

ANTH 543: Foundations of Ethnographic Research
Spring 2024; T R 3:30-4:45 pm; WALNT 105

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Description: In this seminar, students explore ethnographic research methods used in cultural anthropology and in the social and behavioral sciences more generally. In addition to critical consideration of course texts, students pursue hands-on methodological exercises that are meant to enhance understanding of key topics. Students also prepare a draft of a research grant related to their current interests. The class promotes the idea that attention to theory, careful research design, and thoughtful data collection and analysis strategies can produce research that provides rich insights into human experience as shaped by culture. Course concepts and techniques are demonstrated via class activities, discussions, and exercises on actual data, including some collected by students themselves.

Aims: This course aims to provide students with an understanding of the foundations of ethnographic research methods. It is primarily directed towards students: *i.* hoping to develop tools and perspectives relevant to anthropological and related social and behavioral scientific research; *ii.* enrolled in graduate study in anthropology or in related social, behavioral, or psychological sciences at the MA or PhD level, or considering enrolling in such programs and looking to develop methods relevant to their fields of study; *iii.* wanting to enrich their understanding of anthropology or related fields by familiarizing themselves with their fields' methods; *iv.* hoping to work as professional anthropologists and applied researchers engaged with solving practical real-world problems related to health, the environment, community dynamics, international development, and other topics; *v.* working in fields where anthropological methods, including those related to collaborative, participatory, community-based, and public health initiatives, are important to solving practical, real-world problems of broad public interest.

Readings (in the order considered this semester): *Ethnography: Step-by-Step* (Fetterman, abbreviated **Ethnography** on this syllabus); *Qualitative Literacy: A Guide to Evaluating Ethnographic and Interview Research* (Small & Calarco, **Qual Lit**), *Data Analysis in Qualitative Research: Theorizing with Abductive Analysis* (Timmermans & Tavory, **Abductive**); *Rapid Ethnographic Assessments: A Practical Approach and Toolkit for Collaborative Community Research* (Sangaramoorthy & Kroeger, **Rapid**). Additional texts will be posted on **Canvas**.

Assignments and Grading (with rough due dates):

1. IRB training in CITI modules (wk 4/7): **5%**.
2. Two weekly presentations (signup at beginning of semester): **20%** (10% each).
3. Participation in discussions & weekly activities: **10%**.
4. Three assignments (wk 5, 10, 14): **45%** of final grade (15% each).
5. Grant proposal (wk 17/ finals week): **20%**.

Process: The course follows a round-table seminar format with intensive student-led discussions and presentations. To participate meaningfully in class, and to ensure the quality of our discussions, students must keep up with assigned readings, completing all readings by Tuesday each week. Students' final grants will typically be modeled on a U.S. National Science Foundation style proposal (termed *DDIG* grants, for "Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grants"); however, I will be flexible here, adjusting to student interests. Note that the course adheres to the Academic Integrity Policy of the General

Catalog and the Student Conduct Code. Any breach of these policies and codes will be taken seriously. Also, students should be aware that the contents of this syllabus—including due dates and assigned readings—may change. *Students* are responsible for keeping track of these changes through regular class attendance and communication with myself and others in the seminar.

TOPICS AND READINGS

Part I: Foundations of Ethnographic Research

Week 1: Introduction to ethnographic research (Jan. 16, 18)

Readings: **Ethnography**, Front matter, Ch. 1; Canvas: Becker, Problems of inference and proof in participant observation

Week 2: Foundations of ethnographic research; Fieldnotes (Jan. 23, 25)

Readings: **Ethnography**, Ch. 2-4; Canvas: Emerson et al., *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Ch. 2: In the field: Participating, observing, and jotting notes

Week 3: Foundations, conclude; Research ethics & IRBs (Jan. 30, Feb. 1)

Readings: **Ethnography**, Ch. 5-7, end matter; Canvas: Emerson et al., *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Ch. 3: Writing fieldnotes I: At the desk, creating scenes on a page

Part II: Data Collection; Research Design

Week 4: Data collection (Feb. 6, 8)

Readings: **Qual Lit**, Preface, Intro., Ch. 1; Canvas: Levy and Hollan, Person-centered interviewing and observations

