

ANTHROPOLOGY 3P03 DOING ETHNOGRAPHY

Winter 2019

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Lecture: Wednesday, 2:30-5:20 p.m.,
DSB AB 103

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 1:30-2:30 p.m.

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Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the technique of participant-observation ethnographic fieldwork in cultural anthropology. Through readings, lectures and digital resources, the course will present students with the opportunity to consider the ethical, philosophical and practical issues faced by cultural anthropologists doing field research. Students who are from fields other than anthropology that employ ethnographic methods are welcome to take the course, with instructor's permission.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- be familiar with the history of participant-observation fieldwork and with the way it is currently practiced and
- design, carry out and write their own "mini-ethnographies."

Required Materials and Texts

- *Ethnography Essentials: Designing, Conducting and Presenting Your Research.* Julian M. Murchison. John Wiley and Sons, 2010.
- *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City.* Alice Goffman. Picador, 2015.

Class Format

Seminar

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Weekly Reading Commentaries – 40%, due each week on Avenue to Learn
2. Discussion Participation – 20%, due each week in class
3. Mini-Ethnography Proposal – 10%, due Jan. 23, 2019 on Avenue to Learn, revised proposal due Feb. 6 on Avenue to Learn
4. Mini-Ethnography Final Ethnography – 25%, due April 3, 2019 on Avenue to Learn
5. Mini-Ethnography Short Presentation – 5%, due April 3, 2019 in class

Course Evaluation – Details

Assignment 1 Weekly Reading Commentaries (40%), due each week before 2:30 p.m. Wednesday on Avenue to Learn

Every student will be responsible for reading all the assigned weekly readings and for preparing a two-page (typed, 12 point font, 1" margins, double-spaced) commentary on the readings listed in the syllabus every week. For each book chapter, the commentary should summarize the author's argument and formulate a critique, comment or question to be raised during seminar discussion. Your two-page commentary should deal with all

the readings for the week. Commentaries are to be handed in on Avenue to Learn prior to the start of class each week and will be graded out of 10. The Avenue submission portal will be closed each Wednesday at 2:30 p.m. Since the rationale for preparing the commentaries is to prepare you for participation in class discussion, papers will **NOT BE ACCEPTED** after the beginning of class without MSAF or Faculty of Social Sciences documentation, except in the case of students with SAS accommodations, who should see Dr. Badone as soon as possible at the beginning of the semester.

Assignment 2 Discussion Participation (20%), due each week in class

Discussion participation will be graded out of 10 each week. If you are absent without MSAF or Faculty of Social Sciences documentation, you will receive a grade of zero on discussion participation for that class. If you are absent with MSAF or Faculty of Social Sciences documentation, you will receive a grade of 5 out of 10 for participation.

Assignment 3 Mini-Ethnography Proposal (10%), due Jan. 23, 2019 before 2:30 p.m. on Avenue to Learn; revised proposal due Feb. 6, 2019 before 2:30 p.m. on Avenue to Learn for approval and grade

1. Choose a site for your ethnography. Pick a social setting that interests you. Possible fieldwork sites include: activities in the David Braley Centre, clubs on campus, sports events (live or watching on TV in a group setting), a café, a nightclub, a workplace (could be where you work), a department on campus, Mills Library, MUSC. Do preliminary visits to assess the feasibility of fieldwork at your site. Please do not pick a site that would involve observing or interviewing people under 18 or people who lack the capacity to consent to participation in a research project.
2. Choose a research theme to investigate. Your theme could be something like: gender differences in use of space and social roles, power relationships and social hierarchy, how people understand their experience as meaningful, construction of group identity, shared ideals and values. The theme you choose should be one that is practical to investigate at your chosen site.
3. Prepare a fieldwork proposal. List the site and research theme you have chosen. Write a 500 word summary of the research you hope to carry out and how you plan to do it. The summary should be followed by a list of three published works by cultural anthropologists (books or journal articles) that relate to your topic. Using the samples available on Avenue to Learn and the McMaster Research Ethics Board website, prepare a recruitment poster, email recruitment script (holder of participants' contact information), oral recruitment script, letter of information and consent and interview question list. All of these materials are part of your proposal.
4. Hand in your proposal as a Word document on Avenue by 2:30 p.m. on Jan. 23, do any requested revisions and re-submit it on Avenue for approval and grade by 2:30 p.m. on Feb. 6.

