

FIELD METHODS IN RACIAL AND ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

Urban Ethnography

ETHN 190/ USP 129

Winter 2005

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Thurs 11-12

Or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The production of knowledge about racialized urban communities in the United States has consistently offered important possibilities and daunting challenges. Racialized communities have not only been blamed for their own failings within the U.S. racial caste system, but continue to be construed as drains on the system as well. Policy-makers, employers, and state officials use stereotypes like these to legitimize social processes that perpetuate and profit from legacies of discrimination. Entering this environment, researcher-advocates continue to bear ethical burdens regarding the use and impact of the knowledge they produce. While accurate representation is of key importance, researchers must develop methodologies that begin and end with critical attention to how meaning and significance are made relationally within racialized urban communities and the broader U.S. society. This class focuses on the training in and use of ethnography in understanding these issues.

Using a practical approach, we will exercise basic field methods that include actual observation and interviewing in San Diego's Mid City area. This region, including Hillcrest, Kensington, Northpark, and City Heights, is home to highly diverse communities along lines of race, class, nationality, and sexuality. Each student will contribute a self-selected project and conduct an individual ethnography. This project will be part of a collective volume of class papers focusing on communities in Mid City. This structure will allow the class to perform a wide range of methods and explore topics in urban ethnography centering on student interests. The research team will be able to consider, among other topics, social geography, access to resources and social mobility, neighborhood and community formation and representation, cultural values, inter-ethnic relations, and group mobilization.

The course will emphasize critical, collaborative ethnographic practices from project design, through data collection, interpretation, and writing. In-class sessions will focus on developing empathic reading and writing skills, contributing appropriately and extensively to class discussion, as well as giving and receiving peer feedback. In the field, students will practice critical listening, observing, and analyzing, and will also engage research through participation and conversation.

REQUIRED TEXTS (Books available at Groundwork Bookstore (858) 452-9625)

Stephen Gregory. 1998. *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Jim Van Maanen. *Tales of the Field*.

Aihwa Ong. 2003. *Buddha is Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship, the New America*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press.

Jim Thomas. 1993. *Doing Critical Ethnography*. Qualitative Research Methods Series #26, John Van Maanen, series editor. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

*All other readings on syllabus are available through the UCSD Library E reserves.

<http://libraries.ucsd.edu/services/reserves.html>. Follow "All Course Reserves" link to "Electronic Reserves." Search by instructor or course number.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Field Observation Paper (Due Week 5—Fri. 2/4)	25% of grade
Interview Paper (Due Week 8—Mon. 2/21)	25% of grade
Ethnography Paper (Draft 1 Due Week 9—Fri. 3/4)	10% of grade
(Final Draft Due Finals Week—Tue. 2/20)	30% of grade
Attendance and Class Participation	10% of grade

More detailed assignment guidelines will be provided in class.

Field Observation Paper

Identify a research topic for the quarter and conduct three observation sessions. One will be a walkthrough, including a mapping of the site area. The other two should be two different events or locations. Some examples are a classroom, a home, a sports event, a doctor's office, a job site, an area for socializing, and so on. Take extensive field notes during your participant observation sessions. Submit your analysis of these sessions (5 pages) incorporating concepts and themes from our course readings and lectures. Append two pages of field notes from each session.

Interview Paper

Continuing with your research topic, develop an interview guide (questionnaire). Interview three people for at least 30 minutes each. Tape-record your interviews (with their permission) or, alternatively, take notes during the interview. Submit your analysis of these interviews (5 pages), further refining how you incorporate concepts and themes from our course readings and lectures. Attach your interview guide (you can use published questions from relevant research projects in addition to your own questions) and your transcriptions of the most important 10 minutes from each interview.

Ethnography Paper

Revising and developing your Field Observation and Interview Papers, submit a short ethnography of your research topic between 1 ½ and 2 pages, single spaced. The following elements are required, but can be stylized at your discretion:

- **Project Description.** Describe your research design. State your research question and/or hypothesis.
- **Site Description and History.** Give your reader a very brief, basic understanding of the history of your group, community, or site.
- **Findings.** Organize your field observations and interviews by themes that explore/answer your research question or hypothesis.
- **Conclusion.** Briefly restate the implications and significance of your findings. Mention why you would or would not continue the research and what step you would take next.

Attendance and Class Participation

Full credit requires no more than two excused or unexcused absences as well as attentive participation in all in-class discussion and exercises. Additionally, attendance is required for paper due dates when class will use a small-group workshop format to maximize peer feedback. Giving feedback will be a factor in your own paper grade.

Transportation for Fieldwork

You are required to secure your own transportation to and from your fieldwork site visits. The professor will make reasonable efforts to encourage and facilitate carpooling. A free campus shuttle runs from UCSD to the Hillcrest Medical Center every half hour (:00 and :30) from 6am-6pm. Shuttle 3A goes from Hillcrest through downtown. From downtown, routes 7 and 15 (\$2.25 for city bus) service University Heights, Kensington, Northpark, and City Heights. For more detailed information about public transportation options, contact UCSD Transportation and Parking Services (Rideshare Operations 822-5977).

