

Teaching Ethnographic Texts

Instructor: Erin Gould, PhD

Email Address:

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Office Hours:

Course Description:

This course is designed to provide discussion around the construction, analysis, and engagement with ethnographic texts across time and space. Starting with foundational readings on ethnography as a form of writing, the course introduces many texts and significant anthropological topics, which provide pathways for students to critically engage with ethnographic texts as they continue as learners. The course is organized around three larger texts constructed by Anthropologists, which provide students with understandings of different elements of ethnography and what makes a text ethnographic. These “ethnographic” texts range from an anthropological memoir, an ethnography curated for introductory courses, and an anthropological “trade book” ethnography. Alongside and independent of these texts, students read article-length ethnographic works to understand how shorter ethnographic texts discuss major theoretical concepts. By the end of the course, students will be able to analyze and comment on the ways ethnographic texts engage important topics from around the world.

- ❖ **Respect and inclusion:** This class is based on discussion, and our interactions should construct an atmosphere where everyone feels welcome and invited to speak. We want healthy debates and academic deliberations; you are expected to remain courteous to others and to differing opinions. If you leave section holding judgment over a classmate’s input, you have missed an opportunity to learn a different point of view.

Course Learning Objectives:

Students will understand how ethnography is constructed and the forms through which it is created to comment on cultural practices around the world.

- Connect key terms and concepts in anthropology, including (but not limited to) ethics, class, race, gender, identity, and politics to case studies from past and contemporary ethnographers/anthropologists
- Understand differences in forms of writing aimed at different audiences (academic vs. “trade”; introductory text vs. advanced text; etc)
- Engage with methods for writing qualitative essays that are built from analysis of reading how ethnographers represent communities they work with and how the self is represented in writings
- Examine case studies from geographically diverse areas of the world to analyze how ethnographic texts comment on contemporary life through broader understandings

- Students will present, both orally and through written assignments, their analyses and demonstrate their ability to consider course tools/topics as they construct their course projects and reviews.

Course Required Reading:

- **Required Books:** (all are available to buy/rent at the campus bookstore, Chegg.com, etc; there are also copies on reserve at library for this course)
 - Gottlieb, Alma, and Philip Graham. 1994. *Parallel Worlds: An Anthropologist and a Writer Encounter Africa*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
 - Nagle, Robin. 2013. *Picking Up: On the Streets and Behind the Trucks with the Sanitation Workers of New York City*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
 - Roland, L. Kaifa. 2011. *Cuban Color in Tourism and La Lucha: An Ethnography of Racial Meanings*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- All other required materials for class will be posted to Canvas (articles; podcasts; visual materials; short video clips)
- All mandatory materials should be read/listened to/viewed before coming to class on that date, and even if not discussed in class, all materials are fair game for exams and quizzes

Course Requirements (total grade out of 1000 points):

**For each assignment, I will provide a handout with detailed instructions and will review it in class.

1. **(5) Week Reflections (Due online via Google Forms on Sundays as noted on the schedule below):** Every Wednesday afternoon, I will create a Google Form question that you need to answer by **the following Sunday** with 2-3 paragraphs. Each student will choose 5 weeks (based on topics listed in the syllabus) to complete these reflections, making sure to keep themselves accountable with turning these in for each week they've assigned themselves. Each prompt will require you to think about the previous week's content, and you will write an essay on the prompt by bringing in pertinent information from the readings, our lecture class discussion, discussion section conversations, and any multimedia we used that week. These reflections (5) will be worth **20 pts each--10% (100 pts.)** of the total course grade.
2. **Leading Class Discussion (in Groups):** You will be split into small groups at the start of the term, and one time during that term, your group will be responsible for guiding the reading assigned for that class period. As a group, you should 1) provide a basic bibliography of the author(s) and how they fit into anthropological inquiry; 2) briefly summarize the different readings/chapters assigned; 3) create a dynamic list of discussion points and critical engagement questions for your classmates. **These materials should be shared with me at least 1 day before the class meeting.** This activity will be worth **20% (200 pts.)** of the total course grade.
3. **What Does Representation Mean in Ethnography?—Assignment 1 (Due X/X):** A handout will be posted on iLearn about explicit instructions for this activity, and it will be

reviewed in class. This activity will require you contemplate how issues of representation are demonstrated throughout ethnographic texts. How do we think about representation, and what are concepts ethnographers need to keep in mind in order to create “accurate” representations of the groups they work with? This activity will be worth **15% (150 pts.)** of the total course grade. Part of the grade for this assignment includes a presentation of your map and 3 key observations (2-3 minutes).

