

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
SEMINAR SOCIAL CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

ANTH 486
SPRING 2010

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Ethnography, both as a set of methodological and textual practices, is central to the discipline of cultural anthropology. This seminar focuses on the doing and on the reading of ethnography. Students carry out a semester long fieldwork project of their own (I will make suggestions for doable projects) with the benefit of helpful discussion from others in the seminar. We also engage a selection of ethnographic texts focusing on how the ethnographic texts were produced. Attention is devoted to such issues as narrative techniques employed in ethnographic accounts, political questions of representation, and ethical concerns in doing anthropological research. Students are expected to attend regularly and participate fully in the seminar. Students in the seminar will discuss their progress and the progress of other students' fieldwork and ethnography. Besides writing ethnography, students will write three critical essays on the reading of the assigned ethnographies. Description and criteria of critical essays is discussed below in the syllabus. This course is both fieldwork intensive and writing intensive requiring long hours at your field site and at the computer. As you will see, the assignments start early and grow building upon one another and if you fall behind you will not be able to catch up. Many of our seminar sessions will be in workshop format and if you come to class without having done your work, you will undermine the learning for others as well. Due to the short semester and a once a week seminar session, attendance must be 100% for all students. My expectation for student performance is high as appropriate for students who qualify for enrollment in this seminar.

COURSE GOALS

- 1. To provide students with the opportunity to practice cultural anthropology as anthropologists and not as students of anthropology.**
- 2. To provide students with the opportunity to acquire critical thinking and writing skills**

3. To provide students with the opportunity to design their own ethnographic research with the production of an ethnography as an outcome of their research
4. To provide students with the opportunity to read and discuss ethnographies that represents the current genre in ethnographic writing.

PART I

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

ETHNOGRAPHY

Students are expected to write an ethnography having done the requisite fieldwork fundamental to the writing of an ethnography. Fieldwork is a time consuming process and to be done well, requires steady and consistent effort spread over the course of the project. You should decide on a topic with questions for research doable within the constraints of a short semester. It is expected that you will discuss your topic within the seminar (*see course schedule*) and with me, have it approved by me and turn in a (approximately two paged single spaced) by February 24th. I expect that you begin your research in the first week of March. See handout for writing a proposal. It is crucial that you propose a doable research, allowing the month of March for research and April for analysis and writing of your ethnography. *The Ethnography is worth 50 % of your grade. Final version of your ethnography is due in class on Wednesday, April 28th. No late ethnography will be accepted and no extensions will be given.*

Recent innovation in ethnographies involves the inclusion of discourse – interaction – conversations and/or interactions between ethnographer and informant and others who are studied. Our emphasis will be on using, when possible, close transcription of talk in interactions and talk as evidence to support major claims you make concerning your research. This means that you must take and/or make careful notes concerning conversations and exchanges that take place in interviews and in informal discussion.

PROPOSAL FOR ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnography is built upon the inclusion of certain steps: what is the problem/phenomenon research and why do you think it is important that anthropologists should consider this phenomena or problem? What do you want to know? What is your research design (methodology) and why is this design suitable to obtaining the data you must collect? What are the important questions your ethnography must address? What are the questions that enable your research? What is your schedule for fieldwork activities? Keep in mind you must account for Phase I fieldwork (March) for specific intervals of time you intend to spend on specific methodologies, record keeping and writing of field notes. Then, you must account for time (April) spent in data analysis, outlining the ethnography and the writing of the ethnography (description and analysis). Once you have answered these questions to your satisfaction, you should think about the best research site and how you will go about conducting your research. The university setting and the city offer you public space in which to conduct your research. Your ethnography should be divided into four chapters: introduction, field methods, findings and conclusions. See handout on Ethnography for more details. *Your proposal for your ethnography is due in class on Wednesday, February 24th.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In addition, *it is required that you come to the seminar with two or three written questions for discussing the assigned reading for that week.* Students will be asked to lead class discussion on a regular basis. My expectation of student full participation in discussion is high. Discussion will cover three areas, assigned reading of ethnography, assigned projects and presentation of fieldwork. Discussion questions will be collected at the end of the seminar session and returned with comments.

READING NOTES

Besides discussion questions, students are required to bring to class reading notes for the assigned readings of the seminar session. Reading notes are a combination of your impressions, comments and questions that come to mind as you read the assigned reading. Go to my web page at www.udel.edu/anthro/budani and read files *How To Read Critically* and *How To Read Academic Texts Critically*. Each file contains helpful suggestions for you to use as you annotate your text. These annotations serve as the basis of your reading notes. Reading notes have a particular format. Place your name

and date in the left corner at the top of the page. Underneath type the specific reading assigned for the seminar session. Align your page to the left and type your notes as bullet point paragraphs. Reading notes should not exceed two typed pages. Use one inch margins all around and single spaced. Skip two spaces between bullet points. Use a 12 point font. Reading notes will be turned in at the end of the seminar session and returned with comments.

