

Collaborative Ethnography/Ethnographic Theory and Research Methods
Instructor: Yana Stainova | ATHROP 722 | Winter 2022
Thursdays: 2:30-5.30 pm | LRW 3001 (meetings on Zoom until February 7th)



By approaching collaboration as the foundation of ethnographic work, this course explores what it means to do collaborative ethnography. Our relationships are literally the units from which our projects materialize, our methods grow, and our ethnographic forms flourish. In this course, we will practice collaboration at every level of ethnographic research design: from co-conceptualizing a project, to co-building methodologies, to co-writing fieldnotes, to co-analyzing data, to co-producing ethnographies. The collaborative pedagogy in this class stems from the instructor's own long-term collaborative research project with Prof. Laura McTighe (Florida State University) in which we developed what we call "method-making in concert." For each of us, methodological creativity and accountability have been central to the research we have undertaken with our interlocutors in the field. Traditionally, methods have been treated as distinct from and instrumental to theory, and a means to an end, which is the final product of ethnography. However, we see methods as the center of conversations about theory, power, and coloniality. By working in collaboration, we aim to disrupt the hierarchies between university-based scholars and our co-locutors and related models of academic expertise, and to build instead the grounds of decolonial ethnographic work that can understand our world and also transform it. The students will engage in short-term virtual and in-person (in keeping with safety guidelines) fieldwork over the course of the semester. I will teach, and explore together with students, experimental methods and outcomes, and welcome multimodal ethnography projects that include experimental writing, drawing, visual, and sound recording.

Students will be divided into research pods/teams and will complete both classwork and research projects in tandem with one another.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. Make friends! (I'm not kidding!)
2. Practice and grow in these collaborative relationships as a foundation for ethnographic work;
3. Understand and put into practice the role of experimental ethnographic methods in theory-building;
4. Develop and implement a collaborative research plan: research questions, methods, and outcomes;
5. Produce an ethnography reflective of this course's invitation into collaborative and experimental work.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Cox, Aimee Meredith. *Shapeshifters: Black girls and the choreography of citizenship*. Duke University Press, 2015.
- Gonzalez, Martha. *Chican@ Artivistas: Music, Community, and Transborder Tactics in East Los Angeles*. University of Texas Press, 2020.
- Craig, Sienna. *The Ends of Kinship: Connecting Himalayan Lives between Nepal and New York*. University of Washington Press, 2020.
- Simpson, Audra. *Mohawk interruptus: Political life across the borders of settler states*. Duke University Press, 2014.

**The rest of the materials (such as articles and book excerpts) will be uploaded to Avenue to Learn.*

REQUIREMENTS:

Participation (30%)

You are expected to attend class having completed all of the required reading and ready to provide active, thoughtful contributions to seminar discussions and in-class activities. Each class meeting, we will spend the first half of class discussing the major themes from the week's readings, including the author's main points, what is at stake, who the author is writing for, and who the author is writing against. In the second half of class, we will workshop the weekly ethnographic assignment due for that day in order to refine the work completed and prepare for the next week's assignment.

Weekly Assignments (50%)

From weeks 3-12, you will complete a weekly writing assignment. These are cumulative and designed to support you in moving through each of the steps of collaborative ethnographic work in the course of our semester. Weekly writing assignments are due immediately before our class meeting. You will bring the assignment to seminar in order to receive feedback. Instructors will also periodically give you more detailed feedback. Peer and instructor feedback should be used to move you along to the next assignment. For example, feedback on your Week 3 Idea/Question will help you write your Week 4 Proposal, etc.

Final Ethnography (20%)

The final ethnography is a workshopped version of the ethnography you have been building collaboratively throughout the semester.

PART I: MAKING FRIENDS

Week 1: January 13: Introductions

Week 2: January 20 – Generous Reading + Refining Question in Pairs (Laura McTighe visit to class)

ASSIGNMENT: DRAFT RESEARCH QUESTION/ PROJECT IDEA (250 words)

- McTighe, Laura, and with Women With A Vision (WWAV). "Theory on the Ground: Ethnography, Religio-Racial Study, and the Spiritual Work of Building Otherwise." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 88, no. 2 (2020): 407-439.
- Stainova, Yana. "Enchantment as Method." *Anthropology and Humanism* 44, no. 2 (2019): 214-230.

PART 2: DEVELOP A SHARED QUESTION

Gonzalez, Martha. *Chican@ Artivistas: Music, Community, and Transborder Tactics in East Los Angeles*. University of Texas Press, 2020.