4. **Autoethnography—Assignment 2 (Due X/X):** This assignment will require you to use discussions from class to construct a brief autoethnographic text focused on a topic of your choosing. A handout will be posted on iLearn about this project, and it will be discussed in class. This assignment will be worth **20% (200 pts.)** of the total course grade.
5. **Ethnography Review—Final Project (Due X/X):** For this assignment, each student will choose an ethnography (preliminary ideas proposed in office hours during Week 9; Final choices for text during Week 12). Each student will write a 4-6 page review of the ethnography. A draft of this review will be peer edited in class during Week 15, and the final draft is due the final day of class during Week 16. This will be worth **25% (250 pts.)** of the total course grade. Must be submitted by X/X by 5:00 p.m. in lieu of a final exam. Upload to Canvas (if possible) or bring to campus on X/X. Part of your grade includes a presentation of your project to the class/in groups.
6. **Participation (Entire course duration):** Participation is a large component to making this course productive and useful for you and your classmates. Please come prepared by being on time, doing the assigned readings before class, and being ready to participate in class discussion and activities. This will be worth **10% (100 pts.)** of the total course grade.

Grade Breakdown:

Graded Item	Points Possible
Week Reflections (5 @ 20 pts each)	100 pts.
Assignment 1 (Representation)	150 pts.
Assignment 2 (Autoethnography)	200 pts.
Final Project (Ethnography Review)	250 pts
Leading Discussion	200 pts.
Participation	100 pts.
Total Grade	1000 pts.

Course Policies:

- **Canvas:** Primary communication will occur on Canvas. All announcements will be posted on Canvas, and Canvas will be important for checking grades and submitting assignments.
- **Email:** Our primary contact will be through Canvas, but if there are any questions or any concerns that you have about class or material, please feel free to email me. Emails should adhere to a business format, and I will reply to all emails within 3 *business* days.
- **Electronics Policy:** You can use electronics in this classroom, but please only use them for course purposes. If you want to distract yourself, stay home so that you don’t also distract

other classmates. If you are seen using electronics for non-course reasons at any time, we can tell you to put it away or revoke electronics use for you in the classroom.

- **Attendance:** Attendance is not mandatory for lecture portions of the course. If you miss lecture, you will miss course materials, associated activities, and these absences will reflect in your class participation grade.
- **Academic Integrity:** Assignments, including group work, must represent the original work of each student. Use of other's work (i.e., former students, non-enrolled students, paper mills, or published, Internet, or other borrowed materials) is considered plagiarism. Plagiarism, including cheating on examinations or written assignments, may result in a failing grade (F) for the course and referral to the Student Conduct Committee. Acts of plagiarism represent a failure to meet the academic standards of the University.
- **Respect and inclusion:** This class is meant to have a comfortable atmosphere where everyone feels invited to speak. We want healthy debates and academic deliberations; you are expected to remain courteous to others and to differing opinions. Please follow a mature and respectful moral guide in the discussions. If you leave the class holding judgment over a classmate's input, you missed an opportunity to learn a different point of view.

Course Schedule: (Is subject to change throughout the semester)

****Readings and other materials must be completed before the date for which they are assigned to be discussed in class****

Week 1 (Welcome and Recap)

2/4 (Class 1): Welcome/10 Things I Believe to be True

Introductions

10 things I believe to be true

Reading: NONE

2/6 (Class 2): Syllabus/Recap of Cultural Anthropology

Syllabus and assignment expectations

How do we know what we know?

Video Clip: "Robots" from Love, Death, and Robots on Netflix

Reading:

- Leader, George. 2016. "Universities Need Anthropology Now, More than Ever." *The Huffington Post, Politics*. < https://www.huffpost.com/entry/universities-need-anthrop_b_12576982>.
- Miner, Horace. 1956. "The Body Rituals of the Nacirema." *American Anthropologist* 58: 503-508.

Week 2: (What is Ethnography?)