FIELDWORK LOG

To help you keep track of your time, **I require that you keep a fieldwork log starting after your proposal is approved. The log is a place in which you record the interviews you do, the events and places you visit in connection with your research, the approximate time you spend in the field and any relevant. The log does not take the place of your field notes note book.** I look at the logs periodically and set aside class time for you to discuss the progress of your fieldwork. Logs are more than record keeping. Logs also contain your reflections on what you do, how well you think you are progressing and, of course, include questions that come up during the course of your field work. I suggest that you create a file on your computer named 'fieldwork log' so that periodically you can email the file to me for review. Your log will be returned to you with my comments. Doing this means that it is not necessary for me to carry folders or papers to and from the seminar thus avoiding the possibility of losing someone's log.

FIELDNOTES

There is not set format for writing field notes. Everyone devises a systematic way to take and maintain field notes. Select a method that works best with you. There are, however, a few requirements: Whether you keep a field journal or develop a field journal on your computer, each entry must be set in context: what are you doing? With whom are you working? What is the setting, time and date? Is this a note of an observation, informal interviews or structured interviews or participation? Then write your notes. Keep in mind that your notes constitute the data you will analyze and interpret so make notes as detailed and comprehensive as possible. Regular review of notes is advised. When you review your notes, you are looking for patterns, among other things. Ask yourself what do these notes tell me about my research questions? What major theme seems apparent to me? Periodically, I will ask to review your notes. If you keep your notes in a computer file, it will be easy to email a copy of your notes. I will comment on your notes.

CRITICAL REVIEW ESSAY

Students are required to write one critical review essays on a self selected ethnography. A critical essay carries positive as well as negative meaning. A critical essay can be entirely positive. A critical essay is informative and it emphasizes the ethnographic description and interpretation. In this kind of work all claims (position statements) made about the research must be backed up by evidence (reasons). To some degree you are teaching your audience something new about the ethnography. It is important to focus on a particular aspect of the ethnography rather than trying to say everything that could possibly be said.

A critical essay describes your attitude when you do the reading – an attitude best described as detached evaluation. You weigh the coherence of the reading – the ethnographer’s position, coherence of her/his argument and the various claims the ethnographer makes – and evaluate the description and analysis of the data. A critical essay is composed of (1.) a summary of the ethnographic position or stance or what are his/her focus, key questions and what he she has to say about the phenomena under consideration. Most of all, it includes a brief statement of the ethnographer’s main idea and thesis. (2.) A discussion of the important facts and lines of reasoning the ethnographer used to support the main idea. (3.) A summary of the ethnographer’s use of data to support his or her main idea and theme. (4) State your evaluation of the ethnographer’s work including an assessment of the ethnographer’s interpretation and its relevance to the main idea or theme in the ethnography. Also, make an assessment of the ethnographer persuasiveness-- what persuades you as to the correctness of the ethnographer’s interpretations? (5.) Ask yourself have I covered all the relevant material in the assigned reading? What different interpretations would you offer? What would you have done differently? (6.) State explicitly your position on the assigned reading and state why your assessment of the ethnography is an important one and indicate questions that remain to be answered. *A hard copy (paper) of the critical essay is due in class on May 12th. The Critical Essay is valued at 30% of your grade and thus it is important to your overall performance in the seminar. Technical guidelines include one inch margin all around; use 1.5 line spacing and a font at point 12. Include a cover title sheet with your name and seminar designation (anth486) with your ethnography. Be sure to number your pages. Chapters must have headings and there must be a tab of contents. Your bibliography is attached to the end of your paper. Be sure that your citations in the ethnography follow AAA style guide and that the bibliographical citation as follows the AAA format. As you can gather the writing of ethnography*

FIELDWORK EXERCISES

Five mini fieldwork projects will be assigned at the beginning of the course (see course schedule). The purpose of the assigned projects is to provide you with the opportunity to practice methods and techniques requisite to fieldwork. The projects will be assigned from your text, *Field Ethnography: A Manual for Doing Cultural Anthropology*. Each exercise is explained in detail and is accompanied with an example of a completed exercise. Besides completing the exercises as outlined in the Manual, students are required to prepare a brief (one or two paragraphs about the experience of doing the exercise. Such a discussion should include how you felt, problems encountered, doubts and well as a sense of accomplishment. A portion of each seminar session will be set aside to discuss the project and your experiences. Such discussion will help clarify proper procedures and your comfort level. Simply said, so far what you know of fieldwork is abstract knowledge; the field projects will give you the experience with the various methodologies so that you achieve a comfort level before starting fieldwork for your own research.