ADA Statement

Any student with a disability or condition that compromises her ability to complete course requirements should notify the professor as soon as possible. The professor will take all reasonable efforts to accommodate those needs. If, as a result of a disability, you cannot accept the content or terms of this syllabus, notify the professor within one week of receiving syllabus.

Late papers and assignments will not be accepted.

**To pass this course and/or receive a final grade, all course requirements must be completed satisfactorily.*

COURSE SCHEDULE

PART I—DESIGN

Week One: What is Ethnography?

TUESDAY 1/4

Class Introduction and Syllabus

THURSDAY 1/6

- Elliot Liebow. 1973. "Men and Jobs." In Thomas Weaver, gen. ed., *To See Ourselves: Anthropology and Modern Social Issues*. Glenview, IL and London: Scott, Foresman and Company. p.240-245.
- Horace Minter. 1956. "Body Ritual Among the Nacerima." In *American Anthropologist* 58(3).
- Stephen Gregory. *Black Corona*. "Introduction." p.1-19.
- Ahiwa Ong. *Buddha is Hiding*. "Prologue." p.xiii-xix.

Week Two: Critical Ethnic Studies Ethnography

TUESDAY 1/11

- Jim Thomas. *Doing Critical Ethnography*. Ch 1-2. p.1-32.
- Faye V. Harrison. 1991. "Ethnography as Politics." In Faye V. Harrison, ed. *Decolonizing Anthropology: Moving Further Toward an Anthropology for Liberation*. Washington, D.C.: Association of Black Anthropologists, American Anthropological Association. p. 88-109.

THURSDAY 1/13

- Joanne Passaro. 1997. "'You Can't Take the Subway to the Field!': 'Village' Epistemologies in the Global Village." In Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, eds. *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press. p. 147-162.
- Kath Weston. 1997. "The Virtual Anthropologist." (same as above, Gupta and Ferguson, *Anthropological Locations*). p. 163-184.
- Roderick A. Ferguson. 2004. "Introduction: Queer of Color Critique, Historical Materialism, and Canonical Sociology," from *Aberations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press. p. 1-29.

Week Three: Project Design

TUESDAY 1/18

- John Van Maanen. *Tales of the Field*. Ch 1-2. p. 1-44.
- Jim Thomas. *Doing Critical Ethnography*. Ch 3-4. p. 33-60.

THURSDAY 1/20

- Stephen Gregory. *Black Corona*. Ch 2-4.
- Aihwa Ong. *Buddha is Hiding*. Ch 1-2.

PART II—DATA COLLECTION

Week Four: Participant Observation 1

TUESDAY 1/25

- Jim Thomas. *Doing Critical Ethnography*. Ch 5. p. 61-72.

THURSDAY 1/27

- Roger Sanjek. 1990. "A Vocabulary for Fieldnotes" and "Examples of Fieldnotes." In Roger Sanjek, ed. *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. p. 92-135.

Week Five: Participant Observation 2

TUESDAY 2/1

- George C. Bond. 1990. "Fieldnotes in Past Occurrences." In Roger Sanjek, ed. *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. p. 273-289.
- Roger Sanjek. 1990. "Fieldnotes and Others." In (see above, Roger Sanjek, *Fieldnotes*). p. 324-337.

THURSDAY 2/3

Cluster Meetings I

- *Field Observation Paper Due*** (Friday 2/4)

Week Six: Interviewing 1

TUESDAY 2/8

Readings TBA

THURSDAY 2/10

Readings TBA

Week Seven: Interviewing 2

TUESDAY 2/15

Readings TBA

THURSDAY 2/17

Cluster Meetings II

PART III—WRITING ETHNOGRAPHY

Week Eight: Style and Authority

- *Interview Paper Due*** (Mon. 2/21)

TUESDAY 2/22

- Roger Sanjek. 1990. "On Ethnographic Validity." In Roger Sanjek, ed. *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. p. 385-413.
- John Van Maanen. *Tales of the Field*. Ch 3-4.

THURSDAY 2/24

- Aihwa Ong. *Buddha is Hiding*. Ch 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9.

Week Nine: Writing Ethnography 1

TUESDAY 3/1

- John Van Maanen. *Tales of the Field*. Ch 5-6.

THURSDAY 3/3

- Stephen Gregory. *Black Corona*. Ch 5-8 and Conclusion.
- *Ethnography Paper, Draft One Due*** (Fri. 3/4)

Week Ten: Writing Ethnography 2

TUESDAY 3/8

Draft Workshop I

THURSDAY 3/10

Draft Workshop II

- *Final Paper Due*** (Tuesday, 3/15)