

SOC 302H1S-Winter 2013
Professor Jooyoung Lee
Department of Sociology
University of Toronto
SS 2111; Fridays 11-1pm

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Overview

What is ethnography? Why do it?

This course will introduce you to the craft of doing ethnography. Originally developed by anthropologists, ethnography has since become a central research method within sociology. Although sociologists have different (and at times competing) ways of defining ethnography, we will adopt an inclusive definition in this course: Ethnography is a method of participant observation. Put simply, ethnographers *participate in* and *observe* the social world that they are studying.

As a participant in this course, you will learn about the methodological challenges and riches of observing people in their natural social worlds. This kind of “deep hanging out” will allow you to observe, hear, and learn about things that are commonly glossed and missed in other methods—both quantitative and qualitative. Please keep in mind that this is *not* a reading course. Although I will occasionally assign supplementary readings during the semester, our primary focus will be on common issues and concerns that emerge when conducting one’s own fieldwork.

In addition to learning how to collect ethnographic data, you will learn how to write fieldnotes. You can think of fieldnotes as a written diary containing observations, events, and discoveries that you make while doing fieldwork. Since fieldnotes are the primary data upon which ethnographers rely, we will spend considerable time practicing the art of what anthropologist Clifford Geertz describes as “thick description.”

The last part of our course will focus on analytic coding, which is the first step in developing grounded theory. Although we will do this throughout the course, the final few weeks will focus on this task more closely. These tools are critical for turning unbounded fieldnotes into publishable pieces of work. My goal is for you to leave this course with a paper that you can use when applying to graduate school.

Prerequisite

To take this course, you will need to have taken SOC200H1 and one SOC course at the 200+ level. Students without this prerequisite will be removed at any time discovered.

Course Expectations

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. You are responsible for all material presented in class. Students who are unable to attend class are responsible for obtaining information about any announcements that may have been made in class as well as notes on the material covered from their classmates. Also, I will only accept assignments from the person who did the work. You can't turn in your friend's homework. Also, proper documentation from a University of Toronto Student Medical Certificate or college registrar is required to justify an absence.

Course Webpage

We will have a course website hosted on Blackboard. This website will contain the course syllabus, links to all the readings that are in journal article form, handouts, and course announcements. You are responsible for all the course materials and for all announcements. Please make sure to check your official utoronto.ca email addresses regularly. Also, you should post your fieldnotes each week onto the class discussion board. This will allow others to read your work and get to know some of the interesting work that you are doing!

Choose a Fieldsite

1) By the end of week 1, you will need to choose a fieldsite. If you don't have a preference, I will assign you a fieldsite. However, it's usually better if you choose something that you enjoy doing. Ethnography is a lot of work, but it's also a lot of fun. Each of the weekly writing assignments and the final paper will be based on your fieldwork at this fieldsite, so you need to pick a fieldsite and stick with it. In general, it's good to choose a setting that is easy for you to access; given that our course is only 12 weeks long, you may want to avoid fieldwork in which it is difficult to "get in."

2) You will have **1** assigned book and a number of supplementary readings. These will introduce you to writing ethnographic fieldnotes and some of the more common challenges and insights that emerge from ethnographic fieldwork. As you will see, each ethnographer faces unique challenges that require different strategies and solutions. The weekly readings are a key part of your development as ethnographers-in-progress.

3) You will have **10** fieldnote submissions. Each submission should be 1 single-spaced and typed page of some interesting discovery or challenge you faced during the week.

Each submission is worth 5% of your total grade. Together, the weekly written assignments add-up to 50% of your total grade. These are due in **electronic copy** on the discussion board Wednesday *before* each meeting. These are also due in **hard copy** at the end of class. I will only accept assignments from people who were present in class. So, you can't turn in your assignment and leave, or show up at the end of class just to get your assignment in. I will not accept late assignments unless the appropriate doctor's note or documentation is provided for your absence.

4) You will have **2** coding assignments. We will discuss coding in class, but it is where you begin to move from your data to theory. These are slightly longer memos where you begin to compare and contrast data that are alike in some way. Each of these are worth 10%. See the rules above for submitting written assignments.

