

Research Methods in Socio-cultural Anthropology

ANT 394.01

Spring, 2009

Time: MW 3:45-5:15 pm

Location: Cooper Rm. C03

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:15-3:15pm and Fridays, 10:45-11:45am

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Anthropologists pursue ethnographic inquiries through a systematic and dialogic research process. In this course, we will explore how anthropologists form research questions, and both the methods and theoretical frameworks used to secure answers. The structure of this course is designed to foster experiential learning, allowing students to learn by doing. Students will have the opportunity explore the research process from formulating a research question, gathering preliminary data, and analyzing preliminary findings to writing a research proposal. While the class will be focusing on a common research topic, students will have an option to pursue their own research interests within the framework of the course.

In-class presentations, class readings and discussions will highlight particular issues of validity, ethics and research design. Specific research methods will be introduced in-class, which will rely upon a high degree of class participation and co-operation. This class requires different style of learning and studying. Like an anthropologist in the field, time management and flexibility is key here. Students will be expected to work on multiple-assignments at any given time, some of which are sequential and dependent upon the completion of prior assignments. Oftentimes, assigned tasks will require students to be on-campus or at a community location outside of the scheduled class time.

What makes this class different is what makes it exciting and educational. While time constraints limit the ability of students to conduct their own research projects, the assignments do provide a “real” taste of how anthropological studies are designed and implemented. Hence, upon completion of the course, students will gain a greater awareness of how anthropologists conduct their research.

Course Success & Objectives:

This class is fast-paced. Students can expect a reading load of 40-70 pp/wk with an assignment due about every week, sometimes two in a week. *Communication in this course will be facilitated through ANGEL, if you do not regularly check your ANGEL mail forward messages to your Brockport email account.*

Upon completion of the course, hard-working students will be able to...

- Formulate and operationalize a research question of anthropological interest
- Gain familiarity with the methods of participant-observation, unstructured interviews, and semi-structured interviews
- Accurately interpret qualitative data
- Effectively answer a research question by drawing from a toolkit of methods and techniques as reflected within a proposed research design

Evaluation Policy:

Student performance in this course will be evaluated in accordance to the Department of Anthropology's *Guidelines for Student Evaluation* (available on ANGEL class site). Letter grades are calculated as follows: A: 100-94; A-:93-90; B+:89-87; B:86-84; B-:83-80; C+:79-77; C:76-74; C-:73-70; D+:69-67; D: 66-64; D-: 63-60; E:59-0. Additionally, I recommend that you read *Student Handbook* (www.brockport.edu) which, details policies concerning attendance and academic dishonesty.

Student Performance will be evaluated as follows (see Assignments Handout):

- 10% Class Participation (includes IRB Certification & other tasks)
- 10% Background Research
- 10% Open-ended Observation
- 20% Unstructured Interview (requires participation at public event)
- 05% Semi-structured Interview
- 15% Research Topic Interviews
- 10% Data Coding
- 10% Data Analysis
- 10% Proposal
- 100%TOTAL

Late Assignment Policy

Late assignments must be submitted in hard-copy form (i.e. to me in person, in my department mailbox, or under my office door). Late assignments will be marked down **.5 point for each day** in which they are over the deadline. It is in your best interest to notify me of a late submission so I can know to look for it (sometimes I am not on campus). Students should not expect that late assignments will be graded and returned at the same speed as on-time assignments.

Office hours & Contact Information

Immediate questions and assignment-specific concerns are best addressed during office hours or through appointments. Email should only be used for *non-immediate* topics and responses can be expected in *2-3 business days*. I am happy to grant learning accommodations with prior notice.

Academic Dishonesty

“Academic dishonesty, ‘cheating’ and other forms of misrepresenting others’ work as your own, such as plagiarism, ... can result in a range of disciplinary actions including failure of a course or even conduct dismissal from the College.” (This text is excerpted from Chapter 7 of the *Handbook*.)

Electronic Devices:

Cell phones, PDAs, and other electronic devices should be turned off when in the classroom. Moreover, I do not allow note-taking on laptops in my classroom. If you would like note-taking assistance, please talk to me *and* the staff at the Student Learning Center.

Course Materials:

Assigned course readings will be accessible through ANGEL Reserves (designated by brackets) **or** Library Reserves in Drake Memorial. For budget-minded students, consider sharing the cost and use of required books, or schedule time weekly to utilize the library reserves.

REQUIRED BOOKS: (Note: these books are referenced using APA style)

- Berg, Bruce. (2009, 7th ed). *Qualitative Research Methods for Social Scientists*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Heath, Shirley B., Street, Brian V. and Molly Mills. (2008). *On Ethnography: Approaches to Language and Literacy Research (NCRL volume)*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- LeCompte, Margaret and Schensul, Joan. (1999). *Analyzing and Interpreting Ethnographic Data. Ethnographer's Toolkit #5*. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Other required course readings can be found on the ANGEL Reserve section of the course website, under the “Assignments” tab.

Course Schedule:

Readings and assignments are due on the day in which they are listed. Some weekly themes are overlapping. Note: Schedule may change with notice.

