

**Anthropology 650**  
**Ethnographic Field Methods**  
**Spring Semester 2008**  
**Mondays, 4:00 – 7:00 pm**  
**Anthropology Building, Room 214**  
**Professor: Cynthia Werner**

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Office: Anthropology Building, Room 224**

**Office Hours: Tuesday afternoons, 2-5 pm, Wednesdays 10 am-12 pm and 2-5 pm**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Initially developed within the subfield of cultural anthropology, ethnographic field methods include a number of methodological practices that are typically used in long-term field-based research in a unique cultural setting. Ethnographers almost always use the method of participant observation, which basically means that they “hang out” in a community and participate in daily life while taking notes on their experiences. In addition, ethnographers typically conduct interviews, which range from very informal conversations to structured interviews that are equivalent to a questionnaire or survey. This course is designed to introduce graduate students in anthropology (and related fields) to the research methods most commonly used by cultural anthropologists. Although this course emphasizes qualitative research methods, the course examines how qualitative research methods can be incorporated into research projects that employ either a scientific or an interpretive paradigm.

The primary objective of this course is to prepare students to conduct a long-term ethnographic fieldwork project. Course assignments allow students to practice field methods and to develop research design for their future fieldwork. Each class meeting will include discussion of the assigned readings and discussions of student experiences with the various projects assigned for this course.

Prerequisites: Ideally, students enrolled in this class should be familiar with basic concepts in cultural anthropology and should be preparing to do ethnographic fieldwork for their master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation. Students who do not fit this description should consult with the instructor.

**COURSE TEXTS**

- Russell Bernard. 2006. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Fourth Edition. Altamira Press.
- Kathleen DeWalt and Billie DeWalt. 2002. *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*. Altamira.
- Andrew Gardner and David Hoffman. 2006. *Dispatches from the Field: Neophyte Ethnographers in a Changing World*. Waveland Press.
- James Spradley. 1997. *The Ethnographic Interview*. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

## COURSE GRADES

There are no exams for this course. Final course grade will be based entirely on the grades for eight writing assignments:

<b>Assignment #</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Percent of Grade</b>
1	Preparing for Fieldwork	Feb. 11	5%
2	Research Design and Sampling Strategy	March 3	10%
3	Participant Observation	March 17	10%
4	Writing Interview & Survey Questions	March 24	10%
5	Fieldnotes from Practice Interviews	April 7	15%
6	Summary Analysis from Practice Interviews	April 14	15%
7	IRB Application	April 21	10%
8	Modified Grant Proposal	April 28	25%
TOTAL			100%

## COURSE POLICIES

- ***Late Papers***  
Papers should be turned in during the class meeting. If you are unable to attend class, you can submit your paper by email. Late papers for any of the written assignments will be penalized two points for each weekday late. If the paper is extremely late, you may receive up to half the total points for the assignment.
- ***Academic Integrity Statement***  
“An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal or tolerate those who do.” All students are expected to abide by the Aggie Honor Code. All cases of plagiarism and cheating will be handled according to university policies. (<http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor>). If you are caught plagiarizing or cheating, you will receive a zero for the assignment and you may receive an F for the class. As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one’s own ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with the definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of the person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated.
- ***Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)***  
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities are guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Cain Hall, or call 845-1637.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **Week One (Jan. 14) – Introduction to the Course**

**\*\* MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY (Jan. 21) \*\***

### **Week Two (Jan. 28) – Foundations of Social Research: Scientific and Interpretive Approaches**

- ✓ R. Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, Ch. 1-2
- ✓ K. DeWalt & B. DeWalt, *Participant Observation*, Ch. 1
- ✓ J. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview*, Ch. 1-2
- ✓ D. Hoffman & A. Gardner, *Dispatches from the Field* (Hoffman and Gardner)

### **Week Three (Feb. 4) – Preparing for Field Research and Developing a Research Design**

- ✓ R. Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, Ch. 3, 5
- ✓ K. DeWalt & B. DeWalt, *Participant Observation*, Ch. 6
- ✓ A. Gardner & D. Hoffman, *Dispatches from the Field* (Gardner)

