

San José State University
Department of Anthropology
ANTH 149(1) Ethnographic Methods (43247)
Fall 2013 Course Syllabus

Instructor:	Chuck Darrah
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Office Hours:	Mondays 10:30-12:00; Tuesdays 11:00-13:00; Wednesdays 12:00-13:30 and by arrangement
Class Days/Time:	Mondays/Wednesdays 9-10:15
Classroom:	WSQ 004
Prerequisites:	ANTH 11 or instructor consent

Course Description

This course covers the conduct of ethnographic research within cultural anthropology (in particular) and the social sciences and applied fields (in general). Students are introduced to basic concepts in social science research, ethics in social research, selection of research topics, the literature search, basic ethnographic data collection methods (participant observation; un-, semi- and structured interviewing; and structured observation), managing and coding field notes, qualitative analysis; presentation of results, and ethnographic writing. Due to the limitations imposed by a one-semester course, some topics are covered in more depth than others. The emphasis is on becoming a generator of reliable and useful information about the social world by appropriately using ethnographic methods.

Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives

Departmental Objectives

The Department of Anthropology seeks to enhance student knowledge and skills in the following areas. Departmental objectives that this course explicitly addresses are asterisked.

Knowledge

1. Understanding culture as the distinguishing phenomenon of human life, and the relationships of human biology and cultural processes in human behavior and evolution.
2. Awareness of the diverse past and present cultures in which humans have lived.

3. Knowledge of the significant findings of archaeology, cultural anthropology, and physical anthropology, and familiarity with the important issues in each sub-discipline.

*4. Knowledge of the history of anthropological thought and its place in modern intellectual history.

5. Comprehension of multiculturalism as a significant phenomenon shaping global society.

Skills

*6. Familiarity with the forms of anthropological data and literature, and working knowledge of how to access such information.

*7. Awareness of the importance and value of anthropological knowledge in contemporary society, and the ability to apply it to social issues.

*8. Knowledge of the research methods of the sub-disciplines of anthropology, and ability to apply appropriate research methods in at least one sub-discipline.

*9. Ability to present and communicate anthropological knowledge and the results of anthropological research to different audiences.

Delivery

*10. Knowledge of political and ethical implications of social research

Course Objectives

The student who satisfactorily completes this course should:

1. understand the place of ethnography as process and product within cultural anthropology and the social sciences;
2. develop the abilities to formulate problems and design ethnographic studies to explore them;
3. be able to conduct interviews and perform direct observations of social settings as appropriate;
4. be able to analyze textual or "qualitative" data for patterns and themes;
5. develop their abilities in note taking and writing ethnographic reports; and
6. be conversant with the ethical and political aspects of social research.

These objectives will be achieved largely through your active, meaningful, and collective participation in a research project. By enrolling in this course you are effectively joining a research team that is conducting an actual long-term research project in this region. Individual students will be more or less interested in the actual research we will be undertaking, but you are reminded that the overall goal of the class is to develop research skills, regardless of topic. I believe that your mastery of ethnographic methods is facilitated by employing them in the real world, where things do not always unfold as they do in textbooks. You will learn by reading assigned course materials, discussing them in class, participating in several in-class exercises, utilizing the methods of ethnographic research, and reflecting upon them in several assignments. All methods will be discussed in class, and your occasionally sage instructor is available to assist in any way he can: You will not be left alone to figure it all out for yourself.

It is my practice in this course to bring in a real world partner who is grappling with an issue or problem of some sort. The class research team then explores this problem and feeds back its findings to the partner. Some previous partners have been The Health Trust, Santa Clara County Office of Education, Junior Achievement, Working Partnerships, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, The Tech Museum of Innovation, Smart Valley, CommUniverCity, Kaiser Permanente, and the Institute for the Future. This semester the class will be working most directly with Professor Fernando Burga's URBP 201 Community Assessment class on the first phase of the Greater Washington Community Assessment and Prioritization. The project is a collaboration between SJSU's CommUniverCity and Santa Clara University's Thriving Neighborhoods Initiative, working with members of the Greater Washington Community. The data collected will be used to inform policy making, community development, and, potentially, a collaborative research-design studio collaboration between the anthropology and urban/regional planning departments. Thus, this is a real project with serious stakes and your participation in the project will be formally acknowledged in a way that you can incorporate into your resume or application to graduate or professional school. Because this is a decidedly real-world class, it is likely that the syllabus will be modified as the semester progresses and we adapt to the realities of fieldwork.

