

SOC 6303H

ETHNOGRAPHY

Thursdays, 11:00am – 1:00pm

Instructor: Professor Randol Contreras

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Classroom: Room 240

Office hours: Thursday, 10:00am to 11:00am (or by appointment)

Blackboard/Course website: Access via U of T portal: <http://portal.utoronto.caPortal>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will teach students the (lonely) craft of ethnography, with two main foci: the collection and analysis of field data and the critique and analysis of ethnographic texts. Students should have a specific field site prior to the course since they will immediately begin writing up their insights and observations. In addition, students will evaluate selected ethnographies for their theoretical, analytical, descriptive, and writing contributions. The readings will come from the disciplines of sociology and anthropology, and range in their themes – from global sex work, to street-level book vending. This range exposes students to both traditional and innovative works, ones that will help them figure out their own ethnographic approach. In all, this course will serve as a space of dialogue and exchange, where students share field notes and experiences, offer constructive criticism and insights, and practice innovative writing and ideas.

LEARNING GOALS:

1. Students will learn how to collect and analyze their field research data.
2. Students will critically understand how scholars produce ethnographies.
3. Students will learn how to write clear ideas, analysis, and descriptions.

REQUIRED BOOKS

- Behar, Ruth. 1993. *Translated Woman: Crossing the Border with Esperanza's Story*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Contreras, Randol. 2013. *The Stickup Kids: Race, Drugs, Violence, and the American Dream*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Duneier, Mitchell. 1999. *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux.
- Hoang, Kimberly. 2015. *Dealing in Desire: Asian Ascendancy, Western Decline, and the Hidden Currencies of Global Sex Work*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

REFERENCE BOOK*

- Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw. 2011 [1995]. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 2nd Edition.

*This book will guide students in writing field notes and analyzing field data. Thus, students must read the book's relevant chapters as we progress throughout the semester.

REQUIRED ARTICLES/CHAPTERS

- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1990. "Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?" *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 5(1): 7 – 27.
- Behar, Ruth. 1996. "The Vulnerable Observer." In *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Behar, Ruth. 1996. "Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart." In *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Behar, Ruth and Deborah A. Gordon. 1996. "Introduction." In *Women Writing Culture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Buceri, Sandra. 2013. "Becoming a Trusted "Outsider": Gender, Ethnicity, and Inequality in Ethnographic Research." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 42(6): 690 – 721.
- Choo, Hae Yeon and Myra Ferree. 2010. "Practicing Intersectionality in Sociological Research." *Sociological Theory* 28(2): 129 – 49.
- Contreras, Randol. 2015. "Standpoint Purgatorio: Liminal Fear and Danger in Studying the 'Black and Brown' Tension in Los Angeles." In *Violence at the Urban Margins*. Eds. Javier Auyero, Philippe Bourgois, and Nancy Scheper-Hughes. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 249 – 264.

- Contreras, Randol. 2015. "Recalling to Life: Understanding Stickup Kids through Insider Qualitative Research." In *Advances in Criminological Theory* 20: 155–168. Eds. Jody Miller and Wilson R. Palacios. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Duneier, Mitchell. 2002. "What Kind of Contact Sport is Sociology?" *American Journal of Sociology* 107(6): 1551 – 1776.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." In *The Interpretations of Culture: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." In *The Interpretations of Culture: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Goffman, Alice. 2014. "Appendix: A Methodological Note." In *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Katz, Jack. 1997. "Ethnography's Warrants." *Sociological Methods and Research* 25(4): 391-423.
- Kondo, Dorinne K. 1990. "Eye/I." In *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Myerhoff, Barbara. 1978. "So What Do You Want From Us Here?" In *Number Our Days*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Rosaldo, Renato. 1989. "Grief and a Headhunter's Rage." *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Okely, Judith. 2007. "Fieldwork as Embodied." *Sociological Review* 55(1): 65 – 79.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 2004. "Parts Unknown: Undercover Ethnography of the Organ-Trafficking Underworld." *Ethnography* 5(1): 29-73.
- Stacey, Judith. 1988. "Can There Be a Feminist Ethnography?" *Women's Studies International Forum* 11(1): 21 – 27.
- Thorne, Barrie. 1980. "You Still Takin' Notes? Fieldwork and Problems of Informed Consent." *Social Problems* 27(3): 287-97.
- Wheatley, Elizabeth E. 1994. "How Can We Engender Ethnography with a Feminist Imagination? A Rejoinder to Judith Stacey." *Women's Studies International Forum* 17(4): 403-16.
- Wacquant, Loïc. 2002. "Scrutinizing the Street: Poverty, Morality, and the Pitfalls of Urban Ethnography." *American Journal of Sociology* 107:1468-532.
- Wacquant, Loïc. 2015. "For a Sociology of Flesh and Blood." *Qualitative Sociology* 38(1): 1 – 11.

