

Department of Latino and Hispanic Caribbean Studies
Rutgers University—New Brunswick/Piscataway

LATINO ETHNOGRAPHY

(595:307 / 070:321)
SPRING 2017

Prof. Ulla D. Berg
Office: LSH-A260
Email: uberg@rci.rutgers.edu

Class hours: M/ Th 10:20-11:40am
Class location: [LSH-A256](#)
Office hours: Mondays 3-4PM or by appt.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to reading, writing, and theorizing ethnography and applies this knowledge to the analysis and understanding of ethnographic works about and by Latinos in the US. Once largely understood as an “objective” form of knowledge production, ethnography today is often conceptualized as stories about the experiences of the ethnographer in relation to other people within a specific cultural context. Questions to be explored: What is the craft of ethnography? What kind of knowledge is ethnography and what are its limits? What social, political, and cultural processes inform the production and consumption of ethnography about Latinos? How are ethnographic texts on Latinos produced, circulated, and authorized within and beyond specific scholarly communities and larger publics? We will take a critical approach to reading and evaluating ethnographic works and apply our acquired skills in the craft of ethnography to specific writing exercises, which allow us to explore various forms, formats, and styles for “writing Latino culture”.

II. LEARNING GOALS

Core Curriculum Learning Goals: Cognitive Skills and Processes ~ Writing and Communication



After completing this course, students will be able to respond effectively to editorial feedback from peers, instructors, &/or supervisors through successive drafts & revision (WCR, goal s-2). Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry (WCD, goal t)

Additional Course Learning Goals:

After completing this course, the attentive student will be able to:

1. Understand the central concepts that define the craft of ethnography including participant-observation, ethnographic rapport, and ethnographic representation.
2. Evaluate and critique ethnographies about U.S. Latinos.

3. Understand the interrelationships of fieldwork, theory, and various genres of writing in the construction of ethnographic texts about U.S. Latinos.
4. Develop critical skills in ethnographic writing.

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS, ASSESMENT, AND GRADING

This is a reading and writing intensive course. Students are expected to attend class on time, read all required readings, hand in written works on time including weekly reading responses, and participate actively in the discussions that follow lectures, guest lectures, and student presentations. Grades will be based on attendance and active participation in class discussions, oral presentations, and written work, according to the formula listed below.

The final project (30% of final grade + 5% for the abstract) will assess students' achievement of the Core Curriculum learning goals (WCR & WCD).

1. Class attendance and active participation (15%)

Students are required to read ALL course materials in advance to each class and to participate actively in class discussions. Attendance and active participation in this course is mandatory and absences will only be excused under extraordinary circumstances such as medical emergencies. Please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me generated by this system. Missing classes without presenting proper documentation will affect your final grade for this course (eg. you loose a significant amount of points for unjustified absences). Students will sign attendance sheet at the beginning of class. The professor holds the right to call on students in class discussions and there may be unannounced in-class assignments on particular readings throughout the semester.

2. Weekly reading responses (25%)

Students are required to submit 13 reading responses to Sakai over the course of the semester. They are due on Mondays (except for two Thursdays). Due dates are marked with a * in the syllabus. You are allowed to miss one response (this means that you can still get the full 25 points if you submit 12 assignments. This is roughly once a week. Responding in writing will help you better process the readings and prepare yourself for discussion. For some sessions there will be a prompt from the professor asking you to address a specific question. For others you will respond more freely by speaking to issues you find the most interesting or challenging about the given set of readings. Responses must be submitted to Sakai before the beginning of class.

3. Experimental writing assignments (25%)

Throughout the semester students will complete five writing assignments designed to teach the basic crafts of ethnography. Since students come to this class with variable experiences of writing, these assignments will be graded on effort and dedication to learning new and to improving already acquired writing attending to feedback offered by the professor and peers.