Required Texts/Readings

LeCompte, Margaret, and Jean Schensul (2010). Designing and Conducting Ethnographic Research (2nd edition). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Powdermaker, Hortense (1966). Stranger and Friend. New York: Norton.

Jean Schensul and Margaret LeCompte (2013). Essential Ethnographic Methods (2nd edition). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

In addition, a required course reader is available at Maple Press on San Carlos Street between 10th and 11th. It should be purchased immediately and brought to each class meeting.

Classroom Protocol

Although attendance is not graded, you will get nothing from the class unless you attend. Please arrive to class on time, but if you are unavoidably delayed then quietly take a seat. If you must depart early you should sit where you can make a quiet exit and let me know in advance that you will be leaving early. Cell phones MUST be turned off so I do not have to stop class while you attend to the noise. You may use laptops to take notes, but only for that purpose. If screens become a distraction in class I will ban all digital devices except those required to meet Disability Resource Center assessments.

Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, etc. [Information on add/drops are available at http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/soc-fall/rec-298.html](http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/soc-fall/rec-298.html). [Information about late drop is available at http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/advising/latedrops/policy/](http://www.sjsu.edu/sac/advising/latedrops/policy/). Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for adding and dropping classes.

Assignments and Grading Policy

1. Participation (5%). This includes participation in class discussions and sundry in-class exercises, and it assumes you are completing the readings as required and are here on time. The class is organized as a single, integrated research team and such teams demand the participation of all their members. It is difficult to participate if you appear infrequently. Furthermore, things do not always unfold as planned on tidy greensheets, especially in a course built around real world research experiences. *You are responsible for any changes in dates or assignments that are announced in class.*

2. Data Exercises (60%). Here is the core of the course. Each student will complete three exercises that will sharpen your mastery of ethnographic data collection methods. Detailed descriptions of each assignment will be distributed as per the class calendar. They are as follows:

- Participant Observation Exercise (15%). Each student will conduct a participant observation at a place that we agree upon as a class. This involves extensive note taking and then analysis of your description. *Submit one hardcopy report describing and analyzing the experiences.*
- Semistructured Interviews (30%). Each student will conduct a semistructured interview with one person, and transcribe and analyze it. It is entirely possible that your interview may take two separate meetings with your interviewee in order to complete it. *Submit three hardcopies of the interview (one will be graded and returned) and an electronic copy of each. Two hardcopies will be available for other students to read.*
- Domain and Theme Analysis (15%). Each student will read at least 10 interviews and analyze them for basic cross-cutting cultural domains and themes. *Submit one hard copy and an electronic copy. One will be graded and returned; the other will be retained by the instructor.*

3. Powdermaker Paper (20%). This paper is based on your reading of Powdermaker's account of her four fieldwork experiences. Yes, the book is dated, but it still provides a great, readable introduction to many of the recurring issues still encountered during fieldwork. You will answer one of three essay questions in the comfort of your home.

4. Final Examination (15%). Each student will join a group that is responsible for preparing a concise and elegant white paper and complementary poster that documents and explains a theme that emerges from our interviews. These white papers will become part of the documentation of the project and it will be available to the community. *Submit one white paper per group—one hardcopy and an electronic version.* We will meet to present the posters and the white papers during the final exam period. This is a group endeavor and late materials cannot be accepted. Make sure you have a back-up plan in case the person with the paper fails to show up!

Materials submitted for grade must conform to the following minimal requirements. Use margins of 1" all around on good quality, clean white paper. Text must be clear, dark, and clean.

Use the American Anthropological Association format, especially when citing references. It can be found at http://www.aaanet.org/pubs/style_guide.htm.

Each assignment must conform to the protocol that describes it. Note that you must submit both a hard copy and digital version of your transcribed interview.

