

ANT 6353: Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology

Department of Anthropology, University of Texas at San Antonio

instructor: Prof. Jamon Halvaksz,
office: HSS 4.03.24
office hours: Mon, Wed & Fri 1:00-2:00
and Tuesday before class

phone: 458-6905
email: jamon.halvaksz@utsa.edu
blog: politicsofnature.wordpress.com

A TROUBLESOME QUOTE: *Anthropology never has had a distinct subject matter, and because it doesn't have a real method, there's a great deal of anxiety over what it is.* –Clifford Geertz 1991 (interview by Gary Olson, Journal of Advanced Composition 11(2))

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Ethnographic field methods are often debated, yet rarely referenced in ethnographic writing. In this class we will pay careful attention to methodologies, as 'real methods' that connect theory, fieldwork and ethnographic writing. We will emphasize critical and reflective engagements with the variety of humanistic, qualitative and quantitative methodologies used by anthropologist. The ultimate goal is the development of appropriate methods for addressing specific research questions. The class is divided into three parts: 1) examining the historical development of ethnographic field methods, and more recent critical and ethical challenges to those methods, 2) developing a basic tool kit for data collection, 3) exploring different kinds of evidence that result from our methodologies. Additionally, through projects, students will gain experience in participant observation and interviewing. Final papers will allow students to develop specific methodologies for their research.

OBJECTIVES:

Students will have the opportunity to develop and practice methodologies relevant to their own research. Through readings, presentations and discussions, we will also work on developing critical skills for understanding and assessing the work of others.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Bernard, H. Russell (ed.). 2000. *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Altamira Press.
Briggs, Charles L. 1986. *Learning How to Ask: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science Research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Sanjek, Roger (ed.). 1990. *Fieldnotes: The makings of Anthropology*. Cornell University Press.
Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 1999. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Dunedin, NZ: University of Otago Press
Wolf, Margery. 1992. *A thrice told tale: feminism, postmodernism, and ethnographic responsibility*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Additional readings will be available on WebCT or online.

GRADING: Grades will be based upon:

Participation, presentations, reaction statements	100 points or 33%
Projects	100 points or 33%
Methods statement	100 points or 33%

GRADING COMPONENTS

PARTICIPATION (20 points) will be based on overall class contribution over the course of the term. However, this should not be seen as points for simply talking, but for participating in class conversation and facilitating the contribution of others. Absences will be counted against you.

REACTION STATEMENTS (40 points): As part of your participation, each student will be expected to write 8 short reaction statements over the course of the term (1 page minimum, typed, double spaced). The statements should not be exhaustive, but should focus on themes and points of interest to the student. They can take the form of main points from each reading and questions that you would like to raise during discussion. Reaction statements for the second and third week of class is mandatory for everyone. Each week is possible, except for the week on ethics (week 6). If you complete more, the lowest grades will be dropped.

PRESENTATIONS (40 points): Each student will lead discussion 2 times over the course of term (20 points per presentation). During these presentations, students will present a brief summary of the assigned readings, raise critical questions and direct the rest of the class in discussions. Handouts outlining main points and questions are strongly encouraged. You will be graded on presentation content and style.

PROJECTS: The following projects must be completed. You should get started planning and completing these in the first few weeks of class. Writing components are expected to follow the rules of formal writing (typed, double spaced with normal font and margins). I will be grading on grammar and style as well as content.

1. Ethics training (no points):

Due: October 7

Complete it – required by UTSA for research approval. You will need to turn in a printed copy of your results page, and keep a copy for your own records as evidence of completion. Go to <http://vpr.utsa.edu/oric/irb/> and click on the link *****REQUIRED HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH TRAINING***** in the text. Follow the directions on that page.

2. Fieldnotes (40 points):

Due: October 21

By the due date, you will need to spend 10-15 hours taking and writing up detailed fieldnotes. Remember, you should record everything, even if it doesn't seem important at that moment. If you are working in a private office, or workspace, you will need informed consent and approval of appropriate authorities. The location could be related to your other project activities, or your eventual thesis. However, the latter is a bit complicated and will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. During this research, you should note everything, even if it doesn't seem immediately important, including your interactions and conversations. Based upon these notes you will write a 3-5 page reflective analysis on what you observed at the site and what you learned about your own note taking (what you did well, poorly, how you might improve, etc). You should consider course readings on this topic as you write. You will hand in typed copies of your fieldnotes (with times and dates noted). I would suggest complete the fieldwork by week 7