2/11 (Class 3): What is Ethnography? (Part One)

Discuss ethnography generally, speaking to famous accounts and texts

Reading:

- King, Charles. 2019. *Gods of the Upper Air: How A Circle of Renegade Anthropologists Reinvented Race, Sex, and Gender in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Doubleday. **(excerpts: Chapter One: Away, pgs. 1-13; Chapter Eleven: Living Theory, pgs. 245-249)**
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1984 [1923]. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, Inc. **(excerpt: Introduction: The Subject, Method and Scope of This Inquiry, pgs. 1-25)**

2/13 (Class 4): What is Ethnography? (Part Two)

Newer moves in ethnographic creation/writing

Reading:

- Lancione, Michele. 2020. “Underground Inscriptions.” *Cultural Anthropology* 35 (1): 31-39.
- Schwenkel, Christina. 2018. “Haunted Infrastructure: Religious Ruins and Urban Obstruction in Vietnam.” *City & Society* 29 (3): 413-434.
- Stoller, Paul. 2004. “Sensuous Ethnography, African Persuasions, and Social Knowledge.” *Qualitative Inquiry* 10 (6): 817-835.

Due Dates:

- *Response Prompt 1 sent out (evening)—Due 2/17 if chosen Response 1*

Week 3 (Who Can Create Ethnography?)

2/18 (Class 5):

Reading:

- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1988. “Fieldwork of a Dutiful Daughter.” In *Arab Women in the Field: Studying Your Own Society*. Soraya Altorki and Camillia Fawzi El-Solh, eds. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Evans, Anya. 2017. “The Ethnographer’s Body is Gendered.” (The New Ethnographer): <https://www.thenewethnographer.org/the-new-ethnographer/2017/02/14/gendered-bodies-2>

2/20 (Class 6):

End of class: Introduce Assignment 1 (Representation Assignment)

Reading:

- Hall, Stuart. 2013. “Ch. 1: The Work of Representation.” In *Representation*. Stuart Hall, Jessica Evans, and Sean Nixon, eds. SAGE Publications.
- Radher. 2018. “Ethnographic Ableism” (The New Ethnographer): <https://www.thenewethnographer.org/the-new-ethnographer/2018/08/20/ethnographic-ableism-structural-silencing-of-physical-disability-in-anthropological-research>

Due Dates:

- *Response Prompt 2 sent out (evening)*—Due 2/24 if chosen *Response 2*
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Week 4 (Parallel Worlds 1)

2/25 (Class 7): Introduction to *Parallel Worlds*

Introducing first “ethnographic” text: Gottlieb & Graham (1994) *Parallel Worlds (PW)*

Ethnographic and journalistic memoir combination

Geographic/time Contextualization

Reading:

- *Parallel Worlds (PW)*: Review maps, “cast of characters,” and Preface

2/27 (Class 8): Expanding ideas of fieldwork

Reading:

- *PW*: Ch. 1: Premonitions
- *PW*: Ch. 2: Choosing a Host

Due Dates:

- *Response Prompt 3 sent out (evening)*—Due 3/2 if chosen *Response 3*
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Week 5 (Parallel Worlds 2)

3/3 (Class 9): Ethics (in Fieldwork and Research)

Readings on ethics of fieldwork, research, and power dynamics

Reading:

- *PW*: Ch. 3: Trespassing
- Boestorff (2008) —*Coming of Age in Second Life* excerpts (pgs. 79-86: “Ethics” and “Claims and Reflexivity”)
- AAA statement on ethics—online

3/5 (Class 10): Disruption

Reading:

- *PW*: Ch. 4: Adrift
- *PW*: Ch. 5: The Elusive Epiphany
- *PW*: Ch. 6: Bedazzled, Beleaguered

Due Dates:

- *Response Prompt 4 sent out (evening)*—Due 3/9 if chosen *Response 4*
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Week 6 (Parallel Worlds 3)

3/10 (Class 11): Navigating Relationships

Reading:

- *PW*: Ch. 7: Divination and Trial
- *PW*: Ch. 8: Transgressions

3/12 (Class 12): Final day for PW Reading

Reading:

- *PW*: Ch. 9: Metamorphoses
- *PW*: Ch. 10: A Parallel World

Due Dates:

- *Response Prompt 5 sent out (evening)*—Due 3/16 if chosen *Response 5*

Week 7 (Reflection/Student Presentations)

3/17 (Class 13): Reflection Class

What goes into the process of ethnographic fieldwork?

