

Methods in Ethnology
ANTH 5344
Heroy, Founder's Room
Thursdays, 2-450

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Office hours by appointment



Course Description

This provides a critical introduction to some of the key methods used in anthropological research, paying special attention to the formation of one's topic, identifying and using theoretical resources, the techniques of engaging anthropological fieldsites and people, and the politics and ethics of fieldwork and ethnographic knowledge production. We will discuss some of the major issues that arise for anthropologists in the field, including ethics, reflexivity, representation and translation. The course will combine readings in critical anthropology relevant to the methods presented here to promote workshop-style explorations of particular techniques for gathering, managing, analyzing and presenting field material. We will explore the limits and powers of ethnography (broadly construed) by setting up model projects and experimenting with typical fieldwork tasks. The course is intended to help students develop the tools needed to clarify their own research projects, while reflecting critically on the history of Anthropology.

To accomplish these ends, the course is comprised of two components: 1) a weekly seminar meeting in which assigned readings on methodological topics are discussed, and 2) 9 ethnographic exercises.

Weekly readings include a general discussion of particular methodological issues/techniques, and several actual field research examples (journal articles). The field exercises will give students the opportunity to learn to use various research tools in the actual acquisition of anthropological data, as well as to experience working with members of another cultural group.

A NOTE ON SAFETY

IMPORTANT: PLEASE be careful in your fieldwork attempts to get off campus and stay safe. **PLEASE** know that if you had to stop an assignment because you were uncomfortable and you need an extension to make up for it I will **ALWAYS** give you one. Your safety needs to be the #1 priority at all times.

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SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS, READINGS AND EXERCISES

August 29

INTRODUCTION TO ETHNOLOGICAL METHODS

Read:

Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), pp.1-26.

Barnard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, 6th edition, Chapter 1, 1-22

Look over my published articles/book chapter with special attention to Methods sections and be prepared to ask questions about what methods I used and why, in general:

Myers, 2015. *Open Mind, Open Heart*.

Myers & Ziv. 2016. *Autobiographical Power, Social Defeat and Recovery*

Myers, et al. 2019. *Coping with Food Insecurity*.

Myers, et al. 2014. *Clinical Correlates of Treatment Disengagement in FEP*.

Myers, Pauselli and Compton. 2018. *Hearing voices among indigenous Maasai women*

Myers, et al. 2019. *Decisionmaking about Care*.

Myers, 2019. *Mental/Moral Breakdowns*.

September 5

*This class will meet in the Main Lobby of
Fondren Library at 2 PM.*

Readings:

Review Library Sources for Anthropology PhDs guide on course website.

No Show and Tell or Nuts and Bolts.

Download Zotero and create an account for the workshop: <https://guides.smu.edu/zotero>
Get started on September 12 if you have extra time!



September 12 TOPIC FORMATION & LITERATURE REVIEWS

Exercise 1: Write a statement, no more than 2 pages, single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, outlining an imaginary but feasible project—a statement of topic, the anthropological problem it presents, some ruling questions and a specification of field site.

To do this, conduct a literature review of 10 **anthropological** references about your topic of interest using the questions listed in these guidelines: <https://libguides.sonoma.edu/c.php?g=202660&p=1349304>. Then use the information from your review to prepare the proposal.

Upload both with your name in the title of the assignment and your topic to the course website **by 9 AM on Thursday before class under “Discussion”** for that day. Then, please spend some time that morning looking over your peers’ submissions.

Akil Gupta and James Ferguson, “The Field as Site, Method and Location in Anthropology” in *Anthropological Locations, Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, etc. A Gupta and J. Ferguson (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), pp. 1-46.

Neely Myers, *Recovery’s Edge*, Chapter 1: Orientation, Vanderbilt University Press (2015), pp. 1-14

Nuts and Bolts #1 (blogpost due Thursday @ 9 AM):
Barnard, Chapter 3. Preparing for Research, in *Research Methods*, pp.54-82

September 19

ENTERING THE FIELD, POSITIONALITY AND PARTICIPANT-OBSERVATION

Readings:

Myers, Lab Team Safety Plan

Powdermaker, Hortense, "A Woman Going Native," in *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*, ed. Antonius Robben and Jeffrey Sluka, Second Edition (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 92-102

Passero, "You can't take the subway into the field!" *Anthropological Locations*, pp. 147-162.