### **Week Four (Feb. 11) – Entering the Field and Doing Participant Observation**

- ✓ K. DeWalt & B. DeWalt, *Participant Observation*, Chs. 2-3
- ✓ R. Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, Ch. 13
- ✓ A. Gardner & D. Hoffman, *Dispatches from the Field* (Peutz, Simon, Conzelman)
- ✓ *Assignment One Due – Preparing for Fieldwork*

### **Week Five (Feb. 18) – Personal Issues, Positionality and the Ethics of Fieldwork**

- ✓ K. DeWalt and B. DeWalt, *Participant Observation*, Chs. 5, 10; Appendix 4
- ✓ J. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview*, Ch. 3
- ✓ D. Hoffman & A. Gardner, *Dispatches from the Field* (Drybread, Goldade, Ogawa)

### **Week Six (Feb. 25) – Developing a Sampling Method**

- ✓ R. Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, Chs. 6-8
- ✓ J. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview*, Step One

### **Week Seven (March 3) – Observation Methods Used by Ethnographers**

- ✓ R. Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, Ch. 15
- ✓ K. DeWalt & B. DeWalt, *Participant Observation*, Ch. 4
- ❖ *Assignment Two Due – Research Design and Sampling Strategy*

**\*\* SPRING BREAK (March 10-14)\*\***

### **Week Eight (March 17) – Unstructured, Semi-structured, and Structured Interviews**

- ✓ R. Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, Ch. 9-10
- ✓ K. DeWalt & B. DeWalt, *Participant Observation*, Ch. 7
- ✓ *Assignment Three Due – Participant Observation*

### **Week Nine (March 24) – Conducting Domain Analysis Interviews**

- ✓ J. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview*, Steps 2-4, 7, 9
- ✓ R. Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, Ch. 11

❖ *Assignment Four Due – Interview and Survey Questions*

**Week Ten (March 31) – Writing Fieldnotes**

- ✓ R. Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, Ch. 14
- ✓ K. DeWalt and B. DeWalt, *Participant Observation*, Ch. 8 & Appendix A

**Week Eleven (April 7) – Different Approaches to Data Analysis**

- ✓ R. Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, Chs. 16-17
- ❖ *Assignment Five Due – Fieldnotes from Practice Interviews*

**Week Twelve (April 14) – Analyzing Fieldnotes Continued**

- ✓ R. Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, Ch. 18
- ✓ K. DeWalt and B. DeWalt, *Participant Observation*, Ch. 9
- ✓ J. Spradley, *The Ethnographic Interview*, Steps 5, 8, 10-12
- ❖ *Assignment Six Due – Analysis of Interview Data*

**Week Thirteen (April 21) - Dealing with Sticky Issues in the Field**

- ✓ A. Gardner & D. Hoffman, *Dispatches from the Field* (Hoffman, Greenzough, Jones, Tracy, Haanstad)
- ❖ *Assignment Seven Due – IRB Application*

**Week Fourteen (April 28) – Incorporating Other Sources of Data**

- ✓ A. Gardner & D. Hoffman, *Dispatches from the Field* (Ottinger, Teman)
- ✓ Michael Angrosino, “Ethnography and the Analysis of Archived Materials” (Handout)
- ❖ *Assignment Eight Due – Modified Grant Proposal*

## WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

The reading assignments provide you with the background knowledge necessary to design an effective fieldwork project, while the written assignments give you an opportunity to apply this information. There are two types of written assignments: (1) Assignments based on small projects conducted in Bryan-College Station (#3, 5, 6); and (2) Assignments that prepare you for Long-Term Fieldwork (#1, 2, 4, 7, 8). For the first set of assignments, you will be conducting research in Bryan-College Station. For the second set of assignments, you will be writing about a fieldwork project that you are planning to complete in the near future. Most of these writing assignments will be useful for the final writing assignment – the modified grant proposal. (Students who are not planning a fieldwork project will fulfill the same assignments for mock project.) All written assignments will be discussed informally in class on the day that they are due.