Group Brainstorming

Introduction to Final Project (Ethnography Review)

Reading:

- Review notes from *Parallel Worlds*

3/19 (Class 14): Assignment 1 Presentations

Student Presentations of Assignment 1—prepare short presentations to be shared with the entire class or in small groups

Reading: NONE

Due Dates:

- *Assignment 1 Due in-class*
- *Response Prompt 6 sent out (evening)*—Due 3/23 if chosen *Response 6*

Week 8 (Autoethnography 1)

3/24 (Class 15): What is Autoethnography?

What makes AE different from Ethnography?

Readings:

- Greenlaugh, Susan. 2001. *Under the Medical Gaze: Facts and Fictions of Chronic Pain*. Berkeley: University of California Press (**excerpts: Preface & Problematique, pgs. 3-56**)

3/26 (Class 16): Thinking of the Body and Relationships

Introduce Assignment 2 (Autoethnography Assignment)

Readings:

- Jain, S. Lochlann. 2013. *Malignant: How Cancer Becomes Us*. Berkeley: University of California Press. **(excerpt: Introduction, pgs. 1-26)**
- Mokhtar, Hasnaa, and Ellen F. Foley. 2020. “Adviser-advisee feminist relational mentoring: A heartfelt autoethnographic conversation.” *Feminist Anthropology*, Online ISSN: 2643-7961. (<https://doi.org/10.1002/fea2.12003>)

Due Dates:

- *Response Prompt 7 sent out (evening)—Due 3/30 if chosen Response 7*

Week 9 (Autoethnography 2)

3/31 (Class 13): Class and Power in AE

Reading:

- Theodossopoulos, Dimitrios. 2020. “Solidarity Dilemmas in Times of Austerity: Auto-ethnographic Interventions.” *Cultural Anthropology* 35 (1): 134-166.
- Walley, Christine J. 2013. *Exit Zero: Family and Class in Postindustrial Chicago*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. **(excerpt: Introduction, pgs. 1-17)**

4/2 (Class 14): Relationships/Method/Writing Workshop

Workshop/Writing Autoethnography

Reading:

- Mokhtar, Hasnaa, and Ellen F. Foley. 2020. “Adviser-advisee feminist relational mentoring: A heartfelt autoethnographic conversation.” *Feminist Anthropology*, Online ISSN: 2643-7961. (<https://doi.org/10.1002/fea2.12003>)
- Wall, Sarah. 2008. “Easier Said than Done: Writing an Autoethnography.” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 7 (1): 38-53.

Due Dates:

- ***All Students: Come to office hours this week to discuss your ideas for the Final Project (Review) of an ethnographic text***
- *Response Prompt 8 sent out (evening)—Due 4/6 if chosen Response 8*

Week 10 (Cuban Color in Tourism and *La Lucha* 1)

4/7 (Class 17): Introduction to Cuba and *La Lucha*

Introduction of text meant for an introductory audience

Reading:

- *Cuban Color in Tourism and La Lucha* (CC): Preface; Review “Timeline of Cuban History” and Glossary of Terms
- CC: Ch. 1: Race, Tourism, and Belonging in Cuba

4/9 (Class 18): Race and Struggle

Readings:

- CC: Ch. 2: “Blackness” and Race Matters in Cuba
- CC: Ch. 3: Surviving through *La Lucha*
- Khabeer, Su’ad Abdul. 2018. “Hip Hop Matters: Race, Space, and Islam in Chicago.” *City & Society* 30 (2): 141-164.

Due Dates:

- *Response Prompt 9 sent out (evening)—Due 4/13 if chosen Response 9*

Week 11 (Cuban Color in Tourism and *La Lucha* 2)

4/14 (Class 19): Tourism

Reading:

- CC: Ch. 4: Tourism and Belonging
- Robb, Erika M. “Violence and Recreation: Vacationing in the Realm of Dark Tourism.” *Anthropology and Humanism* 34 (1): 51-60.

4/16 (Class 20): Final Day of CC

Reflect on framing as a text for introductory audience

Reading:

- CC: Ch. 5: Of Shorts and Segregated Socialism
- CC: Epilogue: Where Are They Now?