3. Interview (60 points):

Due: November 4

You will need to conduct an interview with an individual about a specific kind of labor or practice that they perform. Your interview must last at least one hour. Do not wait until the last minute as transcriptions take time. For this purpose, you will need to do the following

1. Identify an interviewee, and have them sign an informed consent
2. Observe the person in the skill/ task / labor and take some field notes
3. Interview about that labor. This will need to go beyond the mechanics of the practice, to include aspects of how this practice fits into the person's life, their attitude towards the work, how it shapes who they are...
4. After reviewing and/or transcribing the interview. Schedule a follow-up interview to ask further questions and clarifications.
5. Transcribe the interview
6. Write an analysis (at least 5 pages in length) reflecting on the practice, your strengths and weaknesses. You should consider course readings on this topic as you write.

METHODS PAPER

This has two parts. Please meet with me to discuss your project in the first few weeks. You should have two research questions prepared before meeting.

1. Initial methods statement (10 points):

Due November 23

Sunday night via WebCT

To begin, identify and refine 2 research questions related to your research. For each question you will describe what methods you will use to answer the research question, citing relevant literature and examples of how a given method has been used in similar context. Each research question should entail multiple methodologies, and not all of them will be found in class readings. So you will need to do some research in order to identify specific methods. Your methods statement should be 15 pages in length (double spaced, standard margins, font, etc.) and include a bibliography (which does not count toward the page total). Your bibliography should go beyond the assigned readings to develop a fine-tuned understanding of the literature about specific methods. These statements will be peer reviewed, and revised before they are turned in. Peer reviews will count for part of your grade. (10 based on draft and peer evaluations)

2. Revised methods statement (90 points):

Due December 11, 1pm

Via email

Based upon instructor and peer comments, a revision of the methods statement is due at finals. The revision will be shorter in length to conform with specific grant restrictions. Further directions will be provided.

Academic Policies, including Misconduct:

The University of Texas at San Antonio has clear policies concerning disruptive classroom behaviors, plagiarism, and other forms of misconduct (see www.utsa.edu/infoguide/appendices/b.cfm). Plagiarism can be as simple as collaborating with a classmate on an assignment that is intended to show individual effort. A common form in this class is failure to appropriately cite sources in the ethnography paper. More serious forms include cheating or copying another's work as your own. Cutting and pasting from internet sources is particularly problematic as the material on-line is not always accurate, and this is plagiarism. The college's policies regarding this and other misconduct are available in written form, and you are expected to know them and follow them. You can also refer to the UTSA Student Code of Conduct on scholastic dishonesty and disciplinary action (<http://www.utsa.edu/OSJA/index.cfm>). There are clear procedures for instructors and students to follow in the event of misconduct, harassment, or other unwanted behaviors, along with appropriate consequences for infractions. Students who ignore these policies will minimally receive an F on the associated assignment, but could receive an F for the course at my discretion.

Access/Accommodations:

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with disabilities and learning needs. If you need accommodation in order to fully participate in the course, information about the Disability Services can be found at their web site (www.utsa.edu/disability/), or call them at 458-4157. Please let me know if there is anything that I can do as well.

Other college services include:

Writing Center: www.utsa.edu/twc/index.html

Counseling: (210) 458-4140, RWC1.810

Academic advising (general): (210) 458-8000

Tomás Rivera Center: www.utsa.edu/trcss or (210) 458-4694

Class Schedule

Part 1: history, crisis, ethics

Week 1: Introductions and discussion

September 2

Week 2: Historical perspectives

September 9

<<reaction statement 1 due>>

[WebCT](#) Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1940. *The Nuer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pgs 7-15

[WebCT](#) 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.

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

***also in Stocking, George. 1992. *The Ethnographer's Magic and other essays in the history of anthropology*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

[WebCT](#) 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.

Recommended:

Kuper, Adam. 1983. *Anthropology and Anthropologists*. London: Routledge

Geertz, Clifford. 1988. *Works and Lives: The Anthropologists as Author*. Stanford: Stanford University Press

*Sanjek, Roger (ed.). 1990. *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*. Cornell University Press. Chapter 8.

Stocking, George: everything

Week 3: Crisis of Representation

September 16

<<research questions due>>

<<reaction statement 2 due>>

WebCT Asad, Talal. 1973. Introduction. Pgs 9-21 in *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, edited by T. Asad. New York: Humanities Press.

