Reading ethnographic research—as much of it as one possibly can—is one of the best ways for a qualitative researcher to develop the perspective and skills required to produce high-quality scholarship, and that is what we will do this semester. This course is designed for doctoral students planning qualitative dissertation work; I assume that you have developed strong fieldwork skills and that you have done some preliminary work toward developing a dissertation topic. Through our readings and discussions, we will deepen your insight into ethnographic research, focusing on your ability to read, reflect upon, and draw ideas from the qualitative studies of other researchers.

Together, we will read, study, and discuss a series of recent ethnographic books. I’ve chosen books that I believe will offer various models for the conduct and presentation of qualitative research, and that will also allow us to explore a set of interlocking issues related to bodies, identities, spaces, and discourses. In our discussion of the texts, we will often focus on methodological issues. We will also expect to learn a great deal from these books about social processes—that is, about how people “do things together” and how those “doings” produce the regularities of social organization. Such knowledge of social process is key to the kind of analysis that produces compelling qualitative research.

Typically, we will spend most of our class session on small- and large-group discussion of the week’s book. In the last hour of class, we will sometimes take up other issues of concern to the class and discuss your ongoing work.

**TEXTS** (available at the SU Bookstore):


Mary Gray, *Out in the Country: Youth, Media and Queer Visibility in Rural America* (NYU Press, 2009)


A few additional readings will be available on our course Blackboard site.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

- **Read!** and come to class each week well prepared to discuss all of the assigned books.
- Prepare a brief discussion paper (3-5 pages) and lead your small group discussion for two of our books.
- Submit a final paper related in some way to your own qualitative research work (typically a proposal draft, research report, or methodological essay).

About half of your grade will be based on your participation in class discussions, with the other half based on your final paper.

When I evaluate your participation, I’ll be considering whether your contributions to the discussion show that you’ve read carefully and thoughtfully. I expect that you will not only share your own thoughts but also listen well to other class members. If you have any concerns about your participation and/or your grade, at the beginning of the semester or later on, please discuss those concerns with me.

We will discuss procedures and expectations for the final paper/project during the first few weeks of class. I encourage you to plan something that will be useful in the development of your ongoing work. Please make an appointment early in the semester to discuss your plans for the final paper.
OUTLINE OF TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS:
(The following is a preliminary reading schedule. We will plan additional topics and activities to address the goals and concerns of the class, as these become clear.)

Jan. 17  Introductions; goals, questions, scholarly identities.

24  Getting started – What is the terrain of qualitative research? And: How to read a book.
READ for class: DeVault, “Knowledge from the Field” (available on Blackboard), and Biklen & Casella, chs. 1 & 2.

31  Ethnography of work; racialized encounters.
READ for class: Miliann Kang, The Managed Hand: Race, Gender, and the Body in Beauty Service Work

Feb. 7  Ethnography of professional work; medicalized encounters.
READ for class: Katrina Karkazis, Fixing Sex: Intersex, Medical Authority, and Lived Experience

14  Visual sociology; embodied identities.
READ for class: Wendy Luttrell, Pregnant Bodies, Fertile Minds: Gender, Race, and the Schooling of Pregnant Teens

21  Life history research; identities and spaces.
READ for class: Mary Romero, The Maid’s Daughter: Living Inside and Outside the American Dream

28  Urban ethnography; identities and discourses.
READ for class: Teresa Gowan, Hobos, Hustlers, and Backsliders: Homeless in San Francisco

Mar. 6 - Mid-term reading break – ethnographic film.

SPRING BREAK
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mar. 20</td>
<td>International research; social movements and the creation of identities.</td>
<td>READ for class: Matthew Kohrman, <em>Bodies of Difference: Experiences of Disability and Institutional Advocacy in the Making of Modern China</em></td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Media research; rural ethnography.</td>
<td>READ for class: Mary Gray, <em>Out in the Country: Youth, Media and Queer Visibility in Rural America</em></td>
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<td>Apr. 3</td>
<td>Team ethnography; families and institutions.</td>
<td>READ for class: Annette Lareau, <em>Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life</em></td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Institutional ethnography; families and institutions, take 2.</td>
<td>READ for class: Lois Andre-Bechely, <em>Could It Be Otherwise? Parents and the Inequities of Public School Choice</em></td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Writing ethnography; parents and children.</td>
<td>READ for class: Allison Pugh, <em>Longing and Belonging: Parents, Children, and Consumer Culture</em></td>
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<td>May 1</td>
<td>Looking back and going forward: What have we learned?</td>
<td><strong>Final paper due: Tuesday, May 8</strong></td>
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University Policy Notes:

- The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see http://academicintegrity.syr.edu

- In compliance with section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Syracuse University is committed to ensure that "no otherwise qualified individual with a disability...shall, solely by reason of disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity..." If you feel that you are a student who may need academic accommodations due to a disability, then you should immediately register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 804 University Ave, Rm 309 3rd Floor, (315) 443-4498 or (315) 443-1371 (TDD only). ODS is the Syracuse University office that authorizes special accommodations for students with disabilities.

- SU’s religious observances policy recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. For fall and spring semesters, an online notification process is available through MySlice/Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class. The policy can be found at http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm.
How to read for this course.

Our focus will be on the decisions that researchers make as they craft, pursue, and report on projects. Treat the books as artifacts that reveal those decisions, and as potential models for the decision making you will do in your own research.

Prof. Sari Biklen provides the following questions to guide us toward a fruitful mode of reading:

What was the author trying to accomplish? How do you know this?
What is the book’s argument? What is the author arguing for? What is the author arguing against?
How is the argument structured?
For whom was it written? How do you know this? (In other words, what is the audience that the writer imagines as central for this book?)
In what context does the author embed the argument?
In what context do you read the text?
How and where is the author located in relation to the subject matter, a discipline, and the audience?
How does the author establish authority?
How does the text represent the author? What kinds of personal information does each author provide? What do you know about the author after reading the book?
What are the author’s assumptions about how life is organized that are visible in the text?
What kind of work did you have to do as a reader to understand the text?
What theoretical perspective animates the text? How well did you as a reader understand the theoretical perspective?
What is the relationship between the theory the author invokes and the findings?
How theoretically consistent is the book?
How is the book written? Explain. What is the book’s style?
How are the data displayed?
What do you learn about the author’s methods and procedures from the text?
What kinds of methodological decisions did the author make? Are there some that the author tells you about and some that you learn on your own?
How confident do you feel in the author’s use of qualitative methods? Why?
How is the book organized? How do the chapters construct this organization?
Are the conclusions compatible with the data?
What contributions does the book make to the literature? How do you know this?
If it were a dissertation, would you give it honors? Why?
How does the book compare with other books in the course?
What do you think the book accomplished?
What questions did the text raise for you?
How does the text affect your thinking about your own research, writing, and work?