

**Department of Anthropology**  
**Anthro 3223F-001 - Doing Fieldwork in Sociocultural Anthropology**  
**Course Outline**  
**Fall 2023**

*Version Date: Sept. 6, 2023*

**Instructor and Course Information:**

Instructor: Dr. Jeremy Trombley

Email: jtrombl@uwo.ca

Credit value: 0.5 credit

Antirequisites: None

Prerequisites: Registration in Year 3 or 4 in any Anthropology module.

**Course Description:**

This course introduces students the theory and practice of ethnographic research and situates ethnography within qualitative social science research more generally. The course will begin by considering the historical development of anthropological research and the epistemological questions raised by such research, before turning to practical questions of research design and the primary methods of qualitative research used by anthropologists (e.g., participant-observation, life histories, field interviews). The course will also explore the relationship between research design, conducting research, and writing up the results. We will also discuss the ethical considerations that arise in ethnographic research and all students will undergo training in the ethical design and implementation of research with human subjects. All students in the course will participate in designing and conducting a collaborative research project. By the end of the course students will have extensive practical experience with a range of qualitative research methods and all students will write an ethnographic analysis based on their field research.

This course has an extensive practical component, which means that all students will be conducting field research. The assignments will thus consist of both field research itself and of more polished analyses written after the research is conducted. The focus of the evaluation will be on feedback that will improve your skills. This means that while all assignments are required, not all of them will receive a letter grade.

**Use of OWL**

This course will use OWL to distribute readings and for some activities. Please contact me if you have any difficulties accessing or using the course site.

**Learning Outcomes:**

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

- Identify and describe key methodological approaches in sociocultural anthropology;
- Define research questions and select and apply appropriate methods;
- Design their own research project and collect their own original data;
- Examine and analyze ethnographic data;

- Work collaboratively with a group of peers to develop a shared research project;
- Synthesize research findings and present research results in oral and written formats.

### **Course Materials:**

Readings are available on the course OWL site.

### **Evaluation:**

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| In-class Assignments   | 10% |
| Weekly Assignments     | 15% |
| Short Analytic Paper   | 20% |
| Final Research Project | 55% |

There will be a lot of assignments in this class, including short weekly assignments (some done in class, some done before class). The goal is not to make your life busy, but rather to give you the opportunity to practice a set of skills that are key to the ethnographer's toolkit. In addition to short weekly assignments, we will also work together as a class to design a team-based research project. Each student will also design and conduct their own independent research that will form a component of our larger team project. The group research project will include fieldwork on campus as well as auto-ethnographic research on your own activities. Your independent research project will include additional fieldwork and an extended interview and transcription. All students will write a final ethnographic analysis based on the results of both the group and individual research projects.

In some cases, we might conduct research outside of the classroom (but on campus) during our regularly scheduled meeting. If you are sick, have a family emergency, or will miss class due to a religious holiday, please let me know through email before class. Your overall grade for these assignments will be based on *process* not product, that is, on your genuine engagement with the assignments and conversations.

#### *In-class assignments- 10%*

In weeks 2-12 we will have in-class assignments that you will turn in. These will be short hands-on assignments in which we use ethnographic methods and then reflect on them later in class discussion. I will drop the lowest grade on these in-class assignments.

#### *Weekly Assignments (done outside of class) – 15%*

Throughout the term there will also be short practical assignments for you to do outside of class. In all cases, I will hand out the assignments in class and discuss them in detail; they will then be due in class the following week.

#### *Short Analytic Paper – 20%*

Students will write a short analytic paper that reflects on the methodologies of several ethnographic texts. The key focus of these papers will be for students to develop a sense of the relationship between research questions and research methods used in a variety of ethnographic contexts. The analytic paper should be about 750 words and is due in class on October 20.

### Final Research Project – 55%

Students will design and conduct their own research project (in conversation with the instructor) and write an ethnographic analysis based on their original research. The final research project will consist of several components, including: a short presentation of the project in class (5%); a detailed field interview and transcription (20%); and the final ethnographic analysis paper (30%). Your final paper should be about 2000 words and is due on Friday December 8.

### **Late Policy for Assignments**

Unless a student receives accommodation for illness through Academic Counselling, late assignments will be penalized at the rate of 5% of the assignment grade per day late for up to a total of 5 days (including weekends) following the due date. Late assignments will not be accepted after 5 days.

### **Course Specific Statements and Policies:**

#### Course Specific Conditions Required to Pass this Course

In order to pass this course students must submit all writing assignments and receive at least a passing grade on their final research project.

#### Academic Consideration for Student Absences:

For students who have missed, or will miss, any course work, whether it be for medical related or non-medical related, please read the details and instructions on "[What is Academic Consideration](#)".

No accommodations will be granted retroactively more than 10 days after an assignment's due date or a missed quiz or test. Please see your academic counsellor immediately if you will be seeking accommodations based on medical or compassionate grounds.

All missed work must be made up by the end of the exam period in the applicable term.

#### Academic Integrity - Statement on Plagiarism:

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing. It is also a scholastic offence to submit the same work for credit in more than one course. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

### **Accessible Education**

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. Please see [Accessible Education](#) for information.

