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 should, by the end of this course,

- have a strong 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 skill in various ethnographic techniques, including participant observation, field-note 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

Attendance………………………………………………………………………..10%
Participation………………………………………………………………….5%
Written exercises………………………………………………………………..50%
Fieldnotes………………………………………………………………………15%
In-class presentation………………………………………………………….5%
Final report……………………………………………………………………15%
CITI training…………………………………………………………………...required and ungraded

1. **Attendance** …………………………………………………………………10%

An attendance sheet will be circulated during each class. Excused absences are for documented illnesses, deaths in the family, and direct participation in SU team events. A perfect attendance record earns you 100 points. Each unexcused absence deducts 7 points from your attendance grade.

2. **Participation** ………………………………………………………………5%

Class time will be devoted to a mix of lecture, discussion, exercises and discussion of readings. Some days we will spend more time on exercises; some days more on readings. Come to class ready to participate. I note and keep track of the frequency and quality of your comments and questions. While I do not expect you to participate in every class session, you will receive a lower participation grade if you are silent for lengthy (2 or more sessions) stretches. So do your best to jump in.

3. **10 short assignments** ……………………………………………………..5% each

These are due by 10 pm as an e-mail attachment in a message sent to me at jsburdic@syr.edu. I will hand out guides for each assignment about a week before it is due.

1. Project memo………………………………………………………………… Friday, Jan 25
2. Observe “simple” activity………………………………………………………Friday, Feb 1
3. Develop research questions……………………………………………………Friday, Feb 8
4. Research design………………………………………………………………..Friday, Feb 15
5. Participant-describe a complex social setting…………………………… Friday, Feb 22
6. Participant-describe a practice………………………………………………..Friday, Mar 1
7. Interview report…………………………………………………………………Friday, Mar 8
8. Analytical memorandum……………………………………………………..Friday, Mar 22
9. IRB report ………………………………………………………………………Friday, Mar 29
10. Coding report………………………………………………………………….Friday, April 5
4. Field journal………………………………………………………….15% (2 batches@ 7.5% each)

Your fieldwork for this course will unfold over the period between February 4- April 12. During those ten weeks, you should plan to devote **at least 1-2 hours per week** 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 a given week, you must still spend weekly time on-site.

**Why?** Because the more time you spend in the field, the better your knowledge of the object of your study will become. If you visit the site regularly, the people who frequent the site 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 behavior varies in the setting, of the typicality of any particular event, behavior, or thing you have observed, of details you missed in earlier visits, and much else.

After each field session, you must devote time to **writing field notes**. We will discuss the nature of field notes in class. I expect undergraduates to write **at least two (2) double-spaced pages**, and graduate students **at least three (3) double-spaced pages**, of field notes every week between February 4-April 12. (If you plan to be in town over March break I urge you to go to your field site that week as well). **In total I expect at least 18 pages of field notes from undergraduates, and at least 27 pages from graduate students**. (Most students write more). These notes are essential data to be analyzed toward the end of term. **Please write your field notes digitally**, to facilitate sending, commenting, and analysis.

I will review your field notes twice during the term, to make sure you are keeping up and taking good notes. I will comment on the notes and grade them based on their detail, seriousness, and up-to-datedness. **Please send me your first batch of field notes (10 pages for undergraduates, 15 pages for graduate students) on Friday, March 8 (along with your interview report); your second, complete batch (18 pages for undergrads, 27 for grads) must be included as an appendix to your final report.**

5. In-class presentation…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………….5%

On either **April 15, 17, 22, 24, 29, or (if necessary) May 1** you will make a 10-minute presentation on your project, followed by 5 minutes of discussion. Early in the term we will determine who presents on which day by picking dates from a hat. You **must** attend class meetings when other students are presenting. Detailed instructions for how to organize your presentation will be given later in the term.

6. Final report………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………..15%

Your final report will explain the process and findings of your semester-long project. Undergraduates must write a report of 3000 words; graduate students must write a report 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. Due Tuesday, May 7th, by 10 pm.

