

# **Research Methods in Social and Cultural Anthropology**

(ANTH 8203)

Department of Anthropology, University of Minnesota

**Spring 2007**

<http://www.geocities.com/davidvalentine2002/syllabi/rmsca07.html>

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**Office Hours: Tuesday 12pm-2pm or by appointment**

**Class location: 220 Blegen**

**Class dates: Tuesdays, 2:30-5pm 01/16- 05/01/2007**

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## ***Course Description:***

This class is intended to introduce students to historical and contemporary issues and debates in methodology in social and cultural anthropology, as well as provide initial training in a range of ethnographic and qualitative methodologies. A primary goal of the class is to emphasize the connections among methodological, ethical, and theoretical questions; that is, this is a course which simultaneously aims to train students in particular methodological skills but also focuses on the interconnections among methodology, ethics, theory, writing, representation, and the politics of research. One question we will ask throughout the class is why "methodology" appears to have a separate status from that of "theory," and to interrogate this distinction. Our discussions will include the place of "method" in anthropological writing; the problem of ethics as both a real consideration and an institutionalized approach to knowledge production through university IRBs; the curious and secret life of field notes; feminist and poststructuralist critiques of ethnography; what happens when "natives" talk back; the tension between classical "thick description" and the multi-sited approach emblematic of so much contemporary anthropology; and new/alternative forms of ethnography. While this class is rooted in the history of anthropology and its method, we also consider the engagement of ethnography by other disciplines and interdisciplines in the academy. At the same time you will learn how to write fieldnotes, how to conduct an interview, and how to transcribe a recording of naturally-occurring talk.

Ethnographic methods are best learnt by doing them. As such, a central component of the course is the requirement that each student conduct an independent research project. It is preferable that you locate a site prior to the beginning of class as you will need to begin your research in week 3 of the semester. Preferably, your class research project should in some way connect to your dissertation research. IRB approval has been secured for the purposes of your project, but you will also go through the IRB ethics training so that you become familiar with the process.

Finally, in addition to the practical and theoretical aspects of "method," we will also consider the emotional and affective, paying close attention to the investments we bring to our work as ethnographers. As such, a requirement of this class is that you think actively and critically about your imagined dissertation fieldwork, leading to the writing of a "fieldwork fantasy" (see course requirements below). Course discussions will also be supplemented by informal presentations from other anthropology faculty who will offer advice from their own experience of doing ethnographic research.

### ***Course Requirements***

The primary object of the class in terms of written work is the production of a grant proposal, based on primary ethnographic research conducted during the semester. As such, this is a work-intensive class, and students are encouraged to read as much of the course material over the winter break as possible. Progress reports will be evaluated throughout the semester, and each student will be expected to present their work in class at the end of the semester.

Students will be expected to conduct weekly ethnographic research among a group, community, or other social formation. Ideally, you will be doing this 5-8 hours a week. It would be best to get a sense of where you might do a project before the semester begins. Ideally, it would be related to your dissertation project, but this is not essential. Please contact me via email over the break if you want to discuss suggestions.

Written work for the class clumps toward the beginning and end of the semester, since proposals and research on the grant proposal you will write needs to happen early on. The second big round of written work will be your final paper (the grant proposal).

### ***Details of Assignments***

#### *Assignment 1 (due week 2 in class)*

1. Write a 3-4 page proposal of the research project you plan to conduct during the semester. Discuss your reasons, your relationship to the group/issue you will study, the plans you have for making contacts (within the limits I will outline), and if you have made contacts already, describe the process, problems, research questions, and issues that have arisen so far.

#### *Assignment 2 (due week 3 in class)*

Collect information on grants you plan to apply for for your dissertation fieldwork. We will be examining what is required, in particular issues relating to methods. Some grant applications are available on line, others need to be requested. For anthropology students, Wenner-Gren is one that is almost universally applicable, but you may also want to search out grants from NSF, SSRC, Fulbright etc.

#### *Assignment 3 (due week 4 in class)*

Ensure you have completed the on line IRB tutorials (see below) by today.

#### *Assignment 4 (due week 7 in class)*

Fieldwork fantasy. This is a written piece in which you put in writing the imaginary you have constructed about your dissertation field site(s). I will not actually read this (so that you can give free reign to your fantasy), but I want to see that you have written it. As will become apparent in class, I believe it is crucial to think critically about our own fieldwork imagineries before we enter "the field," and that having this fantasy in hand will make you a more reflective fieldworker.

