Advanced Ethnographic Methods: Research in Anthropology of Education (Y750/H637)  
Fall 2004

Professor: Dr. Bradley A.U. Levinson  
Office Hours: Tuesday, 10-12; Thursday, 2:30-4:30 p.m., or by appointment  
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This course is a workshop-format seminar designed to enable students to deepen their understanding of ethnographic research and further develop their skills as ethnographic researchers and analysts. Students are expected to develop and conduct a modest ethnographic study of an educational site over the course of the semester. To be frank and modest, this seminar might better be titled, “Intermediate Ethnographic Methods”; advanced methods are truly learned from advisors and mentors over the course of a whole career!

Although we will survey and contrast different approaches to ethnographic educational research, this course will highlight the anthropological approach. The first few weeks mainly will consist of common readings, especially an advanced “text” on ethnography from an anthropological perspective (Wolcott), as well as student-led discussion about possible research projects for the semester.

After the first few weeks of common readings, the course will shift to a project focus, in which students will alternate weeks of ongoing fieldwork and individual or small-group meetings with the instructor. Several class sessions will also be held in which students will share with one another the challenges and successes of ethnographic fieldwork—through examples of observational fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and coding strategies. Over this time, students will also be reading the methodological literature (e.g., LeCompte and Schensul’s Ethnographer’s Toolkit and Emerson et al.’s Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes) that especially pertains to the type of project they are conducting, or will conduct for a dissertation, and that speaks to perceived gaps in their ethnographic training. The last 2 weeks will consist of students’ final seminar presentation of their ethnographic project.

Required reading:
2. Methodological literature, including relevant chapters from Lecompte and Schensul’s 7-volume, The Ethnographer’s Toolkit and/or Emerson et al.’s Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes.
3. A book for the “big picture”: How educational ethnographers write. Students choose and order their own books, but some of my favorites include Jan Nespor’s Tangled up in School; Sherry Ortner’s New Jersey Dreaming; Douglas Foley’s Heartland Chronicles; Angela Valenzuela’s Subtractive Schooling; Bradley Levinson et als. The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: Critical Ethnographies of Schooling and Local Practice or We Are All Equal.
Assignments and Evaluation

Seminar participation 80%

Includes:
Introductory interview and interview write-up (10%)
Discussion submission of research proposal (10%)
Sample of fieldnotes (10%)
Sample of interview and interview transcript (10%)
Sample of coding (10%)
Verbal report on ethnographic monograph (10%)
Active participation in discussion and response to assigned readings (20%)

Final analysis and presentation 20%

Tentative Schedule

August 31  Introductions

September 7  What is Ethnography?

Read: Wolcott, Ethnography, Chapters 1-4
Lecompte and Schensul, “Paradigms for Thinking about Ethnographic Research” (Reserve)

Choose one:
Reinharz, “Feminist Ethnography”
Marcus, “Ethnography In/Of the World System”

In-class discussion of possible research projects

September 14  Designing Projects  **No class meeting**

**We don’t meet as a whole class this week
Read:
Murphy and Dingwall, “Ethics and ethnography”

Read 2-3 of the following:
LeCompte and Schensul, “Choosing and designing an ethnographic project”
Walford, “Choice of research site…”
Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte, “Entering the field”
Glesne and Peshkin, “Prestudy tasks”

--Meet with me during office hours last week or this week
--Apply for human subjects approval, if necessary
September 21  *Finding Your Topic and Style as an Educational Ethnographer*

**Read:** Wolcott, Chaps. 5-7  
Yon, “Overview of the history of educational ethnography”  
Gordon et al., “Ethnographic research in educational settings”  
Carspecken, “Critical ethnographies from Houston”

--Due: Research Proposal

September 28  (continued)

**Read:** Wolcott, Chaps. 8-11  
Emerson et al., Chapter 1

October 5  **No class meeting**

--Begin work on observation and note-taking  
**Read:** Emerson et al., Chaps. 2-3

October 12  *Class discussion of observation and fieldnotes*

--Bring in fieldnote samples

October 19  **No class meeting**

--Begin working on interviewing  
**Read:** Hammersley and Atkinson, “Insider Accounts”  
Hatch, “Interviewing”

October 26  *Class discussion of interviewing and transcribing*

--Bring in samples of interviews and transcripts

November 2  **No class meeting**

--Students engage in ongoing fieldwork and consult with me on their projects
November 9  *Pursuing Members’ Meanings: Interview Analysis and coding*

**Read:** Emerson et al., Chaps. 5-6  
We will continue our analysis of interviews and interview transcripts; if you didn’t do this for the last class, bring several copies of 3-5 pages of interview transcript, as well as a medium for playing the original corresponding interview.

We will discuss Chap. 5 from Emerson et al, and talk about initial coding strategies.

November 16  *The big picture: How the ethnographer works and writes*

**Read:** Ethnography of choice  
Prepare 5-10 minutes of commentary about a full-length ethnographic study, answering some of the questions laid out on the Oncourse schedule tab.

November 23  **No class meetings**

--Students engage in ongoing fieldwork

November 30  *Coding and Analysis*

**Read:** Emerson et al., Chapter 7  
Bring in some evidence of coding work (a few pages of integrative memos, indexing or underlining, etc.) to share with classmates.

December 7 and December 14  *Integrating analysis with theory and writing up: Final seminar presentations*

We will meet in our regular class at our regular time on December 7; we will meet at my home at our regular time for the final class on December 14 (directions and refreshments provided later). Students will sign up for 20-minute slots on each of those days to make a final presentation. These presentations need not be polished. Depending on the progress of research projects, the presentation may consist of making initial attempts to write up analyses of significant findings emerging from the study, and seeking feedback; or it may be a relatively complete final report on the project. The only written product I expect you to turn in by December 14 is at least 8-10 pages or so of an attempt at final ethnographic write-up.