1. **CITI Training: to be completed any time between Fri Jan 18 and Fri, Feb 8:**

   Early in term you need to have basic familiarity with the ethical conduct of research. (Later in the term we will discuss in more detail the kinds of risks we impose on the people we ask to work with us as part of the research project.) I therefore expect all students, before beginning in-depth field research on their selected projects, to complete the “Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative” (CITI). The training takes between 90 to 120 minutes. **You must take the training no later than February 8.** To take the training, please go to [https://www.citiprogram.org](https://www.citiprogram.org). Click on the “Register” tab, then on “Select Your Organizational Affiliation”, where you will type in “Syracuse University”. The rest should be self-explanatory. If you run into problems, please e-mail me right away at jsburdic@syr.edu. Once you have completed the training, send me a screen shot of the CITI certification - again, no later than Friday, February 8. **While I will not grade the training itself, your grade for the course will be reduced by one full grade for every week after February 8 that you are late in handing in your proof of certification.**

2. **Optional 4th credit for undergraduates**

   I offer undergraduates the option of registering for an additional experience/independent study credit. You can take the credit P/F. If you are interested in the credit, let me know as soon as possible, and I will fill out an independent study form for you. You may register for the additional credit electronically by January 22; after that it is by petition.

3. **Qualitative Data Management (QDM) programs**

   Later this semester you will analyze your data. Given the relatively small size of the dataset you will be handling, it will be appropriate to analyze it using the basic features of Word (I will walk us through this method later this semester). It is however also fine to become familiar with QDM software, as this offers significant benefits when handling large datasets, and some advantages when handling smaller ones. In April you will be introduced to the basics of [atlas.ti](http://atlasti.com/). You are welcome to use atlas.ti to analyze your data for the course (see [http://atlasti.com/](http://atlasti.com/) for an overview). You may purchase a student license for atlas.ti for $51 for the semester or $99 for two years. (See [http://atlasti.com/students/](http://atlasti.com/students/) for details.) Students already familiar with another QDM program such as NVivo are welcome to use it.
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

**Courtesy:** Please come to class on time. Once class begins, I ask that you refrain from personal and side conversations. Please put away all non-course reading materials. Please avoid premature preparations to leave class.

**Cellphones:** You may not text or otherwise interact with your cellphone during class.

**Laptops:** This is a closed laptop class. Please take notes by hand during class.

**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.

**Religious holidays:** For University policy, please see [https://policies.syr.edu/policies/university-governance-ethics-integrity-and-legal-compliance/religious-observances-policy/](https://policies.syr.edu/policies/university-governance-ethics-integrity-and-legal-compliance/religious-observances-policy/). If you expect to miss class due to religious holiday observance, please let me know during the first two weeks of class.

**Academic integrity:** I do not tolerate academic dishonesty in any form. Please become familiar with the University’s policy: [http://class.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Academic-Integrity-Policy_final.pdf](http://class.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Academic-Integrity-Policy_final.pdf)
Please keep up with the readings. Although we will often discuss readings in class, we will not usually discuss all of them. Many of the assigned readings are intended to provide hands-on guidance. Think of them as similar to a running methodological textbook. I may occasionally change readings.

M Jan 14  Introduction to course

W Jan 16  What is ethnography?

Readings:

- LeCompte and Schensul, “What is Ethnography?”, 1-5; 12-27
- Emerson et al, “Ethnographic Participation”, 1-4
- Burdick, John, “We Are All One in the Periferia”, 62-81

W Jan 23  Setting, focus, positionality

Readings:

- Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte, “Selecting a Research Site and Focus,” 23-37
- Maxwell, James, “The personal equation”, 32-38
- Reyes, Victoria, “Ethnographic toolkit”
- Spradley, James, “Locating a Social Situation”, 39-52

M Jan 28 Access, basic ethics, more positionality

Readings:

- Schensul and LeCompte, “Defining and Entering the Field”, 23-46
- Dewalt and Dewalt, “Doing Participant Observation: Becoming a Participant”, 41-65
• ________________, “The Meaning of Informed Consent”, 214-226
• Mosher, Rhiannon et al. 2017. “Agency and Agendas: Revisiting the Roles of the Researcher and the Researched in Ethnographic Fieldwork”