Assignment 1: Jotting down information

Choose any setting that you consider to be a "Latino setting" and conduct an observation of at least two hours observing a large group of people and writing down what you observe. This could be at a mall, a sports event, a family gathering, or community celebration, among others. Ideally, this setting would be a setting you will return to and observe repeatedly for your final project. The purpose of this assignment is to

get you used to writing down information when a lot is going on. Assignment consist in your raw notes + a brief (1 - 2 page) reflection on your experience of taking these kinds of notes.

Assignment 2: Creating rapport

Conduct a 2-hour (or longer) session of participant-observation and write a 1-2 page reflection on how you developed rapport with the people you were observing. Be prepared to discuss your approach in class.

Assignment 3: Auto-ethnography

Auto-ethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. The approach is reflexive and ethnographers will analyze their own subjectivity and life experiences (usually within the context of fieldwork.) Write a 2-page reflection in which you situate your own self in the context of your research setting.

Assignment 4: Field notes

Conduct another observation, more focused on an area you might want to study for your final ethnographic writing project for this class. Bring in your jots **AND** your first attempt at systematizing those into field notes. If you've recorded part of your "notes" in ways other than text (audio, video, photography, etc.), bring in those recordings as well. Include as many details as possible in your fieldnotes! We will be sharing our notes in class. They are works in progress and do not need to be perfect.

Assignment 5: Creating scenes

Conduct another two-hour observation, make multiple jots, and pay special attention to the ways in which you describe the events and "create scenes" in writing up your notes at home later on. If you are recording additional information through audio or video, make some notes about WHY you chose to zoom in on a certain person, why you began/stopped taping at the times you did, etc. In addition to bringing in your field notes to class, you will write a brief methodological reflection on what aspects of the scene you included. I want you to critically consider the explicit reasons behind your ethnographic decision making process (for example, which „events“ or „situations“ seemed important to you).

4. Final project (35%)

The final paper for this class will consist of a 10-page ethnography in which you will apply the skills you have learned this semester. You must start develop your project in conjunction with Assignment 1. You will be required to submit an abstract and a final draft to the Professor and to one of your peers who will serve as your "writing buddy" for the duration of the semester. You are required to offer constructive editorial feedback to your writing buddy's abstract and project drafts and you to attend to this feedback yourself through successive drafts and revisions of both abstract and final paper (see course overview for specific deadlines). Your project abstract is worth 5 points of the final project grade.

Final grades will be calculated according to LCS's grading scale:

A (93-100) / B+ (89-92) / B (81-88) / C+ (77-80) / C (70-76) / D (65-69) / F (64 and Below)

VI. OTHER CRITICAL INFORMATION

1. Lateness and online musings during class are very disturbing to the development of class dynamics and will not be tolerated. Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. If using an iPad or laptop for notetaking and to consult readings, please disable your wireless Internet access during

class. Allowing electronic gadgets to consume your attention during class time will result in a deduction of points from the class attendance and participation grade.

2. Communication with professor. I value direct and clear communication with students. If you have any issues that are affecting your participation in this class, contact me via email or come to my office hours. In general, students are encouraged to use the office hours to seek help with processing course materials and to discuss your progress in the class. Information regarding this course will be circulated on email via Sakai. Please check your Rutgers email the day before class for important updates.

3. Writing and proof-reading. All assignments must be typed in 11 or 12 point font and doubled-spaced and uploaded to Sakai before class on the due date. If you don't bring a laptop to class, please bring in a hardcopy of your assignment for discussion in class. **Students must proof-read and run spell-check before turning assignments in.** Points will be deducted on written assignments that do not meet such basic standards. Any outside sources informing your paper must be cited appropriately and included in a bibliography at the end of the assignment using standard social science citation practice (in-text citations and an appropriately formatted final bibliography at the end – we will review this in class). No late assignments will be accepted and no make-up work may be requested unless exceptional circumstances such as medical emergencies inhibit you to hand in work on time.