Steven Caton, *Yemen Chronicle*, Chapter 1, Sanctuary, p. 1-60.

Nuts and Bolts #2 (Blogpost due Thursday @ 9 AM):

Barnard, Ch12. Participant Observation. Pp.272-307

Robert Emerson, Rachel I Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, Chapters 1 and 2 in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 1-43

September 26

INTO THE FIELD: FIELDSITES, FIELDNOTES & ONGOING CHALLENGES

Exercise 2: With a focused question in mind before you begin, spend two hours observing (and participating) in a public site. Some possible examples include: a grocery store, a shopping mall, a bar or nightclub, a coffee shop, a bus or train stop, or a library. Keep field notes. Some possible questions to explore include how people socially negotiate shared spaces and how they signal boundaries implicitly and explicitly; sexuality and seduction; the relation between what is being sold and what people think it says about them; and/or the generation of geographies of security and menace. You are allowed to talk to people. Please two single-spaced (12 pt.) pages of commentary on the exercise followed by your fieldnotes. Upload both with your name in the title of the assignment and your topic to the course website **by 9 AM on Thursday before class under "Discussion"** for that day. Then, please spend some time that morning looking over your peers' submissions.

Steven Caton, *Yemen Chronicle*, Chapters 2 and 3, pgs. 60-119.

Theodor Bestor, Inquisitive Observation: Following Networks in Urban Fieldwork, p. 316-334.

Anthrodendum series introduction: <https://anthrodendum.org/2019/06/18/trauma-and-resilience-in-ethnographic-fieldwork/>, and then use this link <https://anthrodendum.org/author/trauma-and-resilience/>
To read: <https://anthrodendum.org/2019/06/22/staying-with-the-feeling-trauma-humility-and-care-in-ethnographic-fieldwork/>

Neely Myers, *Recovery's Edge*, "Acknowledgments," pp. ix-xii; Chapter 2: No Direction Home

Nuts and Bolts #3 (Blogpost due Thursday @ 9 AM):

Robert Emerson, Rachel I Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, Chapter 3 in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 44-87; part of Chapter 4: 109-127.

October 3

VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND MAKING THE “OTHER”

Exercise 3: Find an individual/place that reminds you of an ethnographic subject area we've covered in class. Capture a day-in-the-life of that person/place through a visual medium. The visuals should reveal activities, say something about the social/cultural life of this place, as well as capture the personalities of people. Framing is important to the exercise. In particular, look for details that describe the person without them having to be in every image. Please upload your visuals to the course page with your name in the title of the assignment and your topic to the course website **by 9 AM on Thursday before class under “Discussion”** for that day. Then, please spend some time that morning looking over your peers' submissions.

At-home assignment:

Explore the digital stories on this website: <https://www.storycenter.org/stories>; Choose 2 (up to 10 minutes total) that you want to share in class for discussion

Choose an applied project using digital stories that you think is interesting from Silence Speaks to share about in class:

https://www.storycenter.org/ss-about?mc_cid=5c80411d70&mc_eid=d1921598ab

Nuts and Bolts #4 (Blogpost due Thursday @ 9 AM):

Aline Gubrium and Krista Harper, Participatory Visual and Digital Methods, Chapters 1 (“Introduction”) and 2 (“Participatory Visual and Digital Research in Theory and Practice”), pp. 13-43.

In-Class Film for discussion: A Man Called Bee (30 minutes)

October 10

ETHICS, INSTITUTIONS, HUMAN SUBJECTS

This class will include a visit from Heather McClary from the SMU IRB to discuss policies for Anthropological research at SMU.

Exercise 4: First, complete the “[Responsible Conduct of Research Training](#)” for “non-federally funded graduate students,” which you will need for your dissertation projects. You can find the training instructions here:

<http://smu.edu/research/researchservices/researchcompliance/compliancetraining/responsibleconductresearch>

Second, email me your certificate of completion to the course website **before class**.