## **ANTH 3223F Doing Fieldwork**

### **Schedule of Course Readings**

#### **Week 1 – Introductions**

#### **Week 2 – What is ethnography?**

- McGranahan, Carole. 2014. "What is Ethnography? Teaching Ethnographic Sensibilities without Fieldwork." *Teaching Anthropology*. 4: 23-36.
- MWRG. 2009. "A new form of collaboration in cultural anthropology: Matsutake worlds." *American Ethnologist*. 36(2): 380-403.
- Wang, Tricia. 2016. "Why Big Data Needs Thick Data." *Ethnography Matters*.

#### **Week 3 – Ethics in/of anthropology**

- American Anthropological Association, AAA Code of Ethics.
- San Code of Ethics.
- McGranahan, Carole and Uzma Rizvi. 2016. "Decolonizing Anthropology." *Savage Minds*.
- Harrison, Faye V., et al. 2016. "Decolonizing Anthropology: A Conversation Parts 1 & 2." *Savage Minds*.
- Demian, Melissa. 2018. "Anthropology After #metoo.: *Cultural Anthropology Hot Spots*.
- Sultan, Aisha J. M. 2019. "When Fieldwork Breaks Your Heart." *Anthro Pod*.

#### **Week 4 – Research Design, or the Object of Study and the Object of Observation**

- Joseph Maxwell. 2005. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. Sage. Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework, pp. 33-46 and Chapter 4: Research Questions, pp. 65-78.
- Greenfield, Adam. *Radical Technologies: The Design of Everyday Life*. Verso. Chapter 1: Smartphone: The Networking of the Self, pp. 9-29.
- Seaver, Nick. 2017. "Algorithms as culture: Some tactics for the ethnography of algorithmic systems." *Big Data & Society* (July-Dec): 1-12.

#### **Week 5 – Field Sites**

- Bonilla, Yarimar and Jonathan Rosa. 2015. "#Ferguson: Digital Protest, hashtag ethnography, and the racial politics of social media in the United States." *American Ethnologist* 42(1): 4-17.

- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 2003. *Global Transformations. Anthropology and the Modern World*. Palgrave. "Making Sense: The Fields in which We Work," pp. 117-139.
- Passaro, Joanne. "1997. 'You Can't Take the Subway to the Field!': 'Village' Epistemologies in a Global Village." In *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*, pp. 147-162

### **Week 6 – Fieldnotes, or the Production of Primary Data / Autoethnography**

- Emerson et al., *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chapters 1 & 2.
- Desjarlais, Robert. 2011. *Counterplay: An Anthropologist at the Chessboard*. Chapter 1: "Blitzkrieg Bop."

### **Week 7 – Detailed Notes as First-Order Analysis / Research Proposals**

- Emerson et al., *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chapters 3 & 4.
- Silverman, Sydel. 1991. "Writing Grant Proposals for Anthropological Research." *Current Anthropology*, 32 (4): 485-489.

### **Week 8 – Public space, public culture**

- Low, Setha. *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture*. Chapter 1: Notes from the Field.
- Low, Setha, *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture*, Chapter 2: Public Space and Culture: The Case of the Latin American Plaza.
- Ross, Scott. 2019. "Being Real on Fake Instagram: Likes, Images, and Media Ideologies of Value." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, pp. 1-16.

### **Week 9 – Interviews and Life Histories**

- Russell, Bernard H. 2006 "Interviewing: Structured and Semi-structured." In *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (fourth edition), pp. 210-250. AltaMira.
- Madison, D. Soyini. 2005 "Formulating Questions" in *Critical ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance* Thousand Oaks: Sage Press. pp. 35-43.
- Mintz, Sidney W. *Worker in the Cane*. Introduction, pp. 1-11.
- Mintz, Sidney W. 1979. "The Anthropological Interview and the Life History." *The Oral History Review* Vol 7: 18-26.

### **Week 10 – Transcribing Talk**

- Kvale, Steiner. 2009. "Transcribing Interviews." In *Interviews*, pp. 177-187.

- Ochs, Elinor. 1979. "Transcription as Theory." In *Developmental Pragmatics*, pp. 43–72.

### **Week 11 – Material and Visual Culture**

- De León, Jason. 2012. "‘Better to be Hot than Caught’: Excavating the Conflicting Roles of Migrant Material Culture." *American Anthropologist* 114(3): 477–495.
- Hunleth, Jean. 2019. "Zambian Children’s Imaginal Caring: On Fantasy, Play, and Anticipation in an Epidemic." *Cultural Anthropology* 34(2): 155–186.
- Lutz, Catherine and Jane Collins. 1993. "The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes." In *Reading National Geographic*, pp. 187–216.

### **Week 12 (Nov 28) – Finding Meaning in your notes**

- Emerson et al., *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chapters 5 & 6

[ presentations in class]

### **Week 13 (Dec 5) – Storytelling, or ethno-graphy**

- Kirin Narayan, *Alive in the Writing*. Chapter 1: Story and Theory and Chapter 4: Voice.

[ presentations in class]