Advanced Qualitative Methods

Course Syllabus
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Comm 798.001 – Fall 2017
Wednesday: 5:45 – 8:35pm
Location: Murphey Hall 222

Professor
Torin Monahan, Ph.D.
Office: 308 Bingham Hall
Email: torin.monahan@unc.edu
Office Hours: by appt.

Course Description
The world is hard to crack. Fortunately, there are tools and techniques to help one make sense of complex social, cultural, and political-economic processes. This explicitly interdisciplinary seminar is designed to give students in-depth exposure to ethnographic and related research methods, including participant observation, interviews, action research, photography, and more. Students will also learn to analyze and evaluate qualitative data (e.g., field notes, interview transcripts, websites, and documents). To contextualize the focus on methods, we will read some key ethnographic works and trace the development of related theory over the past few decades. The emphasis will be on global and transnational issues, which have resonance in localities in all countries, including the U.S. [This course will count as an elective in UNC’s Graduate Certificate Program in Participatory Research.]

Grading
Participation 10%
Observational Assignment 25%
Interview Assignment 25%
Research Proposal 40%

Course Expectations
Attendance: This class will be conducted as a seminar with a focus on in-class discussion. Because of this format, you are expected to attend all classes for the full scheduled time. Excessive tardiness will be counted as an absence. Provided you hand in all due materials on time, you can miss one class throughout the semester without penalty.

Reading: Complete all readings (and other assignments) prior to the class meeting for which they are scheduled. Most of the readings will be drawn from the required texts for the course or articles posted to Sakai. You must bring readings (or copies of them) to class for the dates they are assigned. See the course outline below for details.

Participation: Through communication, ideas are formed, revised, borrowed, and developed. It is through argument, description, explanation, and improvisation – within a community – that
individual learning flourishes. This course requires full participation (including active listening, facilitating, note-taking, and question-asking) to create an environment of open and shared learning. An effective participant is not someone who simply talks frequently, but someone who reliably offers thoughtful insights that help others to learn.

We will have weekly common readings around which we will focus our discussion. Each class meeting will begin with some contextual background provided by me and then proceed to a brief summary of the arguments made in the reading. Next, we will generate an in-depth critique of the arguments and then pursue questions sparked by the reading or discussion — as guided by the overarching course goals. Each student should prepare for these steps in advance of the seminar meeting.

Technology: Laptop computers and other portable technologies should be used in class only as learning-facilitation tools. During class, it is not acceptable to play games, send email, surf the web, answer cell phones, text message, or engage in other non-class-related activities. Your participation grade will be penalized if you break this rule. Why? Not only do these practices negatively affect your learning and participation, but they also distract others and create an environment of disrespect.

Writing: There will be three writing assignments in the course. The first will be a detailed (4,000 word) ethnographic description and analysis of an unfamiliar place or event (due September 20). The second will be a full transcription and 1,500-word analysis of an interview with a seminar colleague about her or his future research (due November 1). It is recommended that you use transcription software, such as “Express Scribe” or “Transcrivia,” to assist with completing this assignment. The third will be an 8,000-word research proposal, including a title, abstract, statement of problem, research questions, hypotheses, research site(s), and methods. At a minimum, the methods section should include information about your data collection (e.g., how you will obtain access, what you will do, how you will protect human subjects), how you will code and analyze your data, the feasibility of the project, your contingency plans, and the project timeline (due December 6). More information about these assignments will be provided in the seminar. Please use 12-point Times New Roman font, 1” margins, and double-spaced lines. Do not use cover pages or folders of any kind. All papers must be stapled or they will not be accepted. No late or emailed writing assignments will be accepted.

I reserve the right to distribute unannounced quizzes on the reading or lecture material. Any missed points on these quizzes will be deducted from your participation grade. Quizzes may not be made-up if you are absent.

Academic Honesty
In order to avoid plagiarism, your assignments must provide full citations for all references: direct quotes, summaries, or ideas. Make sure you put all quotes in quotation marks and include references. While you are encouraged to develop your thinking with your peers, you cannot use their material without citing it. Work from other courses will not be accepted in this course. Allowing your writing to be copied by another student is also considered cheating. Please review the Honor Code for complete guidelines on academic honesty: http://studentconduct.unc.edu/. If you have any questions about how to avoid plagiarism, do not hesitate to get in touch with me.
**Gender-Fair Language**
Language structures thought and action. Biases in language can (and do) naturalize inequalities. Imprecise language also signifies un-interrogated values and sloppy thinking. For all of these reasons, the use of gender-fair language is expected in this course. For example, do not use words like “mankind” or “men” when referring to people in general; alternate between “she” and “he” instead of always using “he,” or construct sentences in the plural instead of the singular so you can use “they” or “them” and avoid the problem altogether.

**ESL/LD Students**
Course requirements can be adjusted to serve the needs and capabilities of ESL and LD students. Please speak with the professor during the first two weeks of class to make arrangements. Students may be advised to attend additional sessions during the professor’s office hours so they can draw comparable value from the course.

**Required Texts**


Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Week One: Introductions: Thinking about Ethnographic Methods

August 23: Introductory Discussion

Readings:

Week Two: Youth and Cultures of Punishment

August 30:

Readings:

Week Three: Rendering Global Complexity

September 6:

Readings:

Week Four: Fieldnotes

September 13:

Readings:

Film: *Kitchen Stories*
Week Five: Class Interfaces in Service Work

September 20:
**Readings:**

[Observational Paper Due]

Week Six: Entrepreneurial Dreams

September 27:
**Readings:**

Week Seven: Contested Transparency and the State

October 4:
**Readings:**

Week Eight: Gaining Access & Interviewing

October 11:
**Readings:**
- Berg and Lune, *Qualitative Research Methods*, Ch.4.

Week Nine: Fall Break

October 18: No Class.

Week Ten: Addiction, Technology, and Zones of Extraction

October 25:
**Readings:**
Week Eleven: Grounded Theory

November 1:

Readings:

[Interview Transcriptions and Analysis due]

Week Twelve: Visualizing the Field

November 8:

Readings:

Week Thirteen: NCA Conference Week

November 15: No Class

Week Fourteen: Thanksgiving

November 22: No Class
Week Fifteen: Participation and Power

November 29:

**Readings:**

- Berg and Lune, *Qualitative Research Methods*, Ch.7.

*[Bring to class copies of your research problem, questions and hypotheses]*

Week Sixteen:

December 6:

- No class meeting.
- **Research Proposals due**