Then, try to fill out an IRB proposal for an imaginary or real project and see what questions come up for you. Write up at least five questions and post them. Upload the questions with your name in the title of the assignment and your topic to the course website **by 9 AM on Thursday before class under “Discussion”** for that day. Then, please spend some time that morning looking over your peers' submissions. We will use these questions to guide our conversation with Heather.

Nuts and Bolts #5 (Blogpost due Thursday @ 9 AM):

Read the American Anthropological Association Code of Ethics:

<http://ethics.americananthro.org/category/statement/>

Choose an ethics forum post that interests you and write a response in your blogpost for today's class (from AAA Ethics Forum): <http://ethics.americananthro.org/>. To see more options, scroll down to archives or categories in far right column.

October 17
UNSTRUCTURED & SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Exercise 5: Conduct an interview of 30 minutes with somebody of your choice—but neither a friend nor a person related to you—on one of the following topics:

- (a) his/her autobiography
- (b) the history of his/her family, community, town
- (c) an event they considered to be life-changing
- (d) a story about dealing with bureaucratic systems, at the local, state or national level

Record the interview, transcribe the first 10 minutes, and write a brief report on the exercise, covering:

- (a) what you found difficult about the interview
- (b) what most surprised you about it
- (c) what you would do differently if you did it again
- (d) what kinds of knowledge you hoped would be produced but were not
- (e) what the problems would be in deriving “ethnographic data” from your informant’s answers to your question

These notes should be no more than 3 single-spaced pages (12-pt font) in addition to the transcription of the first ten minutes, of course. Upload them, with the transcription at the end, to the course page **Thursday at 9 AM**. Please spend some time Thursday morning reviewing these.

Neely Myers, *Recovery’s Edge*, Chapter 3, Step One: Take Your Medications

Nuts and Bolts #6 (Blogpost due Thursday @ 9 AM):

Bernard, Chapter 2: The Foundations of Social Research, pp. 23-53. Chapter 7: Sampling III: Nonprobability Sampling and Choosing Informants, in *Research Methods*, pp.145-162; and Chapter 8, “Unstructured and Semi-structured Interviewing” pp. 163-194.

Greg Guest, Arwen Bunce and Laura Johnson. 2006. How many interviews are enough? An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability. *Field Methods* 18: 59-82

October 24
STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS, QUESTIONNAIRES, SURVEYS & PROBABILITY SAMPLES

Exercise 6: Use Qualtrics to create a survey, administer the survey to ten people and create a presentation of your survey results. Include slides about how you designed the survey (sampling strategy, scales you used), how you recruited for the survey, show us the actual survey, and share results.

<https://www.smu.edu/OIT/Services/Qualtrics>. Upload your presentation to the course website by Thursday at 9 AM. Be prepared to present your results in class. You will not need to review others’ slides before class.

Neely Myers, *Recovery’s Edge*, Chapter 4, Step Two: Self-Advocate

Nuts and Bolts #7 (Blogpost due Thursday @ 9 AM):

Barnard, Chapter 5. Sampling I. The Basics. Chapter 9. Interviewing II: Questionnaires, 195-232. Chapter 11, Scales and Scaling. 254-271.

October 31
ARCHIVAL RESEARCH AND ORAL HISTORY

Exercise 7: From popular media, the web, archival sources, published memoirs, or fictional writing, use Zotero to gather 5 short texts (or extracts from texts) that relate to your own anthropological interests. Prepare a one-page annotated list of these sources, describing each and noting its potential usefulness as a source of ethnographic understanding. Then present one of these texts in an interpretive discussion, showing how your reading might advance your anthropological research interests. Upload your work (three pages total, single-spaced) to the course page **by 9 AM on Thursday**. Please spend some time reviewing each other's archival collections.

Readings:

John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff, Chapter 1 ("Ethnography and the Historical Imagination") in *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp. 3-48.

Lockhart, 2008. The Life and Death of a Boy in East Africa, *Medical Anthropology* 22(1): 94-115.