Week #1 – “The Ethnographic Method”

Monday, Jan. 26, 2009

Welcome and Course Information

Wednesday, Jan. 28th

Reading: [ANGEL] “Guiding Principles” from “Essential Ethnographic Methods” by Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte (pp.1-8)

Reading: Ch. 2 (Design Research) from “Qualitative Research” by Berg (pp. 21-59)

Week #2- The Research Process & Finding a Research Topic

Monday, Feb. 2nd

Reading: [ANGEL] “Discipline and Practice” by Gupta & Ferguson’s “Anthropological Locations” (pp.1-46)

Wednesday, Feb. 4th

Reading: Ch. 1 (Language, Culture, Learning) from “On Ethnography” by Heath, Street & Mills (pp.1-26)

DUE: IRB Certification

Week #3 - Fieldwork (Groundwork, Entry, Rapport & Ethics)

Monday, Feb. 9th

Reading: Ch. 2-3 (Ethnographer's Entry & Decision Rules) from "On Ethnography" by Heath et al. (pp. 27-67)

Wednesday, Feb. 11th

Reading: Ch. 6 (Field Strategies) from "Qualitative Research" by Berg (pp. 190-238)

DUE: Background Assignment

Week #4- Observation & Fieldnotes

Monday, Feb. 16th

Reading: [ANGEL] "Doing Participant Observation," "Making an Ethnographic Record," & "Making Descriptive Observation" from Spradley's "Participant Observation" (pp. 53-84)

Wednesday, Feb. 18th

Reading: Ch. 4 (Research Questions) from "On Ethnography" by Heath et al. (pp. 68-82)

Week #5 – Narrowing one's research focus

Monday, Feb. 23rd

Reading: [ANGEL] "Operationalization" by Schensul et al. (pp. 49-68)

Wednesday, Feb. 25th

Reading: [ANGEL] "Open-Ended Interviews" by Schensul et al. (pp. 121-148)

DUE: Observation Assignment

Week #6 – Conducting Unstructured Exploratory Interviews

Monday, Mar. 2nd

Reading: [ANGEL] "Sex, Color and Rites" by Johnson from Robben and Sluka's "Ethnographic Fieldwork" (pp.76-91)

Reading: Ch. 3 (Ethical Issues) from "Qualitative Research" by Berg (pp. 60-94)

DUE: Unstructured Interview – Part I (by Noon)

Wednesday, Mar. 4th

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT DAY (tentatively this day or following Saturday)

Week #7 – Interpreting Unstructured Interviews & Research Parameters

Monday, Mar. 9th

Reading: Ch.1 (Analysis) from "Analyzing & Interpreting" by LeCompte and Schensul (pp. 1-10)

Due: Research Topic Interview Part I

Wednesday, Mar. 11th

DUE: Unstructured Interview Assignment – Part II

WEEK 8 - SPRING BREAK

Monday, Mar. 16th

Wednesday, Mar. 18th

Week #9 – Conducting In-depth Interviews

Monday, Mar. 23rd

Reading: [ANGEL] Ch.7 (Interview Situation) from “InterViews” by Kvale (pp. 124-143)

Reading: [ANGEL] Ch.8 (Quality of Interview) by Kvale (pp. 144-159)

Wednesday, Mar. 25th

Reading: Ch.2 (In-Field) from “Analyzing & Interpreting” by LeCompte and Schensul (pp. 11-36)

Week #10 –Interpreting In-Depth Interviews

Monday, Mar. 30th

[ANGEL] “Semi-Structured Interviewing” by Schensul et al. (pp. 149-164)

Wednesday, Apr. 1st

Reading: Ch. 5 (Analysis) from “On Ethnography” by Heath et al. (pp. 83-109)

Due: Semi-Structured Interview Assignment

Week #11 – Creating Data Codes and Using Qualitative Software

Monday, Apr. 6th

Reading: Ch. 4 (Analysis Top Down) from “Analyzing & Interpreting” by LeCompte and Schensul (pp. 45-66)

Due: Research Topic Intv Part II

Wednesday, Apr. 8th

Reading: Ch. 11 (Content Analysis) from “Qualitative Research” by Berg (pp. 338-373)

Week #12 – Making Sense of One’s Data (Analysis)

Monday, Apr. 13th

Reading: Ch. 7 (Preliminary Results) from “Analyzing & Interpreting” by LeCompte and Schensul (pp. 95-112)

DUE: Data Coding Assignment Part I

Wednesday, Apr. 15th

Reading: Reading: Ch. 10 (Fine-Tuning) from “Analyzing & Interpreting” by LeCompte and Schensul (pp. 177-211)

Week #13 – Research Design

Monday, Apr. 20th

Reading: Ch. 12 (Writing Papers) from “Qualitative Research” by Berg (pp. 378-406)

Wednesday, Apr. 22nd

Reading: [ANGEL] Excerpt from Ch. 8 (Arousing Interest) in “Analyzing Social Settings” by Lofland and Lofland (pp. 149-168)

DUE: Data Coding Assignment Part II

Week #14 – The Products of Research (Writing, Theorizing, and Making a Difference)

Monday, Apr. 27th

Reading: [ANGEL] Excerpt from Ch. 10 (Writing Practicies) by Lofland et al. (pp. 218-229)

Reading: Ch. 6 (History & Writing) from “On Ethnography” by Heath et al. (pp. 110-130)

Wednesday, Apr. 29th

Reading: [ANGEL] “Expert Witness” by Angel-Anjani (pp. 76-89)

Due: Data Analysis Assignment

Week #15 – Preliminary Findings & The Research Proposal

Monday, May 4th

Reading: [ANGEL] Advice for Grant-Writing by Silverman of Wenner-Gren

Reading: [ANGEL] Pick 1 Proposal Sample from choices given

DUE: Proposal Part I

Wednesday, May 6th

Course Wrap-up

Proposal Part II DUE on the Final Exam Day, May 11th
in my departmental mailbox by **3:30pm**