4. Plagiarism. Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's ideas, words, or artistic, scientific, or technical work as one's own creation. Using the ideas of others is permissible only when the original author is recognized. Paraphrasing and summarizing, as well as direct quotations, require citations to the original source. Plagiarism may be intentional or unintentional. It is the student's responsibility to recognize the difference between statements that are common knowledge (which do not require documentation) and restatements of the ideas of others. Paraphrase, summary, and direct quotation are acceptable forms of restatement, as long as the source is appropriately cited. Lack of dishonest intent does not necessarily absolve a student of responsibility for plagiarism. Students caught copying from another source without due credit will automatically receive an F in the course. In addition, they will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs (SJA). Students must familiarize themselves with Rutgers' policy on academic integrity available at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers>. If you still have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, don't hesitate to ask!

5. Disabilities. Students requesting special consideration such as extra test time or classroom accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Services at 848-445-6800 or by email at dsoffice@echo.rutgers.edu. Upon review of the individual case, this Office generates a Letter of Accommodation (LOA), which must be forwarded to the instructor by the student if requesting special consideration. The processing time may take up to 30 days and it is your responsibility to take care of this at the beginning of the semester. LOA's must be renewed each semester.

V. COURSE MATERIALS

The required books for this course are available new or used at <http://rutgers.bncollege.com> or through any other online vendor (which might be cheaper). Required books will also be on reserve at the library. Films will be on reserve in the library only during the week they are screened in class. All other listed required readings are available from on Sakai (log-in at <https://sakai.rutgers.edu>) and marked on the syllabus with a [S]

Required Books:

J. de León. 2015. *The Land of Open Graves. Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. University of California Press, ISBN 9780520282759)

P. Bourgois, 1995. *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*. Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0521017114.

Rios, Victor. 2011. *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*. New York University Press. ISBN: 9780814776384.

Perez, Gina M. 2015. *Citizen, student, soldier: Latina/o Youth, JROTC, and the American Dream*. New York University Press. ISBN 9781479807802.

U. Berg. 2015. *Mobile Lives: Race, Migration, and Belonging in Peru and the US*. New York University Press. ISBN 9781479803460)

VI. COURSE OUTLINE

Writing responses are due on Mondays (and two Thursdays) marked with *. The writing responses should be reactions to the readings to be discussed in class that day.

Introduction: Figuring Out Ethnography

Thurs / Jan 19 Introduction and discussion of syllabus

Fortun, Kim “Figuring Out Ethnography” [S]

Film: *The Couple in a Cage: A Guatinaui Odyssey* (Dir. Coco Fusco and Paula Heredia, 1993, TRT 30 min)

Mon / Jan 23* Spradley, J. “Ethnography and Culture.” [S]

Margaret Mead, *Coming of Age in Samoa*, selection. [S]

Comaroff, J., & Comaroff, J. (2003). Ethnography on an awkward scale
Postcolonial anthropology and the violence of abstraction. *Ethnography*, 4(2), 147-179. [S]

The Ethnographic Process and Journey

Thurs / Jan 26 Jason de León. *The Land of Open Graves*, Introduction + Chaps. 1-3.

Mon / Jan 30* Jason de León. *The Land of Open Graves*, Chaps. 4, 5, 7 (pp.191-201), and 8.

Class visit by Dr. Jason de León, University of Michigan + lunch in A266.

Thurs / Feb 2 Jason de León. *The Land of Open Graves*, Chaps. 9 – 12.

