“We learn to write ethnographies by reading them” (Rose 1990).

“What does the ethnographer do”? [S]he “writes” (Geertz 1973).

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Ethnography—the *sine qua non* of cultural anthropology—has been under close, critical scrutiny since the last few decades of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. These critiques have given rise to a large and sophisticated literature that has probed the philosophical, political, epistemological, ethical, and rhetorical issues facing those who choose to study and “write culture.” This discussion has transformed the discipline in significant ways and has set the terms of debate for the understanding, analysis, and production of ethnography today. This course investigates this critical literature and its assumptions, assessing the implications of understanding ethnography as such things as rhetoric, genre, text, narrative, allegory, and “partial truth” and culture as a product of inscription. Emphasis is placed on understanding ethnographies as texts and on the enhancement of students’ skills in writing ethnography.

Theoretical Focus
Once largely understood as a transparent form of knowledge production resulting from the work of a participant-observer objectively describing a cultural reality, ethnography is often conceptualized today more as a story based on the represented, or evoked, experiences of a fieldworker-self in relationship to others within a given context (see Goodall 2000). In this conception, culture is not seen as external to the anthropologist but as that which is created at the very moment writing is performed, a conceptualization which has had wide-ranging consequences for the discipline. We will assess the implications of this understanding by addressing a range of theoretical and epistemological questions such as these:

- What is the nature of ethnographic knowledge production and how are ethnographic texts authorized? How has this changed over time?
- What were the conditions of possibility that enabled the “writing culture/feminist/postmodern” critique of anthropology?
- What is the nature of the interpretive act and how does it operate in the description or creation of culture?
- How have unrecognized assumptions and traditions of interpretation shaped anthropologists’ experience and understanding of culture?
- What are the processes that inform the production and consumption of ethnographies?
- What is the relationship of reading to writing in the generation of ethnography and how are interpretive communities formed?
- What are the interrelationships among theory, fieldwork, and writing in the construction of ethnographic texts?
- How do we develop paradigms through which experience becomes intelligible and writing strategies that enable ethnographers to communicate what might actually be ineffable?
- What is the saliency of various forms of ethnographic representation for growing numbers of research projects in anthropology today?
Reading and Writing Focus
This course emphasizes the development and enhancement of students’ skills in reading, evaluating, critiquing and writing ethnography through the following:

- the close reading and critical evaluation of a range of ethnographies, and a dissection of them as written texts;
- reading of some “nuts and bolts” pieces on style and form.
- comparison of ethnography to other forms of cultural representation such as travel writing, creative non-fiction, and fiction to bring ethnography as a genre into focus and to explore the possibilities these forms offer the ethnographer for “writing culture;
- providing assignments in which students model various forms of cultural representation;
- workshopping students’ writing to provide them with constructive feedback to use in the process of revising (and re-revising) their work.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Most of these books are available on-line from one of the big booksellers where you can get them used and therefore cheaper, so I’ve opted to have you buy your own. Body and Soul and Friction are only available in hard copy. Let me know if the price is unreasonable for you and we’ll work something out. All the other reading material is on-line at Sakai.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
This seminar will be run as an intensive reading group and as a place for work-shopping your own writing. In the first two weeks each of you will be assigned one article, which you will present to the class. You will also be asked to be the main facilitator of the discussion of the readings twice during the semester, partnered with one of your classmates. Class participation in discussions of the readings and in work-shopping is an important ingredient of your grade (I will discuss the details of work-shopping in class).

After the first two weeks, class time will be broken into two parts: first we will work-shop the writing you have done based on the previous week’s discussion; then in the second half of class, we will discuss the readings for that day, which will provide the basis for your writing experiment for the following week. You will be given two opportunities to revise a piece of writing and the final revision will count as your final writing project. You will be asked to write a one-page commentary on your revisions and final project, which also involves writing a reflection piece assessing the process which the revised piece has undergone, detailing the choices you’ve made and drawing on the ideas developed throughout the course from our discussion of the readings.

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

| Participation in class discussions and work-shopping | 10% |
| 2 Discussion facilitations | 20% |
| 2 individual article synopsis/critique | 10% |
| *6 writing “experiments,” one mid-course revision, final project | 50% |
| Reflective commentary on final project | 10% |

*Since students will come to this course with highly variable experiences of writing, and in order to create a non-threatening atmosphere for sharing your writing, your experimental writing (and its revisions) will be graded only on your effort and dedication to improving it over the course of the semester, not on the writing itself.
COURSE OUTLINE

Jan. 17  Introduction

24  Classic Realist Ethnography: Authorship, Authority and Authenticity

Individual article synopsis/critique due


31  Ethnography and Narrative/Narrative Ethnography

Individual article synopsis/critique due

Barbara Myerhoff, (1980). Number Our Days.


Vincent Crapanzano, (1986). “Hermes’ Dilemma: The Making of Subversion in Ethnographic Description.” In *Writing Culture*, edited by James Clifford and George Marcus, pp. 51-54, 68-76 (only these sections on Geertz are required).


Feb. 7  Ethnography by Comparison: Travel Writing and the Entry Narrative in Ethnography

Writing Workshop: Experimenting with Narrative Ethnography

Discussion Facilitator


Eric Leeds “For a History of Travel” and “The Mind of the Modern Traveler” in *The Mind of the Traveler: From Gilgamesh to Global Tourism*.


John L. Stephens, excerpt from *Incidents of Travel in the Yucatan*.

Tony Horwitz. “Love at First Sight” in *Baghdad without a Map*.

14  The “New” Ethnography and Feminist Anthropology: Reflexivity and Voice

Writing Workshop: Experimenting with Travel Writing

Discussion Facilitator


21 Writing Interlude: work on revising

28 Experiential, “Vulnerable,” and Dialogic Ethnography
Work-shop revisions

Discussion Facilitator
Chapters 1 (pp. 1-33) and 6 (pp. 161-177).

Mar. 7 Reading and Writing “Carnal” Ethnography: “The Taste and Ache of Action”
Writing Workshop: Experimenting with Experiential, “Vulnerable,” or Dialogic Ethnography

Discussion Facilitator

21 Ethnography by Comparison: Creative Non-Fiction as Ethnography
Writing Workshop: Experimenting with “Carnal” Ethnography

Discussion Facilitator

28 Reading and Writing Global Ethnography
Writing Workshop: Experimenting with Creative Non-Fiction

Discussion Facilitator

Apr. 4 Ethnography by Comparison: The Short Story as Ethnography
Writing Workshop: Experimenting with Global Ethnography

Discussion Facilitator
One or two more short stories yet to be assigned.

11 Writing Interlude: work on revising

18 Final Project/Reflective Commentary due

25 Conclusion