Assignments must be submitted as per the class calendar unless discussed with the instructor in advance. Even then, late papers may be penalized. There *are* many assignments due toward the end of the semester, and as long as you are making progress you may not be penalized for a late report. *The most important assignment to complete on schedule is the Interview Exercise, since the interviews will be read by other students in class.*

Finally, I will stop reading your paper when I get to the fifth mechanical (spelling, punctuation, grammar) error and return it to you ungraded. You must revise the paper, eliminate all such errors (including beyond where I stopped reading), and resubmit it for grade. There will be no penalty for the first revision, but a 10% reduction in grade on any second revisions, and an additional 10% on the third revision. After that? I will not grade the paper. Writing is the single most important skill you should develop in university and I have great faith that you can do so. I am happy to help you meet the standard, but I will not lower it.

In order to facilitate computing grades, each assignment is given a percentage that corresponds to conventional letter grades: 100-90% = A; 89-80 = B; 79-70 = C; 69-60 = D; and below 60 = F.

University Policies

Academic integrity

Students should know that the University's [Academic Integrity Policy is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial_affairs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf). Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University's integrity policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. The website for [Student Conduct and Ethical Development is available at http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html](http://www.sa.sjsu.edu/judicial_affairs/index.html).

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating on exams or plagiarism (presenting the work of another as your own, or the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit) will result in a failing grade and sanctions by the University. For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student unless otherwise specified. If you would like to include in your assignment any material you have submitted, or plan to submit for another class, please note that SJSU's Academic Policy F06-1 requires approval of instructors.

Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the DRC (Disability Resource Center) to establish a record of their disability.

Recording

Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent.

Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him/her. You must obtain the instructor's permission to make audio or video recordings in this class. Such permission allows the recordings to be used for your private, study purposes only. The recordings are the intellectual property of the instructor; you have not been given any rights to reproduce or distribute the material.

Credit Hours

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of forty-five hours over the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities including but not limited to internships, labs, clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

ANTH 149 Ethnographic Methods Fall 2013 Course Calendar

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	8/21	Greensheet, Project Overview & Introduction to Ethnography POWDERMAKER ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED
2	8/26 8/27	Ethnography in Anthropology Read: LeCompte 1-3; Schensul 1 & 2; and Pkt: Darrah Ethnography and Research Design Read LeCompte 4
3	9/2 9/4	LABOR DAY/NO CLASS Participant Observation & Note Taking Read: LeCompte 6; Schensul 3 & 4; and Pkt: Spradley PARTICIPANT-OBSERVATION EXERCISE DISTRIBUTED
4	9/9 9/11	Participant Observation & Note Taking Read: Schensul 5 Course Project Overview
5	9/16 9/18	Asking Questions to get at Questions; Instrument Development Read: Schensul 6 & 7; and Pkt: Introduction to Interviewing Project Brainstorm Read: Schensul 10 POWDERMAKER PAPER DUE
6	9/23 9/25	Workshop: Instrument Development Ethics I: Reviewing the Instruments Read: LeCompte 10
7	9/30 10/2	Practice Interviewing SEMISTRUCTURED INTERVIEW DISTRIBUTED PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION EXERCISE DUE Structured Interviewing Read: Schensul 8 (recommended)
8	10/7	Structured Interviewing

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
	10/9	Coding and Analysis Read: LeCompte 7
9	10/14	Coding and Analysis Read: Schensul 2
	10/16	Structured Observation Read: Schensul 9
10	10/21	Structured Observation
	10/23	Structured Observation SEMISTRUCTURED INTERVIEWS DUE
11	10/28	Ethnographic Surveys Read: Schensul 9 DATA ANALYSIS EXERCISE DISTRIBUTED
	10/30	Progress Update: What are you learning?
12	11/4	Interview Analysis Workshop Read: LeCompte 8
	11/6	Interview Analysis Workshop
13	11/11	VETERAN'S DAY – NO CLASS
	11/13	Writing & Representation INTERVIEW ANALYSIS EXERCISE DUE
14	11/18	Ethnography and Applied Anthropology Read: LeCompte 9 and Schensul 11
	11/20	Brainstorming: Themes for White Papers/Posters WHITE PAPER & POSTER ASSIGNMENT DISTRIBUTED
15	11/25	Brainstorming, Part II: Themes for White Papers/Posters
	11/27	Final Presentation Workshop
16	12/2	Final Presentation Workshop
	12/4	Community Feedback Workshop (for materials to present that night!)
17	12/9	Course Synthesis: Becoming Skilled; White Papers/Poster Final Touches
Final Exam	12/11 07:30-09:30	Final Exam: Feedback to Partners WHITE PAPERS AND POSTERS DUE