Assignment 4 Mini-Ethnography Final Ethnography (25%), due April 3, 2019, before 2:30 p.m. on Avenue to Learn

1. Take proposal to someone in a position of authority at your fieldwork site to ask permission to carry out the mini-ethnography.
2. Once you have received permission, begin participant-observation fieldwork. Visit the site for at least one hour on at least three occasions. Talk to people informally and participate in activities at the site. Using your recruitment poster and oral script, recruit five people for interviews. You can leave copies of the recruitment poster at the site so that people interested in being interviewed can contact you. Ask the holder of participants' contact information to use your email recruitment script to contact people who you are unable to meet during participant-observation sessions at the site. Make two copies of your letter of information and consent for each interview that you carry out: one copy should be signed and returned to you; the other is for the participant to keep.
3. After each participant-observation session, write fieldnotes about what goes on at the site, people you encountered and conversations you had, as well as activities in which you participated. Pay special attention to details that relate to your theme of investigation, but make sure you get a holistic overview of the site. Check in with Dr. Badone weekly in class, office hours or by email to discuss any problems arising during fieldwork.
4. Interview five participants. Use your list of interview questions as a guide, but allow participants to talk about issues that are important to them, even if these issues are not on your interview guide. Interviews should be open-ended and informal. Plan to talk to each participant for approximately 30 minutes, but be prepared for the interview to be longer or shorter. At the beginning of your interviews, provide participants with your Letter of Information and Consent. Ask participants to sign the consent form. Ask them if it is OK for you to take notes or to tape record the interview. Remind them at the start of the interview that they are free to withdraw (stop participating in the interview) at any point, and that they do not need to answer any question that they do not want to answer. Remind them that if they decide to withdraw, they can decide whether or not you will be able to use the data they have provided. Be sensitive during the interview to your participant's reactions. If a participant seems upset or uncomfortable, ask them if they wish to skip the question, talk about another topic, or withdraw from the interview. At the end of the interview, make sure to thank your participant, and ask them if they would like to receive a summary of your ethnography. If so, ask them to provide you with their contact information (email address, snail mail address)
5. Make sure that your fieldnotes, tape-recordings and transcribed interviews are securely stored on a password protected computer. Hard copy fieldnotes and USB drives should be kept in a locked desk drawer or storage container. All electronic

and hard copy data should be destroyed at the end of the semester (by May 15, 2019) after you have handed in your mini-ethnography.

6. Transcribe interviews and do in-depth fieldnotes based on your notes taken during the interview.
7. Read through your fieldnotes and transcribed interviews to look for themes. Organize your material according to themes.
8. Drawing on the three published sources listed in your proposal plus two additional sources relating to your topic of research, develop a “thesis” or argument for your ethnography. Use your data from fieldnotes and interviews to support your argument.
9. Write your mini-ethnography. It should consist of three sections. The first should be an introduction that describes the ethnographic setting, states your theme of research and thesis, and reviews relevant literature from other anthropological sources. The second section should present the evidence that you have found through fieldwork to support your thesis. The concluding section should summarize your findings, state the limitations of your research and indicate how it relates to other anthropological works on your topic. Do your findings confirm, correlate with, or differ from, other researchers’ work? The mini-ethnography should be approximately 7-10 pages in length, typed and double spaced (12 point font, 1” margins). Include a 500 word “executive summary” of your report that can be circulated to interested participants after you receive your grade on the assignment and feedback from Dr. Badone.
10. Hand in your mini-ethnography through Avenue to Learn.
11. Grades and comments on the mini-ethnographies will be available after April 24, 2019. Dr. Badone will schedule special office hours for feed-back on the assignments.
12. If necessary, revise your executive summary after receiving comments from Dr. Badone.
13. Circulate the executive summary to interested participants via email or in hard copy.

