

Qualitative Methods for Technoscience

Course Syllabus

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Comm 798.001 – Spring 2014

Monday: 6:00 – 8:50pm

Location: Hamilton Hall 0517

Professor

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Office Hours: Monday 5-6pm or by appt.

Course Description

The worlds of science, technology, and medicine exert a profound influence on communities in all cultural contexts. Such domains also introduce unique challenges for scholars committed to engaged or participatory approaches to research, in part because of institutional resistance to activists groups that one may choose to study, difficulties in gaining access to elite groups, and the problematics of collaborating with organizations that may be creating dangerous conditions for others. This explicitly interdisciplinary seminar will tackle these ethical and practical issues while giving students in-depth exposure to ethnographic and related research methods, including participant observation, action research, interviews, photography, and more. Students will also learn to analyze and evaluate qualitative data (e.g., field notes, interview transcripts, websites, and documents). In addition to the focus on methods, we will read some key ethnographic works on technoscientific worlds 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. Close readings of theoretical texts will be required. [*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 February 10). **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 March 24). It is recommended that you use transcription software, such as “Express Scribe” or “Transcriba,” to assist with completing this assignment. **The third** will be a 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 April 28). 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

Berg, Bruce L., and Howard Lune. 2011. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. 8th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson.

Berger, Michele Tracy. 2004. *Workable Sisterhood: The Political Journey of Stigmatized Women with HIV/AIDS*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Bourgois, Philippe. 1995. *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Braverman, Irus. 2013. *Zooland: The Institution of Captivity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. London: Sage Publications.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Eubanks, Virginia. 2011. *Digital Dead End: Fighting for Social Justice in the Information Age*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Juris, Jeffrey S. 2008. *Networking Futures: The Movements Against Corporate Globalization*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Neff, Gina. 2012. *Venture labor: Work and the burden of risk in innovative industries*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Tickin, Miriam Iris. 2011. *Casualties of Care: Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Week One: Introductions: Thinking about Ethnographic Methods

January 13: Introductory Discussion

Readings:

- Marcus, George E. 1995. Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24:95-117.
- Berg and Lune, *Qualitative Research Methods*, Chts.1-2.
- Monahan, Torin, and Jill A. Fisher. 2010. Benefits of “Observer Effects”: Lessons from the Field. *Qualitative Research* 10 (3):357-376.

Week Two: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

January 20: No Class.

Week Three: Marginalization and Danger

January 27:

Readings:

- Bourgois, Philippe. 1995. *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Week Four: Fieldnotes

February 3:

Readings:

- Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Film: *Kitchen Stories*

Week Five: Sociotechnical Institutions

February 10:

Readings:

- Braverman, Irus. 2013. *Zooland: The Institution of Captivity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

[Observational Paper Due]

Week Six: Politics of Law and Care

February 17:

Readings:

- Ticktin, Miriam Iris. 2011. *Casualties of Care: Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Week Seven: Studying Up

February 24:

Readings:

- Neff, Gina. 2012. *Venture labor: Work and the burden of risk in innovative industries*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Nader, Laura. 1972. Up the Anthropologist-Perspectives Gained from Studying Up. In *Reinventing Anthropology*, edited by D. H. Hymes. New York: Pantheon Books, 285-31.

Week Eight: Gaining Access & Interviewing

March 3:

Readings:

- Patton, Michael Quinn. 2002. Qualitative Interviewing. In *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 339-428.
- Berg and Lune, *Qualitative Research Methods*, Chpt.4.
- Monahan, Torin, and Jill A. Fisher. (under review). Strategies for Obtaining Access to Secretive or Guarded Research Sites. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*.

Week Nine: Spring Break

March 10: No Class.

Week Ten: Ethnographer as Activist

March 17:

Readings:

- Juris, Jeffrey S. 2008. *Networking Futures: The Movements Against Corporate Globalization*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Week Eleven: Grounded Theory

March 24:

Readings:

- Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. London: Sage Publications.

[Interview Transcriptions and Analysis due]

Week Twelve: Gender and Difference in the Field

March 31:

Readings:

- Berger, Michele Tracy. 2004. *Workable Sisterhood: The Political Journey of Stigmatized Women with HIV/AIDS*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Week Thirteen: Participatory Action Research

April 7:

Readings:

- Berg and Lune, *Qualitative Research Methods*, Ch.7.
- Carey, Christopher. 2008. Narrative Positionality. In *Collaboration and Conflict: Exploring the Worldviews within the Anti-trafficking Community*, by C. Carey. Tempe: Arizona State University.
- Fine, Michelle, et al. 2003. Participatory action research: Within and beyond bars. In *Qualitative research in psychology: Expanding perspectives in methodology and design*, edited by P. Camic, J. E. Rhodes and L. Yardley. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 173-198.
- Scott, Pam, Evelleen Richards, and Brian Martin. 1990. Captives of Controversy: The Myth of the Neutral Social Researcher in Contemporary Scientific Controversies. *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 15 (4):474-494.

Week Fourteen: Technology and Social Justice

April 14:

Readings:

- Eubanks, Virginia. 2011. *Digital Dead End: Fighting for Social Justice in the Information Age*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Week Fifteen: Emerging Methods and Alternative Media

April 21:

Readings:

- Rose, Gillian. 2012. *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 297-328.
- Patton, Jason W. 2004. Multiple Worlds on Oakland's Streets. Social Practice and the Built Environment. *Visual Anthropology Review* 20 (2):36-56.
- Carroll, Katherine 2009. Outsider, insider, alongsider: examining reflexivity in hospital-based video research. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches* 3 (3):246-263
- Markham, Annette N., and Nancy K. Baym, eds. 2009. *Internet inquiry: Conversations about method*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 26-67.
- Burrell, Jenna. 2009. The Field Site as a Network: A Strategy for Locating Ethnographic Research. *Field Methods* 21 (2):181-199.

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

Week Sixteen:

April 28:

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