At the heart of cultural anthropology is the research method known as ethnography. The goal of this course is to help you become a good ethnographic researcher. By doing the assigned readings, participating in class discussions and exercises, completing written assignments, keeping a field journal, and conducting a semester-long field project, you will by the end of this course

- have a firm grasp of the nature of ethnographic research, and some of its analytical and political uses
- have a clear sense of how to design ethnographic research projects
- have developed your skill in a range of ethnographic techniques, including participant observation, fieldnote writing, and in-depth interviewing
- be able to evaluate the ethical quality of research
- understand how to analyze ethnographic data
- be able to write clear and accurate ethnographic accounts
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A) Participation .................................................................................................................10%

Class time will be devoted to a mix of practical exercises and discussion of readings. Some days we will spend more time on exercises; some days more on readings. You must come to class ready to participate. I will pay close attention to the frequency and quality of your participation. Use of cell phones, text messaging devices, email, web-browsing and so on are not permitted in class. You should print out articles to bring to class; laptops will not be open during class time, except when we are using the atlas.ti program.

B) Attendance ..................................................................................................................10%

An attendance sheet will be circulated at the start of each class meeting. Excused absences are for documented illnesses, deaths in the family, and direct participation in SU team events.

- 1 or 2 unexcused absences..........................................................................................A
- 3 unexcused absences.................................................................................................B
- 4 unexcused absences.................................................................................................B-
- 5 unexcused absences.................................................................................................C+
- 6 unexcused absences.................................................................................................C
- 7 unexcused absences.................................................................................................C-
- 8 unexcused absences.................................................................................................D
- 9 or more unexcused absences...................................................................................F

C) 10 written assignments ..................................................................................................5% each

These are due by 8 pm as an e-mail attachment in a message sent to me at jsburdic@syr.edu. I will hand out guides to each assignment one week before it is due.

- Project memo.............................................................................................................. Friday, Jan 23
- Observe “simple” activity............................................................................................ Friday, Jan 28
- Develop research questions......................................................................................... Friday, Feb 6
- Research design.......................................................................................................... Friday, Feb 13
- Participant-describe a complex social setting............................................................... Friday, Feb 20
- Participant-describe a practice..................................................................................... Friday, Feb 27
- Interview report.......................................................................................................... Friday, Mar 6
- Analytical memorandum.............................................................................................. Friday, Mar 20
- IRB report .................................................................................................................. Friday, Mar 27
- Coding report.............................................................................................................. Friday, April 3
D) Field journal

Your primary fieldwork for this course will unfold over the ten weeks between February 2- April 10. Over the course of those ten weeks, you should plan on devoting at least 1-2 hours every week to research, that is, to carrying out observations at your field site(s), and/or conducting interviews. You will need to establish a regular routine of research. Even if you have no interview scheduled in any given week, you must still spend this weekly time on-site.

Why? Because the more time you spend in the field, the better your knowledge will become. If you appear in the field regularly, people will treat you more informally, talk more openly with you, and show you things you need to see. The more time you spend in the field, the more you will become aware of how much behavior varies in the setting, of the typicality of any particular thing you have observed, of details you missed in earlier visits, and much else besides.

After each field session, you must devote time to writing field notes. We will discuss the nature of field notes a good deal in class. I expect undergraduates to write at least one (1) page, and graduate students to write at least two (2) pages, of field notes for every week between February 2-April 10. Thus for this 10-week period I expect at least 10 pages of field notes from the undergraduates, and 20 pages form the graduates. (Most students write a good deal more). These notes will be important “raw” data to be analyzed toward the end of term. Please write your field notes digitally, for ease of access, and to facilitate coding and analysis later on.

I will review your field journal twice during the term, to make sure you are keeping up with it and taking good notes. I will comment on the notes and grade them based on their detail, seriousness, and up-to-datedness. You will send me your first batch of fieldnotes on Friday, March 6 (along with your interview report); your second, complete batch will be included as an appendix to your final report.

E) In-class presentation

On either April 15, 20, 22, or 27 you will make a 10-minute presentation on your project, followed by 10 minutes of discussion. Detailed instructions for how to organize your presentation will be given later in the term.