Representing Ethnographic Experience

- Mon / Feb 6* Clifford, James. "On Ethnographic Authority." *Representations* 2 (1983): 118-146 [S]
- H.L. Goddall (2000). "Representing Ethnographic Experience: From Fieldwork to Fieldnotes to Stories." In *Writing the New Ethnography*, pp. 83-120 [S]
- Ana Ramos-Zayas – *Street Therapists*, pp. 38-41 [S]
- Thurs / Feb 9 *** SNOW DAY ***

Urban Ethnography and the "Culture of Poverty"

- Mon / Feb 13* Class discussion of Assignment 1
- Oscar Lewis (1966). Part I, Chaps. 1-11 (pp. 3-123) in *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty – San Juan and New York*. New York: Random House [S]
- Thurs / Feb 16 *La Vida*, continued. Introduction page xi-iv + "Days with Simplicio in New York" (p. 413-443), "A Day with Cruz in San Juan" (p. 533-568), and Epilogue (p. 661-669) [S]
- Mon / Feb 20* Briggs, Laura. "La Vida, Moynihan, and other libels: Migration, social science, and the making of the Puerto Rican welfare queen." *Centro Journal* 14, no. 1 (2002): 75-101 [S]
- 'Culture of Poverty' Makes a Comeback, *New York Times*, October 17, 2010 [S]

Ethnographic Engagements

- Thurs / Feb 23 Philippe Bourgois (1995). *In Search of Respect*, Intro + Chaps. 1-2 (pp. 1-76)
- Mon / Feb 27* *In Search of Respect*, Chap. 4 (pp. 114-173), Conclusion+ epilogue (pp. 318-351)
- Thurs / March 2 Class discussion of Assignment 2

Auto-Ethnography

- Mon / March 6* Ruth Behar - Biography in the Shadow, *Translated Woman* (pp. 320-342). [S]
- Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: an overview. *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 273-290. [S]
- Thurs / March 9 Class discussion of Assignment 3: Auto-ethnography
- ***SPRING BREAK, MARCH 13-17, 2017 ***

Ethnography and Latinx Youth, Part I

- Mon / Mar 20* Rios, Victor. 2011. *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*, PART I (Chaps. 1- 4)
- Thurs / Mar 23 Rios, Victor. 2011. *Punished*, PART II (Chaps. 4-8).

Ethnography and Latinx Youth, Part II

- Mon / Mar 27* Gina Pérez. 2015 *Citizen, Student, Soldier: Latina/o youth, JROTC, and the American Dream* Citizen, Intro + Chaps 1-2.
- Thurs / Mar 30 Class visit Gina Perez. Read: Gina Perez, *Citizen, Student, Soldier*, Chaps 3-4 + Conclusion.
- Fri / Mar 31 Gina Pérez Public Lecture, Pané Room, Alexander Library 4PM.
- Mon / Apr 3 Class discussion of Assignment 4

Queering Ethnography

- Thurs / Apr 6* Carlos Decena, *Tacit Subjects*, Introduction + Chap. 1 [S]

Abstract of final project due to Professor Berg and to one of your peers. Peer feedback on these abstracts are due Monday, April 10. Final revised abstracts are due to Professor on April 13.
- Mon / Apr 10* Carlos Decena, *Tacit Subjects*, Chap. 2 + 5 [S]

Race, Belonging, and Transnational Ethnography

- Thurs / Apr 13* Ulla Berg, *Mobile Selves: Race, Migration, and Belonging in Peru and the US*, Introduction + Chaps 1 and 2.

Final revised abstracts due!
- Mon / Apr 17 Class discussion of Assignment 5
- Thurs / Apr 20 Ulla Berg, *Mobile Selves*, Chaps. 3 + 4.

Resubmission of revised abstracts to Professor!
- Mon / Apr 24* Ulla Berg, *Mobile Selves*, Chaps. 5 and 6 + Conclusion_

Final Words and New Openings

Thurs / Apr 27

IN-CLASS WRITING WORKSHOP: Five-page draft of final projects are due to Professor Berg and to one of your peers before class. Work on peer feedback in the writing workshop.

Please incorporate all peer feedback feedback as well as the Professor's feedback in your final project due on Sakai on **May 5**.

Mon / May 1

*** NO CLASS *** Prof. Berg will be in Lima for the Latin American Studies Association's Annual Meetings. Please continue to work on your final project!