RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS IN CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

This seminar prepares graduate students to design ethnographic research projects, write grant proposals, collect and analyze data, and write up research findings. Topics addressed include the relationship between theory and method, defining researchable questions, research ethics, decolonizing methodologies, participant observation, sensory ethnography, writing field notes, interview techniques (unstructured, semi-structured, structured), transcription, sampling, designing questionnaires, coding data, data analysis, research proposal evaluation criteria, peer review processes, interpersonal relations with fieldwork interlocutors, and other methodological topics of interest to seminar participants (e.g., oral histories, life histories, censuses, focus group interviews, archival research).

Practical exercises will introduce students to techniques of collecting, coding, analyzing and interpreting qualitative and quantitative data (with an emphasis on qualitative techniques). Students will review research proposals funded by a variety of agencies. We will discuss key components of successful proposals, along with screening criteria proposal that reviewers use and how those criteria vary across funding agencies. We will examine actual cases of ethical dilemmas considered by the American Anthropological Association and how they were resolved. Examples of ethnographic writing will be interspersed throughout the course; we will explore their methodological, narratological, ethical, and epistemological dimensions.

Pre-requisite: One graduate course in anthropology or permission of instructor.

Required Texts: The three textbooks listed below are required for the seminar. Additional readings will be available online or posted on Sakai.


Requirements include regular attendance, active participation in seminar discussions (which requires completing all assigned readings on time), occasional oral presentations, written exercises, practice in various research techniques, and a research proposal or final
paper. Any student who misses a seminar meeting should inform the instructor in advance of the reason for the absence, and by noon on Friday of the same week as the missed class should complete that week’s assignment, along with a make-up assignment in the form of a five-page (approximately 1,250-word) summary of the readings covered that week.

**Grades** will be determined as follows: Class attendance and participation (including oral presentations) = 30%; short writing assignments and methods exercises = 25%; research proposal or final paper = 40%. Late work will be penalized.

**Key deadlines:**
2. First draft of research proposal or paper (submitted via Sakai) is due by 3:00 p.m., Friday, April 7th.
3. Final research proposal or research paper (submitted via Sakai + hard copy in instructor’s office mailbox) is due by 3:00 p.m., Monday, May 1st.

**Office hours** will be announced during class. Please feel free to drop in or make an appointment, and please let the professor know if you would like any assistance with course material.

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend all classes. (See information below about required advance notification for a necessary absence due to a religious holiday.)

If you miss a class, please use the University absence reporting website [https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/](https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/) to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. **Students are required to see a Dean of Students for assistance in verifying the circumstances of any absence longer than one week.**

**Religious Holidays:** Please notify the instructor during the first two weeks of the semester if you will observe a religious holiday that will prevent you from attending a class meeting. You may arrange to make up the missed session and any required work (sometimes through a response paper or oral quiz on assigned readings)—if you **notify the instructor during the first two weeks of the semester.**

**Lateness:** To avoid disrupting the class, students should arrive on time.

**Classroom atmosphere:** We are all responsible for creating a friendly, relaxed, and productive classroom atmosphere. That requires listening respectfully to everyone, phrasing comments constructively and politely, turning off cell phones and other electronic devices, coming to class on time, and refraining from reading the newspaper or working on other assignments during class. (No recording devices may be used during class.)

**Communication:** Students are responsible for timely attention to email and Sakai postings
for this course and therefore should check the Sakai site and their Rutgers email accounts regularly. Dates and assignments may change; all changes will be announced in class or posted on Sakai or both. To access Sakai, go to http://sakai.rutgers.edu, log in with your Rutgers userid and password, and use the course membership tool to access class materials.

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations: Please follow the procedures outlined at http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html.

Ethics/Academic Integrity: Read the Rutgers academic integrity policy at http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu. Violations include cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity. You are responsible for knowing what plagiarism is. For tips about how to consult sources without plagiarizing, and how to take notes so that you don't plagiarize by accident, see http://wwwlibraries.rutgers.edu/avoid_plagiarism.

Other Resources

--Institute of International Studies, University of California (Berkeley), “Dissertation Proposal Workshop”: http://iis.berkeley.edu/content/dissertation-proposal-resources

The UC-Berkeley proposal workshop website offers a detailed guide to stages of proposal writing, recommended timeline for proposal development, funding sources, ethics, defining research questions, proposal writing style tips, and components of a successful proposal (theory, research question, research design, budgets, concepts and terminology). It includes samples of proposals funded by NSF and Fulbright, along with George Orwell’s 1945 essay on “Politics and the English Language,” Michael Watts’ essay “The Holy Grail: In Pursuit of the Dissertation Proposal,” and recommended readings on research methods.