Assignment 5 Mini-Ethnography Short Presentation (5%), due April 3, 2019 in class

14. Using your executive summary, prepare a five-minute power point presentation about your fieldwork to share with the class on April 3. Email your presentation to Dr. Badone by 5 p.m. on April 2, so that all presentations can be merged for smooth transitions.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 (January 9)

Introduction

Fieldwork in Brittany, France

Alice Goffman TED Talk

In-class Activity: Brainstorm Ideas for Mini-Ethnography

Readings: no readings

Week 2 (January 16)

Choosing a Topic, Research Design and Ethics

In-class Activities: Visit McMaster Research Ethics Board Website

<http://reo.mcmaster.ca> for information on ethics review procedures for research at McMaster, Complete Modules of the TCPS2 CORE training program

Readings: Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 in *Ethnography Essentials*

Notes: Commentary 1 due

Week 3 (January 23)

Film: 13th

Readings: no readings

Notes: Proposal Due

Week 4 (January 30)

The Basics of Fieldwork

In-class Activity: Proposal Feedback

Readings: chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 in *Ethnography Essentials*

Notes: Proposals Returned for Revision, Commentary 2 due

Week 5 (February 6)

Talking, Listening and Note-taking

Readings: Chapters 9, 10, 11 in *Ethnography Essentials*

Notes: Revised Proposal Due, Commentary 3 due

Week 6 (February 13)

Dilemmas and Positioning in Fieldwork

Readings: "Appendix: A Methodological Note" in *On the Run*

Notes: Commentary 4 due

Week 7 (February 27)

Doing Ethnography (Visiting Speaker, Jeremy Cohen?)

In-class Activity: Issues Arising in Fieldwork for Mini-Ethnography

Readings: Prologue, Preface, Introduction, chapters 1, 2 in *On the Run*

Notes: Commentary 5 due

Week 8 (March 6)

Participant-Observation

In-class Activity: Writing Fieldnotes

Readings: chapters 3, 4, 5 in *On the Run*

Notes: Commentary 6 due

Week 9 (March 13)

Analysis (Visiting Speaker, Jeremy Cohen?)

In-class Activity: Looking for Themes in Your Fieldnotes

Readings: chapters 6, 7, Conclusion, Epilogue in *On the Run*

Notes: Commentary 7 due

Week 10 (March 20)

Beginning to Write

In Class Activity: From Observations to Theory

Readings: Chapters 12, 13, 14, 15 in *Ethnography Essentials*

Notes: Commentary 8 due

Week 11 (March 27)

Completing the Ethnography

In Class Activity: Sharing Drafts – Writing Workshop

Readings: “The Changeling,” by Gideon Lewis-Kraus. *New York Times Magazine*, January 17, 2016.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/17/magazine/the-trials-of-alice-goffman.html>

Notes: Commentary 9 due

Week 12 (April 3)

Mini-Ethnography Short Presentations

Readings: no readings

Notes: Short Presentation Due in Class, submit electronic copy of final Mini-Ethnography to Avenue to Learn

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

Except for class participation and presentations, all assignments will be submitted electronically through Avenue to Learn in Word format.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments

Since the rationale for preparing the weekly reading commentaries is to prepare you for participation in class discussion, commentaries will **NOT BE ACCEPTED** after the beginning of class without MSAF or Faculty Office documentation, except in the case of students with SAS accommodations, who should see Dr. Badone as soon as possible at the beginning of the semester. The Avenue drop-box for weekly commentaries will close at 2:30 p.m. each Wednesday.

Late proposals and final mini-ethnographies will have one point deducted for each day late, unless the student has MSAF or Faculty Office documentation, except in the case of students with SAS accommodations.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

If you are absent without MSAF or Faculty of Social Sciences documentation, you will receive a grade of zero on discussion participation for that class. If you are absent with MSAF or Faculty Office documentation, you will receive a grade of 5 out of 10 for participation.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first

and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please to go www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility

Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO)

The University recognizes that, on occasion, the timing of a student's religious, Indigenous, or spiritual observances and that of their academic obligations may conflict. In such cases, the University will provide reasonable academic accommodation for students that is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Please review the [RISO information for students in the Faculty of Social Sciences](#) about how to request accommodation.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Privacy Protection

In accordance with regulations set out by the Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act, the University will not allow return of graded materials by placing them in boxes in departmental offices or classrooms so that students may retrieve their papers themselves; tests and assignments must be returned directly to the student. Similarly, grades for assignments for courses may only be posted using the last 5 digits of the student number as the identifying data. The following possibilities exist for return of graded materials:

1. Direct return of materials to students in class;
2. Return of materials to students during office hours;
3. Students attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with assignments for return by mail;
4. Submit/grade/return papers electronically.

Arrangements for the return of assignments from the options above will be finalized during the first class.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.