PART II

COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is mandatory. We have a relatively short semester and a great deal of work to accomplish. We meet once a week for three hours. A missed classed will put students behind in their work. Should an absence be unavoidable due to serious illness, students are still responsible for the work assigned for that class session which includes sending me an email with written work and also participatory comments. No absence is excused unless you have permission from me and you should be forewarned that I will not give my permission easily.

LATE SUBMISSION

Students should follow the date due as noted in the syllabus. All assignments are expected to be turned in on the due date. No assignment will be accepted late and this includes the discussion questions. In the rare case that you have my permission to miss class, you are still expected to send me, via email, your discussion questions and any other assignments due for that date. For example, if a chapter from ethnography is assigned, then you are responsible to email your reading notes for that chapter(s). Class discussion questions are expected to be included with the aforementioned material.

SEMINAR PARTICIPATION

It is not possible to obtain a passing grade for the seminar unless you participate in seminar discussion. All students are expected to fully participate in seminar discussion. **Although Participation is valued at 20% of your grade, the percentage is misleading for participation also includes discussion of ethnographies, fieldwork and discussion of fieldwork within the seminar. Suffice it to say I expect lively, useful and insightful discussion during the seminar**

SEMINAR DESIGN

I envision the seminar as a collaborative group with the aim to be active and cooperative participants. This is not an ordinary teacher/student design where I have the knowledge and you, the student passively receive knowledge. We come together to better understand ethnography both in the assigned reading and in your research. I expect students to be colleagues not competitors.

AGENDA FOR SEMINAR

For the most part, the seminar will be divided into two or three segments. The first hour of the seminar will focus on the assigned reading and discussion questions. After a short 10 minute break, we will reconvene and discuss the assigned field project. This segment of the seminar will be student led. You should prepare comments and questions about your experience to date with the field project. Then, after a short break, we will turn to a discussion of your idea for a field project. This segment of the seminar will be student led.

STUDENT LED SEMINAR SESSIONS

All students in the seminar will have at least one opportunity to lead the seminar. It may be possible, depending on enrollment, for students to lead the seminar twice. Students lead discussion for the two segments identified above as student led. Leader should be thoroughly prepared to lead a seminar by preparing comments, observations and questions. Leaders are also expected to encourage participation by all members of the seminar.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT: CAN YOU READ?

My question is a serious one. Most of us use our eyes to glance over the words on a page all the while listening to a voice in our heads. When we come across something that sounds important, we reach for a highlighter and mark the sentence or paragraph.

Making no further notation we soon forget why we marked the item. At the end all we have is a yellow or blue or pink page. This is a description of passive reading. The reading we will do in this seminar is active critical reading. Learn to annotate your texts by writing short summaries, make notes, comments and so forth in the margins of your text. If you must use a highlighter do so, but also annotate why you have highlighted a particular section of the text. As mentioned before, go to my web page www.udel.edu/anthro/budani and study files ***How to Read Critically and How to Read an Academic Text Critically*** for they will give you useful information about active and critical reading.

COURSE SCHEDULE
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Wednesday, February 10

Seminar Topic: Review of Syllabus

1. Review of Assigned Ethnographies
2. First Field Project(s) Assigned: *Map of A Block & Private Language*
3. Review of theory
4. Student Leader for 2/17/2010 Session
5. Assigned Reading for 2/17/2010 *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*

Wednesday, February 17

Seminar Topic: *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*

Student Leader:

1. Discussion Questions/RFIM
2. Reading Notes/ RFIM
3. What did you learn from this reading about fieldwork and writing about ethnographic research?
4. Discussion "Census" and "Private Language" (Bring field notes and exercise notes)
5. Due in class "Census" and "Private Language" written summary (See Chapters for directions)
6. Written ideas for Field Research
7. Assigned Reading for 2/ 24/2010 *Needed by Nobody Chapter 1, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3*

Wednesday, February 24

Seminar Topic: *Needed by Nobody*

Student Leader

1. Discussion Questions/*Needed by Nobody Chapters 1, 2 and 3*
2. Assigned Field Exercise: In Manual *Body Language*
3. Review of Ethnographic Research Proposals
4. Assigned Reading for 3/3/2010 Chapters 4, 5 and 6