- **Assignment One – Preparing for Fieldwork (Practical Considerations)** (5%)  
You are expected to write a 2-3 page essay which addresses how you plan to deal with the practical issues discussed during the first two weeks of class in relation to your long-term fieldwork project. In particular, you should address: (1) Funding Issues (Where can you apply for funding? Which sources of funding are you eligible for? Which sources of funding are a good match for your project? When do you need to apply?); (2) Networking Issues (What steps can you take to build a network of colleagues and local contacts that would be useful for this project?); (3) Language issues (Do you need to know any foreign languages for your project? If so, what steps can you take to improve your language skills before going to the field?); (4) Bureaucratic Issues (What visas and research permits, if any, do you need for this project? If so, when and how do you apply? What do you need to do to get IRB approval?); and (5) Other Issues (Are there any other practical considerations that you need to think about for your project?)
- **Assignment Two – Research Design and Sampling Strategy** (10%)  
You are expected to write a 2-3 page essay that (1) defines the problem you hope to address, (2) describes the general type of research design planned for the project (i.e. interpretive study, hypothesis-based qualitative analysis, hypothesis-based analysis that uses mixed methods, comparative case study, etc.); and (3) the sampling strategy that you plan to use for your study (i.e. type of sample; method used to locate participants; how many participants in the study, etc.)
- **Assignment Three – Participant Observation** (10%)  
Write a 3-5 page essay that summarizes your observations in Bryan-College Station based on ONE of the following guidelines: “Map of a Block,” “Body Language”; or “Elevator Behavior.” The guidelines for these options will be provided in class.
- **Assignment Four – Writing Interview and Survey Questions** (10%)  
You are expected to prepare a list of interview (and/or survey) questions for your long-term fieldwork project. You should write a minimum of 25 questions. (Students who plan to use survey questions should practice writing both types of questions.) The questions should follow in a logical order. You may wish to compile several different sets of interview questions (i.e. questions you would ask shopkeepers, questions you would ask clients). For each set of interview or survey questions, you should identify the basic demographic characteristics of your informants. For survey questions, you should indicate whether or not the questions are close-ended or open-ended questions.

- **Assignment Five – Fieldnotes from Practice Interviews (15%)**  
 For this assignment, you are expected to select a “cultural scene” that is unfamiliar to you. This cultural scene may be a profession, a sport, a hobby, a religion, an organization, a support group, etc. After you have selected a cultural scene to study, you will need to select one or two informants who are familiar with that cultural scene, obtain consent to conduct interviews (using the consent form for this course) and then conduct TWO practice interviews using the interview methods discussed in class. For one of the interviews, you will record the interview with a tape-recorder and practice transcribing the interview. (Note: Due to the time involved in transcription, you should try to limit this interview to 30-minutes AND you should start these interviews well before the assignment is due.) For the second interview, you will take notes during the interview, and then write up a full set of notes after the interview. The goal of the assignment is to learn firsthand how this style of interviewing can be used to see how people categorize their world. This assignment corresponds most closely with the domain analysis type of interview. For the assignment, you will turn in your raw fieldnotes (no page limit).
- **Assignment Six – Summary Analysis from Practice Interviews (15%)**  
 For this assignment, you are expected to prepare a 4-5 page analysis of the qualitative interview data gathered from the practice interview assignment. You may choose to use any of the analytical techniques discussed in the readings (creating tables, causal flowcharts, decision models, taxonomies, etc.). You should summarize what you have learned about the topic from the interview assignment. You may choose to reflect on the limitations of your interview data.
- **Assignment Seven – IRB Application (10%)**  
 For this assignment, you will turn in completed forms for the Institutional Review Board-Human Subjects in Research at Texas A&M. Information and forms can be found at <http://researchcompliance.tamu.edu/irb/information-for-investigators>. You should complete the application form in its entirety and prepare a consent form and/or information sheet for participants. You do not, however, need to include signatures from your advisor and department head, and you do not need to provide additional materials (CITI training certificate, interview questions, translated consent form, letter from host country, etc.) Your IRB application forms should correspond to the project developed for the modified grant proposal assignment.
- **Assignment Eight – Modified Grant Proposal (25%)**  
 You should be working on this final assignment throughout the semester. In the beginning of the semester, you will identify funding agencies that could support your research. You should select one of these agencies (i.e. NSF, Wenner-Gren, SSRC, NEH), and prepare a grant proposal based on their guidelines. Most research proposals consist of at least five components: research objectives, literature review (i.e. significance of study), methods, qualifications of researcher, and budget. For this “modified” grant proposal, the research objectives section should just briefly state the research question and the literature review section can be omitted entirely (though this does not mean that you should not be thinking about a theoretical framework!). The proposal should include the other components in their entirety.