, advise each other about the progress of their fieldwork, and provide written criticism of some of each other’s assignments and drafts. Additionally, readings and discussions will draw on insights of scholars across several fields (e.g., sociology, anthropology, education, etc.); however, the class will focus primarily on the study of communication-centered phenomena, broadly defined.

In order to maximize our 10 weeks together, students should have their field sites selected – and whatever necessary access and permission negotiated – before the fall quarter begins. The default option will be to conduct field research for the class in a public space. If it is likely that data collected during this class will be useful for a student’s research publications in the future, approval from UW IRB should be sought before the quarter begins with assistance from the student’s faculty advisor.

Required Texts
- Paul Atkinson et al. (eds.), Handbook of Ethnography, Sage, 2007
- Thomas R. Lindlof and Bryan C. Taylor, Qualitative Communication Research Methods, Sage, 2011 (Third Edition)
- John Van Maanen, Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography, University of Chicago, 2011
- Recommended (especially for those interested in online research): Christine Hine, Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, Embodied and Everyday, Bloomsbury, 2015
Assignments

Total possible points for the class: 200. To maximize your learning, aim to complete the week’s assigned readings before conducting the week’s fieldwork & composing fieldnotes.

- Fieldnotes (8): (5 pts each; 40 pts total) due by noon the Sunday before class. No credit if late. Fieldnotes should be generally be based on two, 1-hour fieldwork sessions each week [two hours of observation weekly].
- Journals (2): (5 pts each; 10 pts total); guidelines will be provided.
- Analyses (2): (5 pts each; 10 pts total); guidelines will be provided.
- Weekly deeper dive handout & presentation/discussion (25 pts): Consult 3-4 publications beyond those required for the course (unassigned chapters in course texts count). Create a 1-2 page summary handout drawing on those references and any readings assigned to date that are relevant; use bullet points to present key challenges, considerations, and/or strategies, and include an annotated bibliography of the publications you consulted. Bring a hard copy for each person in the class and post to Canvas. Present your findings and lead a discussion on the topic (30 min max).
- Comparison of ethnographies (25 pts): 3-4 page double-spaced essay comparing two book-length ethnographies, due anytime during weeks 6-8, and by Sunday November 26th at the latest. Guidelines will be provided.
- Final paper (15-20pp, ~1/3 data excerpts): draft of at least 10 pages due by noon on Sunday December 3rd (10 pts) final paper due by noon on Monday December 11th (50 pts). Guidelines will be provided.
- Participation: informed, constructive contributions to class discussions, and comments on each document each workgroup member posts before the start of class. (30 pts)

Course Schedule

Week 1, October 2: Getting started - Designing fieldwork-based research
In preparation for field site selection, read Lindlof and Taylor, Chapters 3 & 4

Week 2, October 9: Ethics & Politics; Observations & Fieldnotes
*Bring a list of your research questions to class

Fieldnotes #1: Lindlof & Taylor prompts, pp. 151-155. [due by Sunday 10/8 noon]

In preparation for your fieldwork this week and class read:
On research, ethics and politics:
- Lindlof and Taylor, Chapters 1 & 2
- Murphy and Dingwall, “The Ethics of Ethnography,” from HoE, pp. 339-351
- Miles & Huberman Chapter 3 “Ethical Issues in Analysis” [on Canvas]
- Recommended: George Steinmetz (ed), The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences, introduction and selections

On participant observation and field notes:
- Miles & Huberman Chapter 1 “Introduction” & Chapter 2 “Focusing and Bounding the Collection of Data: The Substantive Start” [on Canvas]
- Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, “Participant Observation and Fieldnotes,” from HoE, pp. 352-368
- Lindlof and Taylor, Chapter 5

Deeper Dive Topic: Validity and reliability in participant observation research
Week 3, October 16: Interviewing and Listening, Part 1

Fieldnotes #2: Sketch (see Emerson et al., HoE, p. 359) [due by Sunday 10/15 noon]
Journal #1: Complete exercise #3 from Lindlof & Taylor, p. 16) [due by Sunday 10/15 noon]

In preparation for your fieldwork this week and class read:
• Lindlof & Taylor Ch. 6 “Asking, Listening, and Telling”
• Heyl, “Ethnographic Interviewing,” from HoE, pp. 369-383
• On the intellectual contexts of ethnographic work: in the HoE, read Introduction to Part One and your choice of two chapters selected from 1-11, 29, and 30