Nuts and Bolts #8 (Blogpost due Thursday @ 9 AM):

Various authors, Part One (pp. 11-50) in *Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010)

Crapanzano, Vincent. 1984. Review: Life Histories, *American Anthropologist*, 86 (4): 953-960.

November 7
ETHNOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATIONS AND THEIR LIMITATIONS

Exercise 8: Treat a class at Southern Methodist University as a field (sub)site. Design an anthropological mini-analysis of the class. You will need to frame a narrow question that can be answered ethnographically, rather than attempt a comprehensive ethnographic study of the setting. Write a three-page "ethnography" that includes both description and some preliminary answers to your research question. Come to class prepared to discuss the choices you had to make as you wrote (e.g., risky speculations, necessary silences, truncated contextualizations). Upload these to the course page by **Thursday at 9 AM** and then please spend some time reviewing other students' submissions.

Readings:

Neely Myers, *Recovery's Edge*, "A Note on Contested Terms" and Chapter 5. "Step Three: Work for Intimacy," and Chapter 6. "Recovery's Edge"

Nuts and Bolts #9 (Blogpost due Thursday @ 9 AM):

Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, Chapter 4: Writing Fieldnotes II: Multiple Purposes and Stylistic Options and Chapter 5: Pursuing Members' Meanings, pp. 128-199.

November 14

YOU CAME, YOU SAW, YOU WROTE

Exercise 9: Anthropologists have had the opportunity to make positive and negative impacts on the lives of their interlocutors. Look for an example (historical or current) of an anthropological project that has had a positive or negative impact on people's lives and create a 15-20-minute presentation for the class about the example. Feel free to use film or video clips, etc. Who was the anthropologist? What historical period were they working in? What caused them to have a negative or positive impact? What could they have done differently? Etc. Please cite at least 3 sources for your findings. Upload these to the course page by **Thursday at 9 AM** and then please spend some time reviewing other students' submissions. Be prepared to share

Readings:

Clifford Geertz, 1968. "Thinking as Moral Act: Ethical Dimensions of Anthropological Fieldwork in the New States," *The Antioch Review*, 28 (2): 21-41.

Arthur Kleinman, 1999. "Moral Experience and Ethical Reflections: Can Ethnography Reconcile Them? A Quandary for 'The New Bioethics,'" *Daedalus*, 128(4): 69-97.

Neely Myers, *Recovery's Edge*, Chapter 7, "Over the Edge," pp.155-164

No Nuts and Bolts readings, no blogpost due.

No Show and Tell.

November 21 & November 28: NO CLASS, AAA CONFERENCE AND THANKSGIVING

December 5th

FINAL ASSIGNMENT DUE: DESIGNING AND PRESENTING A METHODOLOGY

Exercise 10: Write a methods section **ONLY** for your proposed initial project from the literature review in Week 3 of class. The methods section should be 2 pages single-spaced using a 12-point font. Include an additional half-page overview of your topic and key questions. The total assignment should not be longer than 2.5 pages single-spaced. This is the final course requirement. Please post your Methods section to the course website **by 9 AM on Thursday, December 5th**. Please read through everyone else's assignments before class.

Nuts and Bolts #10 (blogpost due Thursday @ 9 AM):

Myers and Wisdom on writing grant proposals

Review successful NSF proposals from department students

MY POLICIES

- **Unexcused Absences:** If you miss more than 2 classes without giving 24 hour notice, then you will lose an entire letter grade from your final grade.
- **Conference absences** must be reported to the professor at the beginning of the semester. Otherwise, they will be unexcused.
- **Office hours** are by appointment. Please be sure to make appointments and connect with me!
- **Feedback Expectations:** You can expect to receive feedback on papers and posts within 7-10 business days of your submission. Please see the Grading Rubric for feedback on Ethnographic Exercises. This will be emailed to you and your grade posted online. Please also look online for additional comments and edits to blogposts or exercises if mentioned in the rubric.
- **Late Assignments:** If you have not requested an extension at least 48 hours in advance, late assignments will lose 1 full letter grade for the first hour that it is late (A+ to B+) and then 1/3 of a letter grade for every 12 hours following. For example, here is your grade if you turn it in at these times when the due date is Monday at 9 AM: Mon, 9 AM (if it deserves it): A+; 10 AM: B+; 10 PM: B; 10 AM Tuesday: B-, etc.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Disability Accommodations: Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS). Students can call 214-768-1470 or visit <http://www.smu.edu/Provost/SASP/DASS> to begin the process. Once approved and registered, students will submit a DASS Accommodation Letter to faculty through the electronic portal *DASS Link* and then communicate directly with each instructor to make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement.

