

Ethnic Studies 107/USP 130
Fieldwork in Racial & Ethnic Communities
Monday & Wednesday - 11:00am-2:00pm
Summer Session I
WLH 2114
UCSD

Instructor- Christina Carney
Office Hours – Wednesday 2-3pm
SSB 251
cjcarney@ucsd.edu

The course will examine interdisciplinary approaches and methods to doing ethnography. We will explore ethnography as a practice with historical and political baggage, but also with the potential for alternative knowledge production and epistemological critique. Class activities and readings will map how life worlds are informed by class, gender, sexuality and race. This course is largely structured by weekly lectures, peer workshops and group activities. Fieldwork exercises for the course will give students an opportunity to incorporate different theories/methods for critical, reflexive, and personal fieldwork activities ranging from performance and literary ethnography, to affect and sensory studies. Based on a local San Diego perspective and a critical, but also reflexive ethnographic examination of space, the fieldwork exercises will allow students to also show what the assigned ethnographies are not capable of illustrating.

All readings are available on Ted.UCSD.edu (grouped according to week) or as stated

Grading - Assignments

Attendance

- **20% of Final Grade**

Attendance and active participation will determine 20% of the student's total course grade. You are required to bring ALL course materials to class for reference, including notes and questions. If you miss more than 1 class ½ a letter grade will be deducted from the final grade. It is the student's responsibility to link-up with a peer/classmate if absent for any reason.

Additionally, weekly quizzes will count for half of your attendance grade (10%). The quizzes will test your comprehension of the assigned readings and lectures.

Research Design Proposal

- **20% of Final Grade**

Submit a proposed research design by Week 2, July 10th. Students must stipulate in the format for the final project—written essay, performance, or video. Must include a bibliography of additional texts needed for this project- literature review. See Chapter 2 of the *Critical Ethnography* (Madison) text for further details on beginning and outlining a research design.

Field notes

- **20% of Final Grade**

Exercises in the field under the following themes: week 3 (performance), week 4 (affect), and week 5 (the senses)

Critical Ethnography

- **40% of Final Grade**

Final project in written, performative, audio or visual format.

COURSEWORK

Week 1: Critical Ethnography

Monday, July 1st

- Introductions

Media: Price of Renewal

Wednesday, July 3rd

- Chps. 1 & 2, D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography*

- - - **QUIZ #1** - - -

Week 2: Ethics & Performance Ethnography I

Monday, July 8th

- Chaps. 4 & 5, D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography*

Wednesday, July 10th

- Ch. 7, D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography*

- - - **Quiz #2** - - - **////** - - - **Research Design Due** - - -

Week 3: Performance Ethnography II & Affect Studies

Monday, July 15th

- Introduction & Selected Sections from Act I "Is it a human being or a girl," D. Soyini Madison, *Acts of Activism: Human Rights as Radical Performance*

- - **Performance Field notes Due** - -

Wednesday, July 17th

- "An Inventory of Shimmers," Gregory J. Seigworth & Melissa Gregg, *Affect Theory Reader*

- "Politicizing Abjection: In the Manner of a Prologue for the Articulation of AIDS Latino Queer Identities," Alberto S. Sanchez, *American Literary History*

- - - **Quiz #3** - - -

Week 4: Sensory Ethnography & Writing/Interpretation

Monday, July 22th

- Ch. 2, Sara Pink, *Sensory Ethnography*

- "Immigrant Lives and the Politics of Olfaction in the Global City," *The Smell Culture Reader*

- - - **Affect Field notes Due** - - -

Monday, July 24th

- Ch. 8, D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography*
- Part I, Kamala Visweswaran, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*
- - - **Quiz # 4** - - -

Week 5: Meaning, Analysis, Interpretation & Writing

Monday, July 29th

- Ch. 1, Maria Eugenia Cotera, *Native Speakers: Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, Jovita Gonzalez, and the Poetics of Culture*
- - - **Senses Field notes Due** - - -

Wednesday, July 31st

- Group Discussion/Presentations
- - - **Quiz # 5** - - -

Final Ethnography Due:
Friday, August 2nd OR Monday, August 5th 11am-noon
(Bring to Room 251 in SSB – Physical Copies Only)

Excerpted from Christopher Prendergast. "The Typical Outline of an Ethnographic Research Publication"
in Teaching Sociology, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Jul., 2004), pp. 322-327

Outline of **research design (see everything in boldface below)** & final ethnography (includes everything on page):

I The research question.