Due Dates:

- *Assignment 2—Autoethnography Assignment Due in class*
- *Response Prompt 10 sent out (evening)—Due 4/20 if chosen Response 10*

Week 12 (Picking Up 1)

4/21 (Class 21): Introduction to Picking Up

Introduction to ideas of “trade books”

Reading:

- *Picking Up* (PU): Review map, Author’s Note, and Prelude: Center of the Universe
- PU: Part 1: On Collection (Ch. 1 : Garbage Fairies ; Ch. 2 : In the Field; Ch. 3: On the Board)

4/23 (Class 22): Embodiment

Reading:

- *PU*: Part 2: In Title (Ch. 4 : Body and Soul ; Ch. 5 : Mongo and Manipulation; Ch. 6: Being Uniform)
- Ness, Sally. 1996. “Dancing in the Field: Notes from Memory.” In *Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture and Power*. Susan Leigh Foster, ed. Pp. 133-158. London: Routledge.

Due Dates:

- **All Students: Turn in chosen ethnography text for student Final Project in-class**
- *Response Prompt 11 sent out (evening)*—Due 4/27 if chosen *Response 11*

Week 13 (Picking Up 2)

4/28 (Class 23): Risk

Reading:

- *PU*: Part 3: Species of Reform (Ch. 7 : Tubbs of Nastiness ; Ch. 8 : A Matter of Spoils; Ch. 9: Apostles of Cleanliness; Ch. 10: An Angry Sea)
- Monroe, Kristin V. “Labor and the Urban Landscape: Mobility, Risk, and Possibility among Syrian Delivery Workers in Beirut.” *Anthropology of Work Review* XXXV (2): 84-94.

4/30 (Class 24): Specialized Knowledges

Reading:

- *PU*: Part 4: Sending It Up (Ch. 11 : You Are a San Man ; Ch. 12 : Road Worthy; Ch. 13: Bumper Cars; Ch. 14: Getting It Up)
- *PU*: Review “How to Speak Sanitation: A DSNY Glossary”
- Malefakis, Alexis. 2019. “Creating a Market Where There Is None: Spatial Practices of Street Vendors in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.” *City & Society* 31 (1): 119-136.

Due Dates:

- *Response Prompt 12 sent out (evening)*—Due 5/4 if chosen *Response 12*

Week 14 (Picking Up 3)

5/5 (Class 25): Class and Hierarchy

Reading:

- *PU*: Part 5: Loaded Out (Ch. 15 : Lost in the Bronx ; Ch. 16: We Eat Our Own; Ch. 17: Night Plow; Ch. 18: Snowed Under; Ch. 19: Benevolence)
- Feltault, Kelly. 2005. “ “We’re Our Own Boss”: Gendered Class-Consciousness and White Privilege among Hooper’s Island Crab Pickers.” *Anthropology of Work Review* XXVI (1): 1-13.

5/7 (Class 26): Invisibility of Labor

Reading:

- *PU*: Postlude: Someone Else
- Finkelstein, Maura. 2016. "Landscapes of Invisibility: Anachronistic Subjects and Allochronous Spaces in Mill Land Mumbai." *City & Society* 27 (3): 25-271.
- Lukacs, Gabriella. 2013. "DREAMWORK: Cell Phone Novelists, Labor, and Politics in Contemporary Japan." *Cultural Anthropology* 28 (1): 44-64.

Due Dates:

- *Response Prompt 13 sent out (evening)—Due 5/13 if chosen Response 11*

Week 15 (Workshopping Ethnography Reviews)

5/12 (Class 27): Ethnography Reviews

Bring Ethnographies to class for pair/small group work OR individual reading

Reading:

- Individual Ethnographies for Final Project

5/14 (Class 28): Ethnography Reviews

Bring preliminary draft of ethnography review to class for peer review (**required)

Reading:

- Individual Ethnographies for Final Project

Due Dates:

- *None*

Week 16: Final Project/Review Presentations

5/19 (Class 29): Student Presentations

Reading: NONE

Due Dates:

- All student book reviews are due in-class!

5/21 (Class 30): Student Presentations

Reading: NONE

Due Dates:

- *Response Prompt 15 sent out (evening)—Due 5/25 if chosen Response 15*

No Meeting or Exam during Finals Week