SOCY5518

SOCY5518 – Boston College
CRAFT OF ETHNOGRAPHY (Syllabus for Graduate Students)
Fall 2016

Professor: Julia Chuang
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Course Description:

This course introduces students to the craft of sociological ethnography. It has three components. In the first, students learn the basic techniques of three ‘schools’ of ethnography. In the second, students read ethnographies from each approach, seeking to understand which techniques led to the finished text. In the final and main course component, students will put these techniques to practice during the term, as they design and conduct a small-scale ethnographic research project, learning in the process the logistics of selecting a field site, recruiting informants, interviewing, recording and analyzing data.

Summary of Objectives:

• To read qualitative research and develop a sense of what it means to recognize patterns of social life and discern their relationship to larger political and economic structures.
• To discern the strengths and limits of analyzing social life through everyday observation and participation.
• To design and implement your own qualitative study.
• To learn the basic techniques of access, observation, interviewing, note taking, analysis, and theory building.

Disability Policy:

This class involves an active fieldwork component, meaning that students will choose a research site and observe and interact with people in this site. The site can be a range of settings: for example, a church, a hospital waiting room, a street corner. Yet the conditions and methods for this observation are quite flexible. Students with documented disabilities should consult with me at the start of the term to discuss how they can leverage their abilities and how I can adapt the fieldwork requirements to make this course possible.

For any other accommodations, please contact Kathy Duggan, (617) 552-8093, at the Connors Family Learning Center regarding learning disabilities, or Paulette Durrett, (617) 552-3470, in the Disability Services Office regarding all other types of disabilities.

Required Texts:


Course Requirements:

Your course grade will be divided into three parts:

1) Participation (30%)

Your participation grade is based on your weekly reading responses, leading class discussion, general class participation (roughly 10% each).

a. For weeks 2 through 7 you will write a weekly 1-page Reflection Memo (300 words) on the readings due on the course website Sunday by midnight prior to Tuesday’s meetings. The memo should identify the key argument of each reading, and discuss how the ethnographic data supports and enriches this argument.

b. Each week (beginning week 2), two students will lead class discussion. To prepare, you will meet with your partner to create an outline of your discussion plan. Presentations should address the fit between question, data, method, and theory.

c. For weeks 8 through 12, you will provide comments on circulated student fieldnotes, in the form of a 300 word memo to each author regarding their field notes/interviews.

2) Data collection (30%)

a. Ethnographic field research-- minimum of 5 weeks of fieldwork (3-5 hours weekly plus fieldnote writing – varies for graduates vs. undergraduates)

b. Two sets of fieldnotes or two interview transcripts to be posted to the class website. Dates will vary.

3) Final Research Proposal (40%)
The main requirement is to produce a final extended research proposal (for undergraduates) or research paper (for graduate students) based on a pilot research project conducted during the semester. You can base your proposal on ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, content analysis of primary data, or a combination of these.

The final proposal/paper should include:

- A problem statement, supported by research site, including people and activities involved.
- A description of your references to the research literature.
- A description of the method for gaining access to the site and establishing field relationships. Observer effects on the data. Ethical problems encountered.
- A description of your data-gathering activities.
- A description of your data-analysis procedures.
- A statement of your findings. These will be exploratory and tentative, but should be grounded in the data you will have collected. How do the findings relate to your original problem statement? Do they confirm, refute, or suggest a reformulation of the research problem? What do these early findings suggest about what you would need to do to continue this research?
- For graduate students: A detailed description of how you will improve the data (once you receive money to do so).

Final proposals should be 20 pages double-spaced, final papers should be 30 pages double-spaced.

**Grading Scale:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>70-73</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>74-77</td>
<td>53-60</td>
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**COURSE SCHEDULE**

(Readings might be changed slightly at the start of the term)

**Week 1**

**Introduction**

Syllabus, course requirements

**Week 2**

**Ethnography and the Construction of the Field**

**Read:**


In class:
End-of-class discussion of possible or ongoing (for graduate students) fieldsites for research portion of course.

Week 3  
**Grounded Theory: Building Theory from Ground Up**

**Read:**

Week 4  
**Symbolic Interactionism (the Chicago / UCLA School)**

**Read:**

**Due:**
Submit 1-page double-spaced memo proposing fieldsite and possible research question.

Week 5  
**Extended Case Method (the Berkeley School)**

**Read:**

Week 6  
**Embodiment**

**Read:**

Week 7  
**Sociological vs. Anthropological Ethnography**
Read:

To do:
Begin or continue (for graduate students) fieldwork. By Week 8 each student should have at least two sets (5-10 pages single-spaced each) of fieldnotes ready for circulation.

Week 8  Writing Fieldnotes

Read:

In class: Circulation and Discussion of two people’s work

Week 9

In class: Circulation and Discussion of two people’s work

Week 10

In class: Circulation and Discussion of two people’s work

Week 11

In class: Circulation and Discussion of two people’s work

Week 12

In class: Circulation and Discussion of two people’s work

Week 13

FINAL PROPOSALS AND PAPERS DUE

Some Supplemental Notes on Research Portion of the Course:

Each student will need to submit paperwork for Human Subjects’ Rights Protection Protocol prior to beginning their fieldwork. All published or publicly presented research including Ph.D. dissertations MUST get approval of CPHS if your research includes human subjects (http://www.bc.edu/research/oric/human.html).

Most of you should be able to fall under a Category 6 or 7 Minimal Risk, which means
that you can apply as EXEMPT (turn around time is usually 10 days) or EXPEDITED (turn around time is usually 20 days) rather than a FULL BOARD REVIEW. Please plan ahead to make sure that you clear IRB before starting your research. You will need to set aside some time to complete the CITI OR NIH trainings in order to be cleared under Boston College’s IRB.

Research
This is the core of the course. Each student will decide whether ethnographic research OR interview based methods is the more appropriate for their study.

1) For Ethnographic Field Research:
   • For undergraduates, 3 days of fieldwork spread over 3 weeks (3-5 hours per day), 3 sets of ethnographic fieldnotes, 5-10 single-spaced pages each. You might want to plan ahead for week where you will be swamped with work from other classes and plan to do 2 days of field research during the light weeks.
   • For graduate students, 8 days of fieldwork spread over 3 weeks (3-5 hours per day), plus ethnographic fieldnotes. 9 sets of fieldnotes, 5-10 single-spaced pages each.

2) For Interview-based Research
   • Construct an interview guide which we will discuss in class. I will also provide sample interview guides.
   • For undergraduates, recruit and interview 7 different respondents, transcribe the interviews, and code at least half of them. At the end of the course you will turn in a portfolio with all interview transcripts and relevant coding schemes.
   • For graduate students, recruit and interview 14 different respondents, transcribe the interviews, and code all of them. At the end of the course you will turn in a portfolio with all interview transcripts and relevant coding schemes.
   • Coding your data— we will discuss a variety of different methods for coding your data. For the purpose of this class hand-written codes will be sufficient.