There are two other more informal aspects to the class. The first is a series of informal feedback "check ins" during each class session. To facilitate this, the class size has been restricted to ten people. In addition, toward the end of semester, several class periods will be devoted to

workshopping grant proposals.

A final and informal project will be the group production of a collection of "Fieldwork Gems," (a phrase coined by one of my grad school pals) in which we will jot down and record the advice, suggestions, methodological innovations, insights, and so on that you have during the semester, as well as any gleaned from the readings and faculty presentations. This is both a practical and theoretical enterprise, one where we will watch what "method" will be distilled in the pages of the "Gems" collection.

### *Fieldnotes*

As with you fantasy, I will not ask to see, nor will I grade your fieldnotes (for reasons that will become apparent in our discussions), but these are a key requirement and component of your training. You should expect to spend several hours a week writing fieldnotes for your weekly fieldwork events. You are encouraged to experiment with format during the course of the semester.

### *Status Report (due before Spring Break)*

Produce a brief report of your fieldwork progress (no more than 4 double spaced pages), laying out your work so far, articulating difficulties and problems, progress, practical concerns etc.

### *Final Project (due May 6)*

The final project is a complete grant application, based on your fieldwork. For most anthropology students, the Wenner-Gren application is the best choice. Students from other disciplines should consult with me and their advisers.

### ***Ethics and IRB requirements***

Because your research involves human subjects, this class research has had to be approved by the university's Institutional Review Board. Because this research is done for a class, involves no risk to your informants, and will not be published, it falls into the category of "exempt" research. Your fieldwork will be covered under what is called a "class protocol," with myself listed as Principal Investigator. If you intend to continue your research beyond the period of the class, or to publish your findings, you must seek your own IRB approval, a process I can help you with.

However, even though the research is exempt from review, each of you is required to familiarize yourself with the contents of the IRB webpage (<http://www.research.umn.edu/irb/>), and in particular, the following two on-line tutorials:

1. The Collaborative IRB Training Initiative (CITI) hosted by University of Miami Medical School. This can be accessed at <http://www.research.umn.edu/first/humansubjects.htm> (Item 1 on this page). Register for the training, complete it, and then return to the above page to report your completion.

2. Informed consent tutorial: <http://www.research.umn.edu/consent/>

It is essential that you complete these tutorials prior to undertaking your research. While you do not need to apply for IRB approval yourselves, you will have to go through and understand this process before you begin your dissertation fieldwork. We will also have a presentation in class from an IRB staff member, in the context of a broader discussion of ethics (week 5)

***Required Texts:***

The reading load for this class is quite heavy, and you are encouraged to read as many of the ethnographies over the winter break as possible. In addition to the texts below, there will be some additional articles, available via e-reserve. I will try to get at least the first few weeks reading on line before semester begins. Recommended readings are not posted on e-reserve.

Briggs, Charles L.

1986 Learning How to Ask : A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science Research. Cambridge: CUP.

Klima, Alan. 2002. The Funeral Casino: Meditation, Massacre, and Exchange with the Dead in Thailand. Princeton University Press.

Maurer, Bill. 2005. Mutual Life, Limited: Islamic Banking, Alternative Currencies, Lateral Reason. Princeton University Press.

West, Paige. 2006. Conservation Is Our Government Now: The Politics of Ecology in Papua New Guinea. Duke University Press.

Liechty, Mark. 2002. Suitably Modern: Making Middle-Class Culture in a New Consumer Society. Princeton University Press.

## Course Outline

### 1. Starting Out: The Obvious and the Not So Obvious (1/16/07)

*Readings:*

**\*\*Begin Grant and Ethics Projects this week\*\***

Mead, Margaret

1933 More comprehensive field methods. *American Anthropologist* 35(1):1-15.

Silverman, Martin G.

1972 Ambiguation and disambiguation in field work. *In Crossing cultural boundaries.* S. Kimball and J. Watson (eds.) San Francisco: Chandler.

Cameron, Deborah

1997 Performing gender identity: young men's talk and the construction of heterosexual masculinity. *In Language and masculinity.* Sally Johnson and Ulrike Hanna Meinhof (eds). pp.47-64. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

### 2. The Fieldwork Tradition (1/23/07)

**\*\*Assignment 1 due -- Project Description\*\***

*Readings:*

Malinowski, Bronislaw

1984[1922] Introduction: the subject, method and scope of this inquiry. *In Argonauts of the Western Pacific: an account of native enterprise and adventure in the archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea.* Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Stocking, George

1983 The ethnographer's magic: fieldwork in British anthropology from Tylor to Malinowski. *In Observers observed: essays on ethnographic fieldwork.* George W. Stocking (ed.) pp. 70-120. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson

1997 Discipline and practice. *In Anthropological locations: boundaries and grounds of a field science.* Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (eds.). pp. 1-46. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Rapp, Rayna

1999 How Methodology bleeds into daily life. *In Testing women, testing the fetus: the social impact of amniocentesis in America.* New York: Routledge.