Week 3: January 27 – Refining Proposal in Pairs (Martha Gonzalez visit to class)

ASSIGNMENT: DRAFT A QUESTION/IDEA + ACCOUNTABILITY PRACTICES

- First half of *Chican@ Artivistas*
- Emergent Strategy: <https://t.co/c9VNp6CziH?amp=1>
- Black Space Manifesto: <https://www.blackspace.org/manifesto>

Week 4: February 3 – Refine question in pairs

ASSIGNMENT: WRITE FULL PROPOSAL

- Second half of *Chican@ Artivistas*
- “Method-making in concert” grant text

PART 3: PLAN AND PRACTICE YOUR METHODS

Cox, Aimee Meredith. *Shapeshifters: Black girls and the choreography of citizenship*. Duke University Press, 2015.

Week 5: February 10 – Sensory Beginnings, Ethnographic Emplacement

ASSIGNMENT: FIRST VISIT, FIVE SENSES FIELDNOTES

- Part I: *Shapeshifters*
- “Ethnographic Ableism: Structural Silencing of Physical Disability in Anthropological Research” <https://www.thenewethnographer.org/the-new-ethnographer/2018/08/20/ethnographic-ableism-structural-silencing-of-physical-disability-in-anthropological-research>

Week 6: February 17 – Deep Listening

ASSIGNMENT: SECOND VISIT + FIELDNOTES TO SELF

- Part II: *Shapeshifters*

- Berry, Maya, Claudia Chávez Argüelles, Shanya Cordis, Sarah Ihmoud, and Elizabeth Velásquez Estrada. 2017. "Toward a Fugitive Anthropology: Gender, Race, and Violence in the Field." *Cultural Anthropology* 32: 537-565.

BREAK: February 24

Week 7: March 3 – Reflections on Collaborative Note-Taking

ASSIGNMENT: THIRD VISIT + FIELDWORK CORRESPONDENCE

- Part III: *Shapeshifters*
- Excerpts from letters between Yana and Laura
- "Fieldwork Correspondence" in Cerwonka, Allaine, and Liisa H. Malkki. *Improvising theory: Process and temporality in ethnographic fieldwork*. University of Chicago Press, 2008

PART 4: ANALYZE YOUR DATA

Craig, Sienna. *The Ends of Kinship: Connecting Himalayan Lives between Nepal and New York*. University of Washington Press, 2020.

Week 8: March 10 – Making-Meaning Together (Sienna Craig visits our class)

ASSIGNMENT: BRAINSTORM/SWAP NOTE TAKING WHILE OTHER TALKS

- Part I and Part II: *The Ends of Kinship*
- Stewart, Kathleen (2008) "Weak Theory in an Unfinished World," *Journal of Folklore Research*, Vol. 45, No. 1, 2008.

Week 9: March 17 – Concept-Making in Concert

ASSIGNMENT: COME UP WITH KEY CONCEPTS

- Part III and Part IV: *The Ends of Kinship*
- Introduction + Selections from "An Otherwise Anthropology":
<https://culanth.org/fieldsights/series/an-otherwise-anthropology>

Week 10: March 24 – Sharing the Load

ASSIGNMENT: ETHNOGRAPHY OUTLINE + ROLE DISTRIBUTION

- Part V and Part VI + Conclusion: *The Ends of Kinship*
- Johanna Hedva, "Sick Woman Theory" <http://www.maskmagazine.com/not-again/struggle/sick-woman-theory>

PART 5: PRODUCE AN ETHNOGRAPHY

Simpson, Audra. *Mohawk interruptus: Political life across the borders of settler states*. Duke University Press, 2014.

Week 11: March 31 – Finding a Genre

ASSIGNMENT: CHOOSE AND IMPROVISE WITH A FORMAT

- Introduction + Chapters 1-3: *Mohawk Interruptus*
- Hamdy, Sherine, Coleman Nye et al. 2017. *Lissa: A Story About Medical Promise, Friendship, and Revolution*. North York, Ontario, Canada: University of Toronto Press. Pp. 72-135; 222-235.

Recommended:

- “Fieldnotes to First Drafts” from AnthroWrites website
(<https://www.anthrowrites.com/fieldnotefirstdraft>)

Week 12: April 7: Imagining the Social Life of Your Work

ASSIGNMENT: REVISE ETHNOGRAPHY THINKING ABOUT AUDIENCE AND WORK IT DOES IN THE WORLD

- Chapters 4-6 + Conclusion: *Mohawk Interruptus*

FINAL ETHNOGRAPHIES DUE APRIL 13

****15-20 pages for text, length for experimental ethnographies to be determined in conversation with instructor**