

ANTHRO 2223F-200
DOING FIELDWORK IN ANTHROPOLOGY
Course Outline
September 2017



In this course, we will explore the methodology of anthropological fieldwork. The emphasis will be less on reading about anthropology and more on actually doing what anthropologists do. In assignments based on participant observation we will develop research skills by talking with people, observing what they are doing and taking part in their activities.

Prerequisite: Anthropology 1020E or 1025F/G, or permission of the Department.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

CLASS MEETINGS ON CAMPUS: This is a ‘blended course’ which means that the course requirements will be divided between actual class attendance on campus and work online. We will use the class meetings on campus to discuss the assignments and the results. However, most of the actual work you will be doing will take place outside the classroom. I have tentatively scheduled six class meetings; however, we can add more if we feel they would benefit us.

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Hours: Fridays
Email: slarkin@uwo.ca
Classes: **Friday, 10:30 am - 12:30 pm in UCC 59**

Learning Outcomes: Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to

- Understand and critically evaluate some of the basic features of anthropological fieldwork.
- Develop research skills through direct experience of participant observation and conducting interviews.
- Compare their own fieldwork with that of other students and with accounts published by professional anthropologists.
- Construct a research proposal for further study.

MARKS WILL BE CALCULATED AS FOLLOWS:

Assignment 1		10 %
Assignment 2		15%
Assignments 3-4	(25% each)	50%
Research Proposal	(Monday, December 11)	25%

READINGS: There are a few readings included in the course. The purpose of these is simply to give you some ideas.

FORUMS: There is a Forum for each week and it is the place to post the results of your fieldwork and to comment on the field notes and findings of other students. The Forums are also places to ask questions and share ideas that come up during the assignments.

ASSIGNMENTS: Only the first of the four assignments is based on reading and posting discussion comments. The purpose of this is to give student a couple of weeks to settle in and become familiar with the expectations of the course. The following three assignments are based on varying aspects of anthropological field work such as participant observation, field notes, short written accounts and discussion of the results. There will be more information and direction for each assignment on the course website.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: Using everything you have learned in the course, write a proposal for future research on a topic of your choice and submit it on the Assignments page of this website. The proposal will include the following: background on your topic, a brief review of the literature on your topic, the methods you will use in your research, any problems you may anticipate and the relevance of your study for anthropology. I will include more detailed information on the Research Proposal on our website.

OUTLINE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Week 1 (Sept 8) Assignment 1: What is Fieldwork?

Class Meeting on Campus

Bronislaw Malinowski, 1922, Introduction: In: *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, pp. 1-25. New York: Dutton.

Join the discussion on Forum 1 by answering the questions: What are Malinowski's concerns? What is he trying to achieve?

Week 2 (Sept 15) Assignment 1: What is Participant Observation?

Judith Okely. 2012. "Participant observation: theoretical overview." In *Anthropological Practice: Fieldwork and the Ethnographic Method*, pp. 75-87.

Join the discussion in Forum 2

Week 3 (Sept 22) Assignment 2: Observation on the City Bus

Class Meeting on Campus

Project: Ride the City Bus on a complete circuit.

Record everything you can about what is going on inside the bus and at the bus stops.

These are your Field notes.

Organize your notes according to themes.

Include any problems you may have encountered.

Post a summary of your notes in Forum 3.

Week 4 (Sept 29) Assignment 2: What Did We Observe?

Read the Field Notes submitted by 3 other students and comment in Forum 4 on the similarities and differences between your notes and the notes of the other students.

Week 5 (Oct 6) Assignment 3: Talking with People

Class Meeting on Campus

Kathleen M. DeWalt and Billie R. DeWalt. 2011. "Informal interviewing in participant observation." In *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*, pp. 137-156.

Project: Cell Phones

Create a set of questions you would like to ask cell phone users.

Post your questions in Forum 5 and comment on the questions posted by other students.

Reading Week: October 9 - 13

Week 6 (Oct 20) Assignment 3: Conducting the Interviews

Contact 4 classmates and interview them.

Week 7 (Oct 27) Assignment 3: What Did You Learn?

Class Meeting on Campus

Write the results of your interviews and post a summary in Forum 7

Are there similarities in the answers to your interview questions?

Are there things you did not ask that seem important now?

Week 8 (Nov 3) Assignment 3: Discussing the Results

Read the results of 4 other students and comment on the similarities and differences between your results and theirs.

Discuss the differences in Forum 8.

Week 9 (Nov 10) Assignment 4: Interpreting the Action

Class Meeting on Campus

Stewart Muir. 1994. "Not quite at home," in *Anthropologists in the Field*. Edited by L. Hume & J. Mulcock, pp. 73-81.

Project: Activities Centre: Shopping Mall, Gym, Club Meeting, Court Session, Church Service, Sports Game or any place where people with common interests gather.

Visit the location, observe what people are doing and listen to what they are saying.

Write up your field notes after you leave.

Week 10 (Nov 17) Assignment 4: What Does It All Mean?

Gregory Bateson. 1958. "Methods of presentation." In *Naven*, pp. 1-5.

Read through your notes and write a 3-4 page paper about your understanding of what you saw and heard.

Post your interpretation in Forum 10.

Week 11 (Nov 24) Assignment 4: Assessing the Meaning

Class Meeting on Campus

Sam Ladner. 2014. "Using theory in ethnography." In *Practical Ethnography: A Guide to Doing Ethnography in the Private Sector*, pp. 21-38.

Read the papers of 4 other students and discuss the points of interpretation in Forum 11.

Do you have questions?

Are their points that seem to stand out as especially insightful?

Week 12 (Dec 1) How Will I Know If I Got It Right?

Peter Metcalf. 2002. "Lies." In *They Lie, We Lie: Getting on with Anthropology*, pp.1-16.

Some questions to think about:

Do you have concerns about your own research?

Now that more time has passed, have you come up with new ideas about how you might do things differently next time?

Week 13 (Dec 9) Refining the Research Proposal (Due Monday, Dec 11)

Class Meeting on Campus

General University Policies:

All students should familiarize themselves with Western's current academic policies regarding accessibility, plagiarism and scholastic offences, and medical accommodation. These policies are outlined (with links to the full policies) at:

http://anthropology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/course_information/academic_policies.html

Useful Websites

- A range of student services is available at: <https://student.uwo.ca>
- Student Support Services: <http://westernusc.ca/services>
- Anthropology Department: <http://anthropology.uwo.ca>
- Office of the Registrar: <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>
- Student Development Services: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca>
- Writing Support Centre: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing/>
- Plagiarism and Citing Sources: www.lib.uwo.ca/essayhelp
- Accommodated Exams:
http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html