--Social Science Research Council, readings on research methods (archival research, case studies, ethnographic methods, focus group interviews, oral histories, quantitative methods, survey research, research ethics). <http://www.ssrc.org>


**Schedule of Topics and Readings**

**Week 1/Jan. 17 ~ Introduction and Welcome**

--Penny Harvey, 2014. “What is ethnography?” University of Manchester, August 26. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUPrWAAAYII](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUPrWAAAYII) (43 minutes).


Reference/optional:
http://www.haujournal.org/index.php/hau/article/view/hau1.1.001/50

Week 3/Jan. 31 ~ Beyond Familiar Textual Modes of Representation

Guest: Dr. Jason De León

--Jason De León, 2015. The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail. Oakland, CA: University of California Press. [Read Introduction and at least one of the following additional chapters: 1, 2, 3, 8.]

--Jason De León, 2016. Undocumented Migration Project. 2-minute video, December 5:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILRaLNjhc0w


--See Storify AAA panel on this subject: live tweets-- https://storify.com/jennyshaw011/byndtxt

NOTE: Jason De León, Social and Behavioral Sciences Distinguished Lecture, Monday, January 30, 4:30 p.m., Alexander Library, Teleconference Room


Week 4/Feb. 7 ~ Defining a Research Problem + A Short History of Fieldwork


--Proposal Writing Timeline, UC-Berkeley Proposal Writing Workshop [S]

--Theory in a Research Proposal, UC-Berkeley Proposal Writing Workshop [S]

♦ Problem definition exercise.

Week 5/Feb. 14 ~ Research Ethics


Bhimull, Fernando Coronil, Monica E. Patterson, and Julie Skurski, eds. *Anthrohistory: Unsettling Knowledge, Questioning Discipline*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. [S]


Reference/Optional

* Case studies of ethical dilemmas.

**Week 6/Feb. 21 ~ Fieldwork Relations, Hazards, Rapport, Transference, Sensory Experience, Digital Fieldwork**

**Guest:** Dr. Yarimar Bonilla


Digital supplement for Bonilla and Rosa article (music, tweets, debates, background on Ferguson, additional resources):


Week 7/Feb. 28 ~ Participant Observation and Fieldnotes


* Observation and fieldnotes exercise

Week 8/March 7 ~ Choice of Interviewees, Unstructured and Semi-Structured Interviews, Life Histories, Kinship, Mapping

Unstructured and semi-structured interview exercises.

SPRING BREAK, MARCH 11-19

Week 9/March 21 ~ Structured Interviewing and Questionnaire Design


  * Questionnaire design and structured interview exercise.

Week 10/March 28 ~ Grant Proposals: Key Components and Evaluation Criteria, I

--Institute of International Studies, University of California (Berkeley), “Dissertation Proposal Workshop” (reread “Nuts and Bolts” sections): http://iis.berkeley.edu/content/nuts-bolts

  * Proposal evaluation exercises.

--Sample proposals funded by Fulbright-Hays, Fulbright IIE, Guggenheim Foundation, National Science Foundation, Social Science Research Council, Wenner-Gren Foundation. [S]
Week 11/April 4 ~ Coding and Analyzing Qualitative and Quantitative Data


Data coding exercise.

**Draft #1 of research proposal or final paper due (via Sakai), 3:00 p.m. Friday, April 7.**

Week 12/April 11 ~ Fieldwork in the Archives, Oral History, Censuses, Multi-Sited Fieldwork

--Caroline B. Brettell, "Fieldwork in the Archives: Methods and Sources in Historical Anthropology, pp. 513-546, in Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology, Second Edition. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press. [S]

Week 13/April 18 Grant Proposals: Key Components and Evaluation Criteria, I + Writing Workshop

--Sample proposals funded by Fulbright-Hays, Fulbright IIE, Guggenheim Foundation, National Science Foundation, Social Science Research Council, Wenner-Gren Foundation. [S]

Proposal evaluation exercises.
--George Orwell, 1945, “Politics and the English Language.” [S] Also available at http://iis.berkeley.edu/content/style.


• Writing and editing exercise

Reference/optional:

Week 14/April 25 – Writing Up Your Fieldwork + Seminar Wrap-Up


• Student presentations.

**Research proposal or final paper due Monday, May 1**
(Hard copy due at 3:00 p.m. in instructor's office mailbox. Electronic version due at 3:00 p.m via Sakai. No exceptions.)