Sanjek, Roger

1990 The secret life of fieldnotes. *In Fieldnotes: the making of anthropology.* Roger Sanjek (ed.) pp. 187-270. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Bunzl, Matti

2004 Boas, Foucault, and the "Native Anthropologist": Notes toward a Neo-Boasian Anthropology *American Anthropologist* 106(3):435-442.

***Recommended:***

Malinowski, Bronislaw

1967 A diary in the strict sense of the term. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World.

The Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland (RAI)

1951[1929] "Introduction" and "Methods" from Part II. *In Notes and queries on anthropology.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

### 3. Research Design, Research Questions (*Ethnographic Case Study I*) (1/30/07)

*Readings:*

**\*\*Assignment 2 due -- Grant Information\*\***

Johnson, Jeffrey C.

2000 Research design and research strategies. *In Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology.* H. Russell Bernard (ed.) pp. 131-171. Rowman and Littlefield.

Briggs, Charles L.

1986 Learning How to Ask : A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science Research. Cambridge: CUP.

**4. Participant-Observation and Description (2/6/07)***Readings:***\*\*Assignment 3 Due -- Ethics\*\***

Gans, Herbert J.

1968 The participant-observer as a human being: observations on the personal aspects of fieldwork. In *Institutions and the person*. Howard S. Becker et al (eds.) pp. 300-17.

Geertz, Clifford

1983 "From the native's point of view:" on the nature of anthropological understanding. *In . In Local knowledge: further essays in interpretive anthropology*. Pp 55-70. New York: Basic Books.

Goffman, Erving

1987 On Fieldwork. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 18(2):123-32.

DeWalt, Kathleen M and Billie R. DeWalt

2000 Participant-Observation. In *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology*. H. Russell Bernard (ed.) pp.259-299. Rowman and Littlefield.

Geertz, Clifford

1973 Thick Description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. *in The interpretation of cultures*. pp. 3-30. New York: Basic Books.

Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw

1995 Fieldnotes in ethnographic research. *In Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press.**5. Ethnographic Case Study II (2/13/07)***Readings:*

Klima, Alan

2002 The Funeral Casino: Meditation, Massacre, and Exchange with the Dead in Thailand. Princeton University Press.

**6. Paying Attention (2/20/07)***Readings:*

Garfinkel, Harold

1973 Background expectancies. *In Rules and meanings: the anthropology of everyday life*. Mary Douglas (ed.) pp. 21-23. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Stoddart, Kenneth

1974 Pinched: notes on the ethnographer's location of argot. *In Ethnomethodology*. Roy Turner (ed.) pp. 173-179. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Ryave, A. Lincoln and James N. Schenkein

1974 Notes on the art of walking. *In Ethnomethodology*. Roy Turner (ed.) pp. 265-274. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Sacks, Harvey

1984 On doing "being ordinary." *In Structures of social action: studies in conversation analysis*. J.Maxwell Atkinson and John Heritage (eds). Pp. 413-440. New York: CUP.

Goffman, Erving

1967 On facework: an analysis of ritual elements in social interaction. *in Interaction ritual: essays on face-to-face behavior*. Garden City: Anchor Books.

Bulmer, R.

1973 Why the cassowary is not a bird. *In Rules and meanings: the anthropology of everyday life*. Mary Douglas (ed.) pp. 167-193. Harmondsworth: Penguin.**7. The IRB, Ethics, and Dilemmas (2/27/07)***Readings:*