F) Final report

Your final paper will report on the process and findings of your semester-long project. Undergraduates must write a report of 3000 words; graduate students must write a paper of 4500 words. Beyond this word count, you will include as an appendix all your field notes and transcripts of all interviews. Detailed guidance on the content of the reports will be distributed toward the middle of the term.
Human Subjects Certification. PLEASE READ CAREFULLY. At Syracuse University, all students conducting human subjects research must pass the “Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative” (CITI) training. The training takes between 90 to 120 minutes, and is quite interesting and even a little fun. **You must take the training during the first two weeks of the semester, no later than January 26.** To take the training, please go to: [https://www.citiprogram.org/](https://www.citiprogram.org/). Click on the “Register” tab, located immediately below the “Create an account” tab. This will take you to “Select Your Organizational Affiliation”, where you will type in “Syracuse University”. The rest should be self-explanatory; if you run into problems, e-mail me at [jsburdic@syr.edu](mailto:jsburdic@syr.edu). Once you have completed the training, send me the CITI certification proof no later than **Monday, January 26.** While I will not grade the proof itself, your overall grade for the course will be reduced by one-half grade for every week that you are late in handing in your proof of certification.

**Registering for a 4th credit:** Because of the expectation of regular fieldwork/fieldnotes, I am offering undergraduates the option of registering for an additional credit, as an experience credit/independent study. You can take the credit P/F. My colleague Robert Rubinstein has offered this option with no complication in prior years. Full-time tuition covers up to 19 credits; hence there should be no any additional cost.

**Qualitative Data Management Software.** We will be using the qualitative data analysis software [Atlas.ti](https://www.atlasti.com) throughout the class. Familiarity with this software is one of the skills that you will take away. There are 10 computers in the Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs computer cluster that have Atlas.ti installed, and you are welcome to use them on a first come, first served basis. (The Moynihan Institute doors lock at 5pm.) Student licenses are also available for $51 for the semester or $99 for two years (very useful). That way you are not restricted to Moynihan. More information coming soon.
**GENERAL POLICIES**

**Courtesy:** Please come to class on time. Once class begins, refrain from personal conversations. Please put away all non-course reading materials (e.g. newspapers). Turn off and put away all cell phones and text-messaging devices. Please avoid premature preparations to leave class.

**Laptops:** This is a “closed” laptop class. Please take notes by hand during class. Remember, anthropology is a discipline in which it is important to be able to write notes. Recent research shows that laptop-generated distraction, for both laptop and non-laptop users in the class, is significant. Indeed, one recent study shows that laptop users and the students who sit near them perform consistently below students who do not use laptops – a whole grade point! (See Sana et al 2012, [http://bama.ua.edu/~sprentic/695%20Sana%20et%20al.%202013-laptops.pdf](http://bama.ua.edu/~sprentic/695%20Sana%20et%20al.%202013-laptops.pdf))

**Plagiarism:** I will not tolerate plagiarism or any other forms of cheating. If I find a case of cheating, you will receive an F on the assignment, possibly for the course, and will be reported to the relevant college administrator. For more information on plagiarism please see [http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/](http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/)

**Students with disabilities** who have registered with the Office of Disability Services should see me about accommodating your needs. Please see [http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/](http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/) If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), located in Room 309 or 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible. For more information see Office of Disability Services:

**Religious holidays:** see [http://humanresources.syr.edu/holiday-schedule/](http://humanresources.syr.edu/holiday-schedule/) and [http://supolicies.syr.edu/studs/religious_observance.htm](http://supolicies.syr.edu/studs/religious_observance.htm)
I. GETTING STARTED

All readings are available on the course Blackboard site. Readings are subject to change.

M Jan 12  Introduction to course

W Jan 14  What is ethnography?