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

Fabian, Johannes. 1983. Time and the Emerging Other. Chapter 1 in *Time and the Other: How Anthropology makes its object*. New York: Columbia University Press.

WebCT Marcus, James and Michael Fischer. 1986. *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: an experimental moment in the human sciences*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1 and 2 (pgs 1-44)

Recommended:

Asad, Talal (ed.). 1973. *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*. New York: Humanities Press.

Geertz, Clifford 1973. *The Interpretations of Cultures*. Basic Books.

Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books

Week 4: Intervention I, Feminist Methodologies

September 23

*Gailey, Christine Ward. 2000. Feminist Methods. Chapter 6 in Bernard, H Russell (ed.). *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Altamira

*Wolf, Margery. 1992. *A thrice told tale: feminism, postmodernism, and ethnographic responsibility*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Recommended

Abu-Lughod 1991. Writing against Culture. In *Recapturing Anthropology: Working in the Present*. Ed R. Fox. Santa Fe, NM School of American Research Press.

di Leonardo, Micaela, ed. 1991. *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Post Modern Era*. California University Press.

Visweswaran, Kamala, (ed.). 1994. *Fictions of feminist ethnography*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Week 5: Intervention II, Indigenous/ Anti-Racist Methodologies _____ September 30

*Linda Tuhiwai Smith. 1999. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. Dunedin, NZ: University of Otago Press

Recommended

George Sefa Dei and Gupreet Singh Johal (eds). 2005. *Critical issues in Anti-Racist Research Methodologies*. New York: Peter Lang.

Kirin Narayan. 1993. How Native Is a "Native" Anthropologist? *American Anthropologist*. 95(3): 671-686.

Week 6: Ethics of Fieldwork _____ October 7

<<Complete ethics course on-line. This is required for anyone doing research at UTSA.>>

Cassel, Joan and Sue-Ellen Jacobs. [on-line]. Handbook on Ethical Issues in Anthropology. <http://dev.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/toc.htm>

*read the first three entries: Introduction, Some Issues..., and The Committee on Ethics....

*Fluehr-Lobban, Carolyn. 2000. Ethics. Chapter 5 in Bernard, H Russell (ed.). *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Altamira.

webCT Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2004 "Parts Unknown: Undercover ethnography of the organs-trafficking world" *Ethnography* 5(1): 29-73.

<http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm>

<http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/fieldnotes.htm>

<http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/ethstmnt.htm>

<http://dev.aaanet.org/stmts/irb.htm>

<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/documents/OHRPRegulations.pdf>

Recommended:

Blackwood, Evelyn. 1995. Falling in love with an-Other lesbian: reflections on identity in fieldwork. In *Taboo: sex, identity, and erotic subjectivity in anthropological fieldwork*. Don Kulick and Margaret Wilson (eds). pp. 51-75. New York: Routledge.

MacClancy, Jeremy. 2002 *Exotic No More: Anthropology on the front lines*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Fluehr-Lobban, Carolyn. 2003 *Ethics and the Profession of Anthropology*. 2nd Edition. Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.

Part 2 Informants, fieldnotes, and the fieldwork practice

Week 7: Practicalities 1, The Field as Place

October 14

WebCT Fischer, Michael. 1999. Emergent forms of Life: Anthropologies of Late or Post Modernities. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 28:455-478.

WebCT Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson. 1997. Discipline and Practice: 'The Field' as site, method and location in anthropology. In *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.

WebCT Marcus, George. 1995. Ethnography in/of the world system: The emergence of multi-sited ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24:95-117.

*Hannez, Ulf. 2000. Transnational Research. Chapter 7 in Bernard, H Russell (ed.). *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Altamira.

Recommended

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.

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

Week 8: Practicalities 2, Fieldnotes

October 21

<< complete fieldnotes project, due on Friday of this week. >>

*Sanjek, Roger (ed.). 1990. *Fieldnotes: The makings of Anthropology*. Cornell University Press. Chapters 1-6 (recommended: 9, 10)

Recommended:

Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz and Linda Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: the University of Chicago Press.