W Jan 30 Observing activities and settings

Readings:

• Spradley, James, “Doing Participant Observation”, “Making and Ethnographic Record”, “Making Descriptive Observations”, 53-80
• Emerson, Robert et al, “Inscribing Experienced/Observed Realities”, 4-16
• Steusse, Angela. 2016. “A Bone to Pick”, 120-127

M Feb 4 Participating and 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
• Burdick, John, “Making lasagna in the building occupation”

W Feb 6 Focusing questions: pattern, meaning, process, influence

Readings:

• Professor Burdick’s handout on research questions
• Schensul and Schensul, “Elaborating Research Questions”

M Feb 11: Sampling places and people; recruiting them

Readings:

• Schensul and LeCompte, “Sampling in Ethnographic Research”
• Schensul and Schensul, “Ethnographic Sampling”
Wed Feb 13: Putting the pieces together into a design

Readings:

- LeCompte and Schensul, “Data Collection Techniques"
- Research Design Checklist
- Sample undergraduate design
- Sample graduate design

M Feb 18 Observing interactions, events, scenes, episodes

Reading:

- Burdick’s fieldnotes in Brazil, January/February 2018
- “Conventional Queuing”

W Feb 20 Participating in practices

Reading:

- Prentice, Rebecca, “Knowledge, skill, and the inculcation of the anthropologist: reflections on learning to sew in the field”
- Downey, Greg et al, “Apprenticeship as method: embodied learning in ethnographic practice”

M Feb 25 Witnessing and eliciting informal speech

Reading:

- Emerson, “Pursuing Members Meanings”, 108-141
- Dewalt and Dewalt, “Informal Interviewing in Participant Observation”

W Feb 27 Seeking meaning more formally: grand/mini-tour spirals & other prompts

Readings:

- Spradley, “Asking Descriptive Questions”
- Transcript of my interview with Renata
M Mar 4 Multisensory prompts

Readings:

- Harris et al, 2012 “Developing Sensory Awareness in Qualitative Interviewing: A Portal Into the Otherwise Unexplored”
- Cohen and De Leon, “Object and Walking Probes”
- Harper, “Talking about pictures: A Case for Photo Elicitation”

W Mar 6 Narratives of selves

Readings:

- Lanford, Michael, “Making Sense of Outsiderness: How Life History Informs the College Experiences of “Nontraditional” Students”
- Tierney, William et al, “Inequitable Structures: Class and Caste in Indian Higher Education”
- Chang, Heewon, “Individual and collaborative auto-ethnography as method”

M Mar 18 Focus groups

Reading:


W Mar 20 “Go-alongs” and shadowing

Readings:

- Gill, Rebecca, “The shadow in organizational ethnography”

M Mar 25 Risks, benefits, IRB

Readings:
• Margaret LeCompte and Jean Schensul, “Protection of Risk to Human Subjects and the Ethics of Ethnographic Fieldwork,” 285-316
• Full, Expedited, and Exempt IRB Forms

W Mar 27 Activist research

Readings:

• Jared Sacks, “On Militancy, Self-reflection, and the Role of the Researcher”

• Lozano, Alberto Arribas. 2018. “Knowledge co-production with social movement networks. Redefining grassroots politics, rethinking research

If necessary, we may have an additional session on analysis

M April 1 Coding and memoing

Readings:

• Emerson et al, 144-168
• Coffey and Atkinson, “Concepts and Coding”
• Gibbs on coding
• Professor Burdick’s memo on codes

W April 3 From codes to patterns

• Finding patterns on atlas.ti
M April 8 Building interpretations about pattern, meaning, context, and process

Readings:

- John Burdick, “Anastácia at Chautauqua”
- Stacia Zabusky, “Ethnography in/of Transnational Processes”

W April 10 Validating, triangulating

Readings:

- J. Schensul, “Validity and Reliability”
- Professor Burdick’s list of validation checks
- Emerson et al, “Writing and Representing”

M April 15

- Student presentations

W April 17

- Student presentations

M April 22

- Student presentations

W April 24

- Student presentations

M Apr 29

- Student presentations

W May 1 (if necessary)
• Student presentations