5) You will have **1** final research paper. This assignment is worth 30% of your final grade. I hope that you will use this course and the final paper to begin a draft of a Master's paper, a dissertation chapter, a standalone article, or a proposal that you will use for your dissertation. In essence, this course and the paper you write should help you advance toward your degree. The questions and themes will be drawn from what you find while doing ethnographic fieldwork. The paper should be about 12-15 pages (all double spaced, 12 point type) and should be approached as a draft of something that will advance your academic progress. The paper is due on the last day of class, and is to be submitted as a **hard copy** and **electronically** on Turnitin.

Plagiarism: Don't do it. It's a serious academic offense with serious penalties (see the "Code of Behavior on Academic Matters"). If you are using somebody else's ideas, do not present them as your own, whether you are quoting exact words, paraphrasing or summarizing. Give proper references if you are using somebody else's ideas, and use quotation marks if you are quoting. When in doubt, it is always safer to over-reference -- you are not going to be penalized for that.

Deadlines: You have short written assignments due at the end of each class during weeks 2-11. Your final paper is due at the end of our 12th class. Late work will NOT be accepted unless you have proper medical documentation. Medical documentation must include the University of Toronto's Student Medical Certificate). The certificate is available on the University of Toronto's website and may be completed by a Health Services physician or by your physician.

Late assignments will be penalized 10% for the first week and 5% per day afterwards.

Accessibility: The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>

REQUIRED TEXT

BOOK

Emerson, Robert; Fretz, Rachel; and Linda Shaw. 1995. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

ADDITIONAL READINGS

Throughout the course, I will link different articles to Blackboard, or email them to you in pdf form.

Weekly Readings

Week 1: Introduction: What is Ethnography? Why do it?

Katz, Jack. "Ethnography's Warrants." 1997. *Sociological Methods & Research*. 25(4): 391-423.

Week 2: Doing Fieldwork, Writing Fieldnotes

Goffman, Erving. "On Fieldwork." 1989. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. 18(2): 123-132.

Emerson, Robert. "Four Ways to Improve the Craft of Fieldwork." 1987. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 16(1): 69-89.

Emerson, Robert; Fretz, Rachel; and Linda Shaw. 1995. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Preface-Ch.3

Fieldnotes #1

Week 3: Getting In, Reflexivity, and Ethics

Fine, Gary Alan. 1993. "Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. 22(3): 267-294.

Fieldnotes #2

Week 4: Depicting Scenes

Bourgois, Philippe. 1998. "Just Another Night in a Shooting Gallery." *Theory, Culture, and Society*. 15(2): 37-66.

Emerson, Robert; Fretz, Rachel; and Linda Shaw. 1995. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 4

Fieldnotes #3

Week 5: Local Meanings

Geertz, Clifford. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *Contemporary Field Research* Pp. 55-75

Emerson, Robert; Fretz, Rachel; and Linda Shaw. 1995. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 5

Fieldnotes #4

Week 6: Depicting Variation

Lofland, Lyn. 1975. "Toward a Sociology of Death and Dying: Editor's Introduction." *Urban Life* 4(3): 243-249.

Fieldnotes #5

Week 7: Informal Interviews

Fieldnotes #6

Week 8: Going Along

Kusenbach, Margarethe. 2003. "Street Phenomenology: The Go-Along as Ethnographic Research Tool." *Ethnography* 4(3): 455-485.

Fieldnotes #7

Week 9: Coding

Emerson, Robert; Fretz, Rachel; and Linda Shaw. 1995. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 6

CODING #1 DUE

Fieldnotes #8

Week 10: From How to Why

Katz, Jack. 2002. "From how to why: On luminous description and causal inference in Ethnography (part 2)." *Ethnography* 3(1): 63-90.

CODING #2 DUE

Week 11: From Data to Theory

Glaser, Barney. 1999. "The Future of Grounded Theory." *Qualitative Health Research* 9(6): 836-845.

Emerson, Robert; Fretz, Rachel; and Linda Shaw. 1995. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 7

Week 12: In-Class Presentations

Final Paper Due