Religious Observance: Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence (<https://www.smu.edu/studentaffairs/chaplain/religiousholidays>)

- **Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities:** Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (See [2018-2019 University Undergraduate Catalogue](#))
- **Student Learning Outcomes:** Please include in your syllabi all student learning outcomes, both those specific to your course, as well as those that satisfy major and general education requirements.
- **Student Academic Success Programs:** Students needing assistance with writing assignments for SMU courses may schedule an appointment with the

Writing Center through Canvas. Students wishing support with subject-specific tutoring or success strategies should contact SASP, Loyd All Sports Center, Suite 202; 214-768-3648; <https://www.smu.edu/sasp>.

- **Final Exams:** Final course examinations shall be given in all courses where they are appropriate, and some form of final assessment is essential. Final exams or final assessments must be administered as specified in the official examination schedule, and shall not be administered during the last week of classes or during the Reading Period. Please state clearly in the syllabus the date/time and form of the final exam or assessment.

- **Caring Community Connections (CCC) program:** This is a resource for anyone in the SMU community to refer students of concern to the Office of the Dean of Students. Faculty play a critical role in identifying students who are experiencing challenges, as you may be the first to notice a change in behavior such as class attendance or performance. The online referral form can be found at smu.edu/deanofstudentsccc. After a referral is submitted, students will be contacted to discuss the concern, strategize options, and be connected to appropriate resources. Additionally, should you have concerns about students and are unclear about what to do, please see the [CCC Reference Guide](#), or contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 214-768-4564.

Office of Institutional Technology

<https://www.smu.edu/OIT/Training/ATSD-Training>

Rubric for Conducting and Writing Ethnographic Exercises

Quality	No/Limited Proficiency	Some Proficiency	Proficiency	High Proficiency	Rating
Engagement with Ethnographic Method (a) Originality	Did not engage with appropriate method	Engagement with methods is obvious or unimaginative (i.e., in terms of questions asked/raised, placed where research is conducted).	Engagement with method is original in terms of questions asked/raised. Engages with communities/people outside of SMU (unless assigned).	Develops fresh insight that integrates and challenges course readings and conversations. Engages with communities/people outside of SMU (unless specifically asked to engage a SMU class, etc)	
Writing up Exercise (b) Clarity	Reader cannot determine how thesis, arguments and questions raised relate to method.	Thesis, arguments and questions raised are loosely related to method.	Thesis, argument and questions raised are fairly clear and related to method.	Thesis, argument and questions raised are clear and closely related to method.	
(c) Organization	Unclear organization OR organizational plan has nothing to do with ethnographic exercise.	Some signs of logical organization. May have abrupt or illogical shifts and ineffective flow of ideas.	Organization supports stated thesis and purpose of exercise. But sequence of ideas could be better related to method.	Fully & imaginatively supports thesis and purpose of the exercise. Sequence of ideas is effective in illuminating the significance and/or drawbacks of a given methodological approach.	
(d) Ideas	Offers simplistic or undeveloped support for ideas. Has off-topic generations or errors of fact pertaining to a given method.	Offers somewhat obvious reasoning that may be too broad. Details pertaining to methodological approach are too general, not interpreted, irrelevant, or repetitive.	Offers solid but less original reasoning. Contains some appropriate details or examples illuminating usefulness and/or drawbacks of method.	Substantial, logical and concrete development of ideas. Assumptions are made explicit. Details are relevant to theme, original, and convincingly interpreted with regards to usefulness and/or other drawbacks of method.	

Grade/Additional Comments: