Ethnographic Research Methods

Course Syllabus
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Comm 798.001 – Fall 2021
TH: 6:30 – 9:20pm
Location: Hanes Art Center 117

Professor
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Office: 127 Bynum
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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 exemplary ethnographic works and trace the development of related theory over the past few decades. [*This course will count as an elective in UNC's Graduate Certificate Program in Participatory Research.*]

Learning outcomes
At the conclusion of the course, students should know the fundamentals of ethnographic research methods, have developed basic observational and interviewing research skills, and have developed familiarity with the genre of academic research proposals.

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

Course Expectations
Attendance: Because we are currently in a global pandemic, there will be no required attendance. Take care of yourselves and your loved ones first and foremost.

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. <u>An effective participant is not someone who simply talks frequently, but someone who reliably offers thoughtful insights that help others to learn</u>.

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 (<u>due September 16</u>). **The second** will be a full transcription and 1,500-word analysis of an interview with a seminar colleague about their *future* research (<u>due October 28</u>). It is recommended that you use transcription software, such as "Express Scribe" or "Transcriva," 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 (<u>due December 2</u>). 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.

<u>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.</u>

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.

Mask Use (**In-Person Instruction Modes**)

This semester, while we are in the midst of a global pandemic, all enrolled students are ***required to wear a mask covering your mouth and nose at all times in our classroom***. This requirement is to protect our educational community—your classmates and me–as we learn together. If you choose not to wear a mask, or wear it improperly, I will ask you to leave immediately, and I will submit a report to the Office of Student Conduct. At that point you will be disenrolled from this course for the protection of our educational community. Students who have an authorized accommodation from Accessibility Resources and Service have an exception. For additional information, see Carolina Together.

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.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

The Department of Communication is committed to social justice, equity, and inclusion. This course reflects these commitments by creating an environment that fosters critical thinking, represents diverse views points and ideas, and invites thoughtful, respectful, analysis of the issues and ideas that are discussed in the course. Each of us has the right be recognized for who we are, referred to in the identities that we inhabit, and included and represented in the course.

ESL/LD Students

Course requirements can be adjusted to serve the needs and capabilities of ESL and LD students. Please speak with me 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

Brayne, Sarah. 2020. *Predict and Surveil: Data, Discretion, and the Future of Policing*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. **1st ed**. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

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

Fisher, Jill A. 2020. *Adverse Events: Race, Inequality, and the Testing of New Pharmaceuticals*. New York: New York University Press.

Lane, Jeffrey. 2019. *The Digital Street*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lepselter, Susan. 2016. *The Resonance of Unseen Things: Poetics, Power, Captivity, and UFOs in the American Uncanny*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. [Open Access available]

Lune, Howard, and Bruce L. Berg. 2017. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. 9th ed. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson.

Pachirat, Timothy. 2011. *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Ralph, Laurence. 2014. *Renegade Dreams: Living through Injury in Gangland Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Course Schedule (subject to revision)

Week One: Introductions: Thinking about Ethnographic Methods

August 19: Introductory Discussion
> **Readings:**
> - Berg and Lune, *Qualitative Research Methods*, Chts.1-2.
> - Clifford, James. 1988. On Ethnographic Authority. In *The Predicament of Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Havard University Press, 21-54.
> - Marcus, George E. 1995. Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24:95-117. [Skim only.]

Week Two: Ethnographic Immersion

August 26:
> **Readings:**
> - Pachirat, Timothy. 2011. *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Week Three: Technology and Police Cultures

September 2:
> **Readings:**
> - Brayne, Sarah. 2020. *Predict and Surveil: Data, Discretion, and the Future of Policing*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Week Four: Fieldnotes

September 9:
> **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: Imprints of Violence

September 16:
> **Readings:**
> - Ralph, Laurence. 2014. *Renegade Dreams: Living through Injury in Gangland Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[Observational Paper Due]

Week Six: Gaining Access and Interviewing

September 23:
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*, Cht.4.
- Monahan, Torin, and Jill A. Fisher. 2015. Strategies for Obtaining Access to Secretive or Guarded Organizations. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 44 (6):709-736.

Week Seven: Precarity, Race, and Clinical Trials

September 30:
Readings:
- Fisher, Jill A. 2020. *Adverse Events: Race, Inequality, and the Testing of New Pharmaceuticals*. New York: New York University Press.

Week Eight: American Conspiracies and Subcultures

October 7:
Readings:
- Lepselter, Susan. 2016. *The Resonance of Unseen Things: Poetics, Power, Captivity, and UFOs in the American Uncanny*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Week Nine: Participation and Power

October 14:
- Berg and Lune, *Qualitative Research Methods*, Cht.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.
- Darder, Antonia. 2018. Decolonizing Interpretive Research: Subaltern Sensibilities and the Politics of Voice. *Qualitative Research Journal* 18 (2):94-104.
- 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.

Week Ten: Fall Break

October 21: No Class.

Week Eleven: Grounded Theory

October 28:
   Readings:
   - Charmaz, Kathy. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory*. London: Sage Publications.
   - Timmermans, Stefan, and Iddo Tavory. 2012. Theory Construction in Qualitative Research: From Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis. *Sociological Theory* 30 (3):167-186.

[Interview Transcriptions and Analysis due]

Week Twelve: Visualizing the Field

November 4:
   Readings:
   - Rose, Gillian. 2012. *Visual methodologies: An introduction to researching with visual materials*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 297-328.
   - Pauwels, Luc. 2015. 'Participatory' visual research revisited: A critical-constructive assessment of epistemological, methodological and social activist tenets. *Ethnography* 16 (1):95-117.
   - Mokos, Jennifer T. 2017. Stigmatized places as therapeutic landscapes: The beneficial dimensions of river-bottom homeless encampments. *Medicine Anthropology Theory* 4 (1):123-150.
   - Burrington, Ingrid. 2016. Why Amazon's Data Centers Are Hidden in Spy Country. *The Atlantic*, January 8. Available from https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2016/01/amazon-web-services-data-center/423147/ [accessed June 30, 2017].

Week Thirteen: Workshopping

November 11:
   [Bring to class copies of your research problem, questions and hypotheses]

Week Fourteen: NCA Conference Week

November 18: No Class

Week Fifteen: Thanksgiving

November 25: No Class.

Week Sixteen:

December 2:
   - No class meeting.
   - **Research Proposals due**

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Information for Undergraduate Classes
Fall 2021

Attendance Policy

University Policy: No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

1. Authorized University activities

2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by Accessibility Resources and Service and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC)

3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the Office of the Dean of Students, Gender Violence Service Coordinators, and/or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (EOC).

Class Policy: Instructors may work with students to meet attendance needs that do not fall within University approved absences. For situations when an absence is not University approved (e.g., a job interview or club activity), instructors determine their own approach to missed classes and make-up assessment and assignments.

Honor Code

All students are expected to follow the guidelines of the UNC honor code. In particular, students are expected to refrain from "lying, cheating, or stealing" in the academic context. If you are unsure about which actions violate the honor code, please see me or consult honor.unc.edu.

Mask Use (In-Person Instruction Modes)

This semester, while we are in the midst of a global pandemic, all enrolled students are required to wear a mask covering your mouth and nose at all times in our classroom. This requirement is to protect our educational community—your classmates and me–as we learn together. If you choose not to wear a mask, or wear it improperly, I will ask you to leave immediately, and I will submit a report to the Office of Student Conduct. At that point you will be disenrolled from this course for the protection of our educational community. Students who have an authorized accommodation from Accessibility Resources and Service have an exception. For additional information, see Carolina Together.

Acceptable Use Policy

By enrolling as a student in this course, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of IT systems and services. You may be asked to participate in online discussions or other online activities that may include personal information about you or other students in the course. The rights and protection of other participants are protected under the UNC-Chapel Hill Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy, which covers topics related to using digital resources, such as privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual property.

Consult the University website "Safe Computing at UNC" for information about the data security policies, updates, and tips on keeping your identity, information, and devices safe.

Accessibility Resources and Services

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.

Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: https://ars.unc.edu or email ars@unc.edu.

Counseling and Psychological Services

CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: https://caps.unc.edu/ or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

Title IX Resources

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim–titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

Policy on Non-Discrimination

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied.

If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at safe.unc.edu) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, or online to the EOC at https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/.

Diversity Statement

I value the perspectives of individuals from all backgrounds reflecting the diversity of our students. I broadly define diversity to include race, gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation, political background, and physical and learning ability. I strive to make this

classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve. I appreciate suggestions.

Undergraduate Testing Center

The College of Arts and Sciences provides a secure, proctored environment in which exams can be taken. The center works with instructors to proctor exams for their undergraduate students who are not registered with ARS and who do not need testing accommodations as provided by ARS. In other words, the Center provides a proctored testing environment for students who are unable to take an exam at the normally scheduled time (with pre-arrangement by your instructor). For more information, visit http://testingcenter.web.unc.edu/.

Learning Center

The UNC Learning Center is a great resource both for students who are struggling in their courses and for those who want to be proactive and develop sound study practices to prevent falling behind. They offer individual consultations, peer tutoring, academic coaching, test prep programming, study skills workshops, and peer study groups. If you think you might benefit from their services, please visit them in SASB North or visit their website to set up an appointment: http://learningcenter.unc.edu.

Writing Center

The Writing Center is located in the Student and Academic Services Building and offers personalized writing consultations as well as a variety of other resources. This could be a wonderful resource to help with your writing assignments in this course (and any assignments in your other courses). You do not need a complete draft of your assignment to visit; they can help you at any stage! You can chat with someone in the writing center or set up as appointment on their website: http://writingcenter.unc.edu.

Grade Appeal Process

If you feel you have been awarded an incorrect grade, please discuss with me. If we cannot resolve the issue, you may talk to our departmental director of undergraduate studies or appeal the grade through a formal university process based on arithmetic/clerical error, arbitrariness, discrimination, harassment, or personal malice. To learn more, go to the Academic Advising Program website.