May be formally stated as a hypothesis or informally as a motive to under-take the study. Usually found in the opening paragraphs. Poses a question or identifies a problem experienced by aggrieved communities. The study's findings answer the question; its methods ensure the answer's reliability.

II The field site or community

The place(s) where your interlocutors interact and where the observations and interviews are conducted. Identifies the key actors by pseudonym and describes the social categories of actors that inhabit the area. Typically situates the field site in a wider social or physical environment.

III The fieldwork experience.

Getting in, being accepted, establishing trust and rapport, getting the data. The learning and discovery process from the researcher's point of view.

IV The conceptual or theoretical framework

In our course this will fall under the themes sound studies, the senses, performance studies and affect studies.

V Literature review.

Other published studies on the research question, the population, or the field site. Often includes other studies using the author's preferred conceptual or theoretical framework. May generate hypotheses or ideas that the author wishes to adapt, test, contest, or extend in the present study.

VI Ethical considerations

Include here steps taken to ensure interlocutors' privacy, safety and agency.

VII Methods and procedures.

How the data were collected (by participant observation, structured or unstructured interviews, etc.). Site selection. Access to the field site or the population studied. Use of visual images or recordings.

VIII The presentation of results.

Major findings or observations. An efficient ethnography hews closely to the principle of relevance. Subheadings often help organize the presentation of results. Generally the longest section of the article.

IX Summary/conclusion.

Reiteration of the research question and the main findings. If the conceptual framework fruitfully supports the observations, the findings are treated as confirmed facts. If the conceptual framework is deemed inadequate in some respects, the study offers finer distinctions or recommends a different conceptual framework. New issues or questions raised by the study. Suggestions for further research.

X Discussion.

Explores the implications of one or more findings. Often prompted by an unexpected finding or methodological difficulty.

XI Bibliography

Include a bibliography with all of your references (even film or other media). Must use APA (American Psychological Association) format (this is the standard for the social sciences).

Courtesy of Professor Roshanak Kheshti, Ethnic Studies, UCSD

What?

The basic task of writing field notes requires little more than **paying close attention** to your subject matter and recording that which you've deemed "note worthy" (i.e. **using an audio or video recorder** or **jotting down notes**). This seems simple enough but you will soon discover that it takes a knack to determine 1) how to bracket your **subject matter** from other **peripheral matter** and 2) what is "note worthy". For example, if you are performing ethnographic fieldwork among street performers in Balboa Park, do you also include patrons, audiences and passers-by? Is it worth noting the performances only or should you also take notes when the performer's break for coffee?

-For more on what go to section called "**Data Collection**".

How?

Ultimately, these are judgments that you as a qualitative researcher must make, as there is **no omnipotent perspective** that anyone can attain; you are limited to your positionality and perspective. Description of an event can involve many modes of perception and each will give you a different **sense** of what you've just encountered. When taking notes, **tune your senses** to the details you've deemed most important for the exercise. If you're specifically taking notes on the topic of performance, focus your attention on every possible detail, offering what anthropologist Clifford Geertz calls "**thick description**"; don't just describe details of the action or behavior but also provide details on the **context** that will make those actions and behaviors meaningful (e.g. if you describe someone winking, the reader would want to know if there was debris in the actor's eye, if he or she was being flirtatious, or if the wink was a gesture between two actors conspiring in a shared secret).

When?

Get permission to take notes or record the interaction bearing in mind that in some cases it is inappropriate to take notes while in other cases it is totally acceptable. Use your better judgment: if jotting down notes is distracting your interlocutors, use an audio recorder or wait until later to take notes by memory. When taking notes by memory try to do so as soon after the fieldwork encounter as possible.

Vantage Point:

Be mindful of the vantage point you are using in the documentation of the encounter. Are your notes written from your vantage point or are you interviewing an interlocutor regarding her or his vantage point? In either case field notes should prioritize local knowledge and meanings: don't just make up a meaning for something you encounter but cross-reference your interpretation with those of your interlocutors (this has the added benefit of opening up a dialogue on the topic). Prioritize interaction, performance and dialogue-based field notes so that we get a sense of as many vantage points as possible including your own.

Anonymity:

It is important to respect the privacy of your interlocutors whose lives you risk exposing. While you may use proper names in your own field notes, all field notes handed in or included in the final ethnography should use only first names or pseudonyms in order to ensure anonymity.

Challenges to fieldwork: resistance, falsifications, half-truths & denial of participation

- If an interlocutor denies you access or declines to participate, it is most ethical to accept and honor their wishes. Since ethnographers rely on voluntary participation in our research, we must anticipate that not everyone will want to take part. Always have a plan B or additional individuals you can recruit for your research.
- How would you feel if someone wanted to know personal information about you for research purposes? You should always anticipate resistance because ethnographic fieldwork is invasive and people will naturally want to protect themselves against harm, scrutiny and surveillance. Try to begin with the least invasive data collection methods (the most informal) and work your way more organically to complex & challenging methods (formal interviews that involve personal questions).
- When an interlocutor gives you what you believe is false information, you must accept it as truth, because it is the truth of that moment. Perhaps he or she wants you to go away by lying to you, perhaps it is what he or she wishes to be true. In either case, this is as valid as a verifiable "truth" because the answer can illuminate some other cultural, political, personal or historical dynamic.

Tips & timesaving tricks:

If you don't have time to write everything down, **jot down keywords** that will jog your memory in the near future when you actually sit down to write the complete field notes. It is always easier to audio record your interactions (video recording is less so because of the bulkiness of the technology); use this method if you get permission to do so (note: if you plan to submit a written ethnography as your final project, you will have to transcribe the audio, which tends to be time-consuming).

Data Collection:

What counts as data: Qualitative data can include almost anything in the world, including: transcribed interviews; old photos or movies; ephemera (sentimental objects, collectibles, flyers and posters, things that should have been discarded that were kept for some reason); performances (which must be recorded somehow); memos or notes taken on an experience.

Data collection techniques: deep hanging out; interviewing (from formal to informal and everywhere in between); participatory; performative; felt-sensing...

Majoring or Minorng in Ethnic Studies at UCSD

Many students take an Ethnic Studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a social science, non-contiguous, or other college requirement. Often students have taken three or four classes out of interest yet do not realize how close they are to a major, a minor, or even a double major. An Ethnic Studies major is excellent preparation for a career in law, education, medicine, public health, social work, counseling, journalism, government and politics, international relations, and many other careers. If you would like information about the Ethnic Studies major or minor, please contact:

Daisy Rodríguez, Ethnic Studies Department Undergraduate Advisor
858-534-3277 or d1rodriguez@ucsd.edu or visit www.ethnicstudies.ucsd.edu

Student Consent for Release of Student Information

I hereby authorize the UCSD Ethnic Studies Department to return my graded final examination/research paper by placing the examination/research paper in a location accessible to all students in the course. I understand that the return of my examination/research paper as described above may result in the disclosure of personally identifiable information, that is not public information as defined in UCSD PPM 160-2, and I hereby consent to the disclosure of such information.

Quarter: _____

Course: _____

Instructor: _____

Student I.D.#: _____

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____