EVALUATION ASSIGNMENTS

Students must submit critical evaluations of *Sidewalk*, *Translated Woman*, and *Dealing in Desire* (for obvious reasons, *The Stickup Kids* is excluded). Each assignment must be at least two single-spaced pages and broken up along the following four lines:

- 1) Theoretical Merit (or its place within the topic's literature)
- 2) Analytical Rigor
- 3) Quality of Descriptions and Accounts
- 4) Writing Style and Clarity

FIELDNOTE ASSIGNMENTS

Students will be required to submit five field note assignments. The submissions will focus on specific topics to help students think about their fieldwork setting; their place within the research; and the search for themes and categories that will have them think creatively and add scholarly substance to their final product. Each assignment, which must be at least three single-spaced pages long, should pay attention to detail and have speculations about what is “going on.”

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Each student must participate throughout the semester. They can do so by sharing their field note insights or discussing their evaluation assignment. To get credit, the student can only discuss the field note or evaluation assignment on the day that it is due. In other words, the student cannot discuss any work that was previously submitted or that will be submitted in the future. Also, the student will only get credit for one *participation* per class. Thus, it is important for the student to participate progressively throughout the semester rather than wait until the end and run out of time.

VISUAL METHODOLOGICAL PRESENTATION

On the last day class, students will present photos/images of their field sites. The brief presentation (lasting no more than eight minutes) will help them learn how to present the methodology section of their ethnographic research: present the field site, the recruitment and entry process, and the study participants. The photos will give the audience a visual context for the research – and enliven the performance.

GRADE EVALUATION

5 Field Note Assignments	(10 points each)	50 points
3 Evaluation Assignments	(10 points each)	30 points
5 Class Participations	(3 points each)	15 points
Visual Presentation		5 points
Total		100 points

COURSE SCHEDULE

September 14th *Course Overview: Ethnography – What is it and why do it?*

- Katz, “Ethnography’s Warrants.”*
- Geertz, “Thick Description.”*
- Geertz, “Deep Play.”*

*Try to read them before the first class (we will be discussing them).

September 21st *Entering a Field Site: Insider/Outsider Issues*

- Myerhoff, “So What Do You Want From Us Here?”
- Kondo, “Eye/I.”
- Bucarius, “Becoming a Trusted “Outsider.”
- Contreras, “Recalling to Life.”
- Contreras, “Standpoint Purgatorio.”

***DUE: Field Note 1 – Field Site Description** (sights, sounds, layout, etc.)

September 28th *Ethical Issues in the Field*

- Thorne, “You Still Takin’ Notes?”
- Scheper-Hughes, “Parts Unknown.”
- Goffman, “Appendix: A Methodological Note.”

***DUE: Field Note 2 – Reflexive Positionality Account**

October 5th *The Modern Chicago School Model*

- Duneier, *Sidewalk*.

***DUE: Sidewalk Evaluation**

October 12th *Challenging the Chicago School Tradition* (read in order)

- Wacquant, “Scrutinizing the Street.”
- Duneier, “What Kind of Combat Sport is Sociology?”
- Choo and Ferree. “Practicing Intersectionality in Sociological Research.”

***DUE: Field Note 3 – Group/Status Differences at the Field Site**

October 19th *Finding Global Forces in Everyday Life*

- Hoang, *Dealing in Desire*

***DUE: Dealing in Desire Evaluation**

October 26th *Intersecting History, Social Structure, and Biography*

- Contreras, *The Stickup Kids*

***DUE: Field Note 4 – A Study Participant in the Global/Social Context**

November 2nd *Emotions in Ethnography* (read in order)

- Behar, “The Vulnerable Observer.”
- Rosaldo, “Grief and a Headhunter’s Rage.”
- Behar, “Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart.”

***DUE: Field Note 5 – Creative/Sensory/Emotional Experience**

November 9th FALL READING WEEK

November 16th *Challenging the Ethnographic Orthodoxy*

- Behar, *Translated Woman*

***DUE: Translated Woman Evaluation**

November 23rd *Feminist Ethnography* (read in order)

- Abu-Lughod, “Can There be a Feminist Ethnography?”
- Behar and Gordon, “Introduction.” (Women Writing Culture).
- Stacey, “Can There be a Feminist Ethnography?”
- Wheatley, “A Rejoinder to Judith Stacy.”

***DUE: Field Note 6** (choose only one of the following):

a. Revealing Raced, Classed, and Gendered Phenomena
(or other phenomena, which you can discuss with me beforehand)

b. Showing A Feminist Approach in Action

November 30th *Embodied Ethnography*

- Wacquant, “Carnal Sociology.”
- Okely, “Fieldwork as Embodied.”

***Guest Speaker (TBA)**

December 7th *Visual Methodology Presentation*

- Visual Presentations of the Field Site