Deeper Dive Topic: Negotiating and managing the participant-observer role

Week 4, October 23: Interviewing and Listening, Part 2 [class ending at 5pm today]

Fieldnotes #3: Conversation (see Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, HoE, p. 359-360) [due by Sunday 10/22 noon]

In preparation for your fieldwork this week and class read:

Deeper Dive Topic: Processing and cataloging field notes and interview data

Week 5, October 30: Domains of Ethnographic Fieldwork (including online)

Fieldnotes #4: Episode (see Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, HoE, p. 359) [due by Sunday 10/29 noon]
Journal #2: Complete exercise #3 from Lindlof and Taylor, p. 169, again [due by Sunday 10/29 noon]

In preparation for your fieldwork this week and class read:
• On domains of ethnographic work: in the HoE read the Introduction to Part Two and your choice of two chapters from chapters 12-19.
• Christine Hine, Ethnography for the Internet (2015, selections).

Deeper Dive Topic: Participant observation online

TENTATIVE VISIT: Jessica Beyer, UW Jackson School for International Studies
**Week 6, November 6: Interpreting Data I**

**Fieldnotes #5: Asides and commentaries (see Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, HoE, p. 361-362, and Lindlof & Taylor pp. 211-213) [due by Sunday 11/5 noon]**

In preparation for your fieldwork this week and class read:
- Lindlof & Taylor Ch. 7 “Qualitative Analysis and Interpretation”
- Fielding, “Computers in Qualitative Research,” Ch. 31 in HoE, pp. 453-467. Miles & Huberman, Ch. 4 “Early Steps in Analysis”
- Ball & Smith “Technologies of Realism? Ethnographic Uses of Photography and Film,” Ch. 21 from HoE

**Deeper Dive Topics:** Managing & analyzing visual data & artifacts  
Interpreting symbolic/nonverbal communication

**Week 7, November 13: Interpreting Data II – Atlas.ti Workshop Part 1, Savery 117, 5-6:20pm**

**Fieldnotes #6: In-process memos (see Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, p. 361-362, and Lindlof & Taylor pp. 213-214) [due by Sunday 11/12 noon]**

In preparation for your fieldwork this week and class read:
- Emerson, Fretz, Shaw, Ch. 5 “Pursuing Members’ Meanings” from Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, University of Chicago, 1995, pp. 108-141.
- Miles & Huberman Ch. 5 “Within-Case Displays: Exploring and Describing”

**Deeper Dive Topic:** Representing others’ perspectives and meanings while answering your own research questions

**Week 8, November 20: Interpreting Data III – Atlas.ti Workshop Part 2, 5-6:20 pm**

**Fieldnotes #7: Members’ meanings in greetings, Q/A, narratives (see Emerson, Fretz, Shaw) [due by Sunday 11/19 noon]**  
**Analysis I [due by Sunday 11/19 noon]**

In preparation for your fieldwork this week and class read:
- Miles & Huberman Ch. 6 “Within-Case Displays: Explaining and Predicting,”
- Miles & Huberman Ch. 9 “Matrix Displays,”
- Miles & Huberman Ch. 10 “Making Good Sense: Drawing and Verifying Conclusions”

**Deeper Dive Topic:** Multi-sited fieldwork
Week 9, November 27: Writing it up & Writing Workshop

Fieldnotes #8: Fieldnote tales (see Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, p. 359) [due by Sunday 11/26 noon]
Analysis #2 [due by Sunday 11/26 noon]

In preparation for your fieldwork this week and class read:
• Lindlof & Taylor Ch. 9 “Authoring and Writing”
• Emerson, Fretz, Shaw, Ch. 7 “Writing an Ethnography” from Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes, University of Chicago, 1995, pp. 169-210
• Miles & Huberman, Ch. 12 “Producing Reports,” Deeper Dive Topic: Collaborative fieldwork

Week 10, December 4: Reflections & Writing Workshop

No fieldnotes due
Final paper draft due by noon on Sunday December 3rd

In preparation for your fieldwork this week and class read:
• Van Maanen, Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography
• Lather, “Postmodernism, Post-structuralism and Post(Critical) Ethnography: Of Ruins, Aporias and Angels,” Ch. 33 from HoE pp. 477-492.
• Miles & Huberman, Ch. 12 “Concluding Remarks”

Final papers due by Monday December 11th on Canvas