Recommended: Make progress in CITI modules completion

Week 5: Data collection, cont. (Feb. 13, 15)

Readings: **Qual Lit**, Ch. 2 & 3; **Rapid**, Appendices; Canvas: Hennick & Kaiser, Sample sizes for saturation in qualitative research

Assignment 1: Fieldnotes

Due, Friday, Feb. 16th, 6pm

Week 6: Data collection, conclude; ethnography and causality (Feb. 20, 22)

Readings: **Qual Lit**, Ch. 4, 5, Conclusion, end matter (esp. note on proposals); Canvas: Lukka, Exploring the possibilities for causal explanation in interpretive research; Snodgrass et al., “Causal explanation in ethnographic research: A guide to research design and data collection and analysis

Interlude, Grant writing

Week 7: Grant writing, cont. (Feb. 27, 29)

Readings: Canvas: Przeworski & Salomon, On the art of writing proposals; Silverman, Writing grant proposals for anthropological research; Tavory & Timmermans, Appendix: A synopsis of abductive analysis; Sample grants, tba

CITI modules completion due, Friday, March 1st, 6pm

Part III: Data Analysis

Week 8: Data analysis (March 5, 7)

Readings: **Abduction**, Ch. 1-3; Canvas: Ryan & Bernard, Techniques to identify themes

Week 9: ****Spring Break, No Class**** (March 9-17)

Week 10: Data Analysis, cont. (March 19, 21)

Readings: **Abduction**, Ch. 4-6; Canvas: Snodgrass et al., An iterative approach to qualitative data analysis: Using theme, cultural models, and content analyses to discover and confirm a grounded theory of how gaming inculcates resilience (with appendices in Word doc version); Recommended: **Systematic Methods**, Ch. 7: Text analysis

Assignment 2: Person-centered interview or draft of key grant sections
Due, Friday, March 22nd, 6pm

Week 11: Data Analysis, conclude (March 26, 28)

Readings: **Abduction**, Ch. 7-9, end matter; Canvas: Snodgrass et al., Causal inference in ethnographic research: Refining explanations with abductive logic, strength of evidence assessments, and graphical models

Part IV: Mixed Methods Research; Applications

Week 12: Mixed methods research in psychological anthropology (April 2, 4)

Readings: Canvas: **Systematic Methods**, Foreword, Ch 1-3; Dressler & Oths, Social survey methods (Ch15 in Bernard & Gravlee edited Handbook)

Resources: Visual Anthropac – Free Lists, <http://www.analytictech.com/anthropac/anthropac.htm>

Resources: **System** Ch. 3 free list supplementary material, <https://www.routledge.com/Systematic-Methods-for-Analyzing-Culture-A-Practical-Guide/II-Snodgrass-Polzer-Nixon/p/book/9780367551513>

Week 13: Mixed methods research in psychological anthropology, cont. (April 9, 11)

Readings: Canvas: **Systematic Methods**, Ch 4; Snodgrass et al., Ethnographic methods for identifying cultural concepts of distress: Developing reliable and valid measures (with appendices in Word doc version)

Resources: Visual Anthropac – Pile Sorts, <http://www.analytictech.com/anthropac/anthropac.htm>

Resources: **Systematic Methods**, Ch. 4 pile sort supplementary material, <https://www.routledge.com/Systematic-Methods-for-Analyzing-Culture-A-Practical-Guide/II-Snodgrass-Polzer-Nixon/p/book/9780367551513>

Week 14: Mixed methods research in collaborative & community-based research (April 16, 18)

Readings: **Rapid**, Front matter, Ch. 1-3

Assignment 3: Text analysis or field survey design & distribution or cultural domain analysis writeup
Due, Friday, April 19th, 6pm

Week 15: Mixed methods research in collaborative & community-based research, cont. (April 23, 25)

Readings: **Rapid**, Ch. 4-7, revisit Appendices

Conclude: Grant Workshop and Presentation

Week 16: Grant Presentations (April 30, May 2)

Presentations of grant drafts, April 30th, May 2nd
***Grants, due Wed., May 8th, 6pm ***