*Fieldwork Proposal Due in Class

Wednesday, March 3

Seminar Topic: *Needed by Nobody*

Student Leader

1. Discussion Questions/*Needed by Nobody Chapters 4, 5, and 6*
2. Reading Notes/*Needed by Nobody*
3. Anything you can use from this ethnography in your own ethnography? What did you learn about writing ethnography from this reading?
4. Discussion Field exercise Experience
5. Send via email Fieldwork Log for fieldwork from 2/24 to 3/2
6. Discussion of Ethnographic Research
7. Assigned Fieldwork Exercise: *Holding the Door: Cultural Rules*
8. Assigned Reading for 3/10 *An Enchanted Modern Chapters 1, 2, and 3,*

Wednesday, March 10

Seminar Topic: *An Enchanted Modern*

Student Leader:

1. Discussion of Field Exercise *Holding the Door*
2. Discussion Questions/*An Enchanted Modern Chapters 1,2, and 3*
3. Reading Notes for *An Enchanted Modern*
4. Discussion of Ethnographic Research: Specific Activities, Progress and What Remains to be done?
5. Need to Revise Proposal?
6. Assigned Reading for 3/17/2010 *An Enchanted Modern Chapter 4, 5, and 6. Skim read chapter 7*

Wednesday, March 17

Seminar Topic: *An Enchanted Modern*

Student Leader:

1. Discussion Questions/*An Enchanted Modern Chapters 4, 5 and 6*
2. Reading Notes for *A Enchanted Modern*
3. Anything you can use from this ethnography in your own ethnography? What did you learn about writing ethnography from this reading?
4. Discussion of Ethnographic Research: Progress Report, Questions and Problems...
5. Email Ethnographic Log cover period 3/3 to 3/16
6. Assigned Reading for 3/24 *Love and Honor in the Himalayas Chapters 1-Chapter 5*

Wednesday, March 24

Seminar Topic: *Love and Honor in the Himalayas*

Student Leader:

1. Discussion Questions/*Love and Honor in the Himalayas*
2. Reading Notes for *Love and Honor in the Himalayas*
3. Discussion of Ethnographic Research: Progress Report, Questions, and What's left to be done?
4. End of Fieldwork?
5. Email a *selection of field notes*
6. Assigned Reading for 4/7 *Love and Honor in the Himalayas Chapter 6,7 and 8*

SPRING BREAK

Wednesday, April 7

Seminar Topic: Love and Honor in the Himalayas

Student Leader:

1. Discussion Questions/Love and Honor in the Himalayas Chapters 6, 7 and 8
2. Reading Notes for Love and Honor in the Himalayas
3. Anything in this ethnography you can use in your own ethnography? What did you learn about writing ethnography from this reading
4. Discussion of Data analysis and interpretation
5. Email selection of Ethnographic notes for April 7th seminar session
6. Assigned Reading for April 14th Death Without Weeping Chapter s 1, 2 and 3

Wednesday, April 14

Seminar Topic: Death Without Weeping Chapter 1, 2, and 3

Student Leader

1. Discussion Questions Death Without Weeping Chapters 1, 2, and 3
2. Reading Notes Death Without Weeping
3. Any insights from reading you can use in your ethnography?
4. Review Ethnographic Notes
5. Progress Report on Writing Ethnography
6. Email Draft of Ethnography

Wednesday, April 21

Seminar Topic: Death Without Weeping Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Student Leader

1. Discussion Questions
2. Reading Notes: Death Without Weeping chapters 4, 5, and 6
3. Anything useful you learned in reading that helps your ethnography?
4. Review of Draft Ethnography
5. Questions: Where are we?
6. What needs to be done to meet 28th deadline

Wednesday, April 28

Topic: Ethnography

1. How do you feel?
2. What did you accomplish?
3. What skills do you think you are most sure about and what skills that still needs some work?
4. How would you assess your ethnography – it's strengths and weaknesses
5. If I had another two or three months, I would do.....what?
6. What did I learn about my subject/topic/ problem that are important to anthropology?
7. How would you do it (fieldwork and ethnography) differently?
8. Anything I left out? Final words?

*Ethnography Due in Class

Wednesday, May 5

No Class

1. Assigned Reading Death Without Weeping Chapters 7, 8 and 9
2. Write Discussion Questions
3. Write Reading Notes

Wednesday, May 12

Topic: Final Comments on Ethnography and Field Work

1. Assigned Reading at least Chapter 10 or Chapter 11 or Chapter 12 in Death Without Weeping
2. What is your assessment of Death Without Weeping – strengths and weaknesses
3. Your Reflections and Comments about the process of Ethnography?
4. What is the next Ethnography you would like to do?
5. Assess the Seminar – strengths and weaknesses
- Critical Review Essay due in class.