Readings:

- LeCompte and Schensul, “What is Ethnography?”, 1-5; 12-27
- Emerson et al, “Ethnographic Participation”, 1-4
- Burdick, “We Are All One in the Periferia: Blackness, Place and Poverty in Gospel Rap”, 59-81

M Jan 19  MLK day: no class

Wed., Jan 21  Projects: setting, group, focus, you

Readings:

- Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte, “Selecting a Research Site and Focus,” 23-37
- James Spradley, “Locating a Social Situation”, 39-52

II. GETTING INTO THE FIELD

M Jan 26 Access, gatekeepers, basic ethics

Readings:

- Schensul and LeCompte, “Defining and Entering the Field”, 23-46
- Dewalt and Dewalt, “Doing Participant Observation: Becoming a Participant”, 41-65

W Jan 28 Observing activities and settings

Readings:

- Robert Emerson et al, “Inscribing Experienced/Observed Realities”, 4-16
M Feb 2  Writing fieldnotes

**Readings:**

- Emerson et al, “In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes,” and “Writing Up Fieldnotes I: From Field to Desk”, 17-65

---

**III. DEVELOPING RESEARCH DESIGNS**

W Feb 4  Focusing your questions: pattern, meaning, process, influence

**Readings:**

- John’s handout on research questions

M Feb 9:  The ABCs of research design

**Readings:**

- LeCompte and Schensul, “Choosing and Designing an Ethnographic Research Project”, 134-169
- John's handout on the elements of research design

Wed Feb 11:  Sampling places and people; recruiting them

**Readings:**

- Schensul and LeCompte, “Sampling in Ethnographic Research”
M Feb 16 Describing social events, scenes, episodes

Reading:

W Feb 18 Describing practices

Reading:
- David Nicolini, “Zooming in and zooming out: A package of method and theory to study work practices”

M Feb 23 Describing discursive practices; analytical memos

Reading:
- Emerson, “Pursuing Members Meanings”, 108-141

W Feb 25 Interviewing 1: grand/mini-tour spirals & other prompts

Readings:
- Dewalt and Dewalt, “Informal Interviewing in Participant Observation”
- Spradley 1979, 85-91
- Bernard 2011, 156-172; 176-186

For graduate students:
- Schensul and Schensul, “In-depth, open-ended exploratory interviews”

M Mar 2 Interviewing 2: multisensory prompts

Readings:
- Anna Harris et al, 2012 “Developing Sensory Awareness in Qualitative Interviewing: A Portal Into the Otherwise Unexplored”
- Cohen and De Leon, “Object and Walking Probes”
W Mar 4 Group interviews

Readings:

- Schensul, Scensul and LeCompte, “Focus Group Interviews” (2013), 195-240

M Mar 16 Interviews about the past

Readings:

- Sean Field, “Oral History Methodology”
- Rachel Slater, “Using life histories to explore change”

For graduate students:

- Javier Auyero, “The judge, the cop, and the queen of carnival: Ethnography, storytelling, and the (contested) meanings of protest”

W Mar 18 “Go-alongs” and shadowing

Readings:

- Rebecca Gill, “The shadow in organizational ethnography”
M Mar 23 Risks, benefits, IRB

Readings:
- Margaret LeCompte and Jean Schensul, “Protection of Risk to Human Subjects and the Ethics of Ethnographic Fieldwork,” 285-316

W Mar 25 Applying ethnography

Readings:
- Margaret LeCompte and Jean Schensul, “Applying Ethnography”, 251-283
- John Burdick, “Uniting Theory and Practice in the Study of Social Movements”

M March 30 Coding and memoing

Readings:
- Emerson et al, 144-168
- Coffey and Atkinson, “Concepts and Coding”
- John's memo on codes

For graduate students:
- Bernard, 429-457

W April 1 From codes to patterns

Readings:
- Gibbs, “Thematic Coding and Categorizing”
- Finding patterns on atlas.ti
M April 6 Building interpretations about pattern, meaning, context, and process

**Readings:**

- John Burdick, “Anastácia at Chautauqua”
- Alexander Simpson, et al “The use of ethnography to explore meanings that refuse collectors attach to their work”

For graduate students:

- Stacia Zabusky, “Ethnography in/of Transnational Processes”

W April 8 Validating and triangulating

**Readings:**

- J. Schensul, “Validity and Reliability”
- John’s list of validation checks

M April 13 Writing ethnographically; looking to the future

**Reading:**

- Emerson et al, “Writing an Ethnography,” 169-210

For graduate students:

- Takeyuki Tsuda, Maria Tapias, and Xavier Escandell, “Locating the Global in Transnational Ethnography”
VII. REPORTING FINDINGS

W April 15
  o Student presentations

M April 20
  o Student presentations

W April 22
  o Student presentations

M April 27
  o Student presentations