Review UMN IRB webpage

AAA Code of Ethics: <http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm>

- Lederman, Rena  
 2006 Introduction: Anxious Borders Between Work and Life in a Time of Bureaucratic Ethics Regulation. *American Ethnologist* 33(4): 477-481.
- Lederman, Rena  
 2006 The Perils of Working at Home: IRB "Mission Creep" as Context and Content for an Ethnography of Disciplinary Knowledges. *American Ethnologist* 33(4): 482-491.
- Katz, Jack  
 2006 Ethical Escape Routes for Underground Ethnographers. *American Ethnologist* 33(4):499-506.
- Plattner, Stuart  
 2006 Comment on IRB Regulation of Ethnographic Research. *American Ethnologist* 33(4): 525-528.
- Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins  
 2006 IRBs Are the Tip of the Iceberg: State Regulation, Academic Freedom, and Methodological Issues. *American Ethnologist* 33(4):529-531.
- Strathern, Marilyn  
 2006 Don't Eat Unwashed Lettuce. *American Ethnologist* 33(4):532-534.
- Brenneis, Don  
 2006 Partial Measures. *American Ethnologist* 33(4):538-540.
- Annas, George J.  
 2006 Anthropology, IRBs, and Human Rights. *American Ethnologist* 33(4):541-544.
- Price, David  
 2000 Anthropologists as Spies. *The Nation*, November 20, 2000.
- Valentine, David  
 2003 "The calculus of pain": violence, anthropological ethics, and the category transgender. *Ethnos* 66(1):27-48.
- Pratt, Mary Louise  
 2001 *I, Rigoberta Menchú* and the "culture wars." *In* The Rigoberta Menchú controversy. Arturo Arias (ed.) pp.29-48. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Stoll, David  
 2001 The battle of Rigoberta. *In* The Rigoberta Menchú controversy. Arturo Arias (ed.) pp.392-410. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

***Recommended/Resources:***

- AAA Committee on Ethics  
 Final Report of the AAA El Dorado Task Force <http://www.aaanet.org/edtf/index.htm>
- Gregor, Thomas A. and Daniel R. Gross  
 2004 Guilt by association: the culture of accusation and the American Anthropological Association's Investigation of *Darkness in El Dorado*. *American Anthropologist* 106(4):687-698.
- AAA Committee on Ethics Briefing Papers on Common Dilemmas Faced by Anthropologists Conducting Research in Field Situations: <http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/bp.htm>
- Ethics Web: <http://www.ethicsweb.ca>

**8. Ethnographic Case Study III (3/6/07)**

*Readings:*

- West, Paige. 2006. *Conservation Is Our Government Now: The Politics of Ecology in Papua New Guinea*. Duke University Press.

**\*\* Spring break -- No Class (3/13/07) \*\***

**9. Contemporary Concerns: Reflexivity and Positionality (3/20/07)***Readings:*

Nader, Laura

1972 Up the anthropologist: perspectives gained from studying up. *In* Reinventing anthropology. Dell Hymes (ed). Pp.284-311. New York: Pantheon.

Clifford, James

1986 Introduction: partial truths. *In* Writing culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds.) pp.1-26. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Brettell, Caroline B.

1993 Introduction: fieldwork, text, and audience. *In* When they read what we write: the politics of ethnography. Caroline B. Brettell (ed). pp. 1-24. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Zavella, Patricia

1993 Feminist insider dilemmas: constructing ethnic identity with "Chicana" informants. *Frontiers* XIII(3):53-76.

Visweswaran, Kamala

1994 Introduction. *In* Fictions of feminist ethnography. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Nussbaum, Emily

1998 Return of the natives. *Lingua Franca* February 1998: 53-56.**10. Ethnographic Case Study IV (3/27/07)***Readings:*Maurer, Bill. 2005. *Mutual Life, Limited: Islamic Banking, Alternative Currencies, Lateral Reason*. Princeton University Press.**11. Contemporary Concerns: Multi-sites, Cultural Objects, New Terrains (4/3/07)***Readings:**Readings:***\*\*Stop Fieldwork this week!\*\***

Marcus, George

1998 Ethnography through thick and thin. Princeton: Princeton University Press (Introduction, chp 4).

Constable, Nicole

2003 Ethnography in imagined virtual communities. *In* Romance on a global stage: pen pals, virtual ethnography, and "mail-order" marriages. Berkeley: University of California Press,

Lepselter, Susan

1997 From the Earth Native's Point of View: The Earth, the Extraterrestrial, and the Natural Ground of Home. *Public culture* (9)2:197-

Caputo, Virginia

2000 At "home" and "away": reconfiguring the field for late twentieth century anthropology. *In* Constructing the field: ethnographic fieldwork in the contemporary world. Vered Amit (ed.) pp.19-31. New York: Routledge.**12. Ethnographic Case Study V (4/10/07)***Readings:*Liechty, Mark. 2002. *Suitably Modern: Making Middle-Class Culture in a New Consumer Society*. Princeton University Press.**13. Paper Workshop I (4/17/07)****14. Paper Workshop II (4/24/07)****15. Course Review (5/1/07)****\*\*Final Projects Due\*\***