Week 9: Practicalities 3, Informants, interviews and observations _____ **October 28**

*Bernard, H. Russell and Gery Ryan. Text Analysis: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods. Bernard, H Russell (ed.). *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Altamira chapter 16

*Dewalt, Kathleen, Billie Dewalt, with Coral Wayland. 2000 Participant Observation. Bernard, Russell (ed.). *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Altamira chapter 8

*Farnell, Brenda and Laura Graham. 2000. Discourse-Centered Methods. Bernard, Russell (ed.). *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Altamira chapter 12

*Johnson, Allen, and Ross Sackett. 2000. Direct Systematic Observation of Behavior. Bernard, Russell (ed.). *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Altamira chapter 9

*Levy, Robert and Douglas Hollan. 2000. Person-Centered Interviewing and Observation Bernard, Russell (ed.). *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Altamira chapter 10

*Weller, Susan. 2000. Structured Interviewing and Questionnaire Construction. Bernard, Russell (ed.). *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Altamira. chpt. 11

Recommended:

Johnson, Jeffrey. 1990. *Selecting Ethnographic Informants*. Qualitative Research Methods Series 22. Thousand Oaks, London, New Dehli: Sage Publications

Week 10: Practicalities 4, data, stats and numbers _____ **November 4**

<< interview project due >>

Descriptive Statistics: <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/statdesc.php>

*Handwerker, W. Penn and Stephen Borgatti. 2000 Reasoning with numbers. Bernard, H Russell (ed.). *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Altamira chapter 15.

WebCT Gregory, Chris and J. Altman. 1989. *Observing the Economy*. London: Routledge. Chapters 3 and 5.

*Johnson and Johnson. 1990. Quality and Quantity: On the Measurement Potential of Ethnographic Fieldnotes. Chapter 7 in Sanjek, Roger (ed.). *Fieldnotes: The makings of Anthropology*. Cornell University Press.

WebCT Tsing, Anna. "The earth, this island Borneo". *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connections*. Princeton University Press. pgs 155-171

Recommended:

<http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/contents.php>

Part 3 Types of Evidence

Week 11: Social Evidence

November 11

first half of class:

WebCT Engelke, Matthew. 2008. The object of evidence. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. 14(1s): S1-S21.

*Schweizer, Thomas. 2000. Epistemology: The Nature and Validation of Anthropological Knowledge. Bernard, H Russell (ed.). *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Altamira chapter 2

second half of class:

WebCT Carsten, Janet. 2004. *After Kinship*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1

WebCT W. H. R. Rivers. 1900. Genealogical Method of Collecting Social and Vital Statistics *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 30: 74-82

Week 12: Linguistic evidence

November 18

*Briggs, Charles L. 1986. *Learning How to Ask: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science Research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Recommended

Kulick, Don. 1992. *Language shift and cultural reproduction: socialization, self, and syncretism in a Papua New Guinean village*. Cambridge: CUP.

Week 13: Historical evidence

November 25

<< Methods statements due, via email, on Sunday November 23. >>

first half of class

*Brettell, Caroline. 2000. Fieldwork in the Archives: Methods and Sources. Bernard, H Russell (ed.). *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Altamira chapter 14

*Lutekehaus, Nancy. 1990. Refractions of Reality: On the Use of Other Ethnographers' Fieldnotes. Chapter 11 in Sanjek, Roger (ed.). *Fieldnotes: The makings of Anthropology*. Cornell University Press.

WebCT Fairhead, James and Melissa Leach. 1996. "Introduction" In *Misreading the African Landscape*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

second half of class

Peer review. Please read assigned papers before class and complete evaluation

***Week 14: Visual and Material evidence**

December 2

WebCT Bell, Joshua. 2006. Losing the Forest but not the Stories in the Trees. *The Journal of Pacific History* 41(2)

*El Guindi, Fadwa. 2000. From Pictorializing to Visual Anthropology. Bernard chapter 13

WebCT Latour, Bruno. 1999. Circulating Reference. Chapter 2 in *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Read this first: <http://battellemedia.com/archives/003386.php>

Then watch the video ethnographies at: <http://mediatedcultures.net/youtube.htm>

Recommended:

Bateson, Gregory and Margaret Mead. 1985. *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis*. New York: New York Academy of Sciences.

Edwards, Elizabeth. 2001. *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums*. London: Berg.

Ginsburg, Faye. 1994. Embedded Aesthetics: Creating a Discursive Space for Indigenous Media. *Cultural Anthropology*, 9(3):365-382.

Pink, Sarah. 2001. *Doing Visual ethnography: images, media, and representations in research*. London Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.