

AMST 540: Ethnography and Society
Penn State Harrisburg
Fall 2019

Instructor Info:

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Office hours: Thursdays, 2-3pm, or by appointment.

Course Info:

Thursdays, 6-9pm

Olmsted Bldg E252

Ethnography, understood broadly as the systematic study of human cultures through direct engagement known commonly as “fieldwork,” is an important mode of scholarly inquiry into vernacular human experience. This course will serve as a comprehensive introduction to graduate-level ethnographic research, emphasizing participant observation as the primary means of ethnographic data-gathering. Readings will move from classic ethnographies to contemporary works challenging established understandings of culture. Special attention will be paid to changing theoretical frameworks in folklore, anthropology, and cultural studies. Students will learn best practices in contemporary ethnographic fieldwork, and will conduct fieldwork of their own, culminating in an ethnographic research paper. They will also learn about the ethics of ethnographic research and the importance of IRB (Institutional Review Board) oversight for ethnographic work.

COURSE GOALS

This course will provide an overview of ethnographic methods and an introduction to ethnographic case studies. Students will learn to plan and carry out an ethnographic research project, navigate the Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight process, and engage in field observations to generate primary data.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course will enable students to:

1. Understand the history of ethnographic research and the various methodologies it comprises.
2. Develop a set of approaches to contemporary human cultures based on ethnographic best practices.
3. Read scholarly texts critically, with an eye to understanding theoretical frameworks, methods employed, and key arguments.

4. Form theoretical and methodological links between interdisciplinary ethnographic research and their own specific research interests.
5. Craft sophisticated research papers appropriate to graduate-level study.

REQUIRED BOOKS

- Campbell, Elizabeth, and Luke Eric Lassiter. 2014. *Doing Ethnography Today: Theories, Methods, Exercises*. Chichester, West Sussex; Malen, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Dorst, John Darwin. 1989. *The Written Suburb: An American Site, an Ethnographic Dilemma*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Hurston, Zora Neale. 2009. *Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 2012. *Tristes Tropiques*. Reprint. New York: Penguin Classics.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. 2014. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. Oxford; New York: Routledge.

Additional readings will be available online (e.g., JSTOR) or made available on Canvas.

STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

This course meets for 180 minutes once a week. Each meeting will be divided approximately as follows (subject to change):

- 1) Attendance & housekeeping (10 minutes)
- 2) In-class activities: IRB sessions, activities from Campbell & Lassiter text, etc. (30-60 minutes)
- 3) Discussion of remaining readings (approx. 120 minutes)

Coursework

The originality of all written work will be verified using Turnitin. Students will have an opportunity to review their Turnitin reports, correct any problems, and resubmit their work before it is reviewed by the instructor.

This course involves the following types of assignments:

- **Critical abstracts:** Four times throughout the semester, students will submit a critical abstract for assigned readings. **These abstracts must address: 1) the author's main points/arguments; 2) the evidence the author provides to support their arguments (including research methodologies); and 3) a brief**

but thoughtful critique of their arguments as they relate to other materials in the course and your own scholarly knowledge.

- In particular, your Critical Abstracts must address the ethnographic methods employed by the authors. Do they take an objectivist, “scientific” approach to ethnography? Are they engaged in reflexivity and/or reciprocity? Are they simply *describing* a “culture,” or are they exploring some theme or theoretical issue? –etc.
- Your abstracts must also be scholarly in tone. **Avoid statements about whether you “liked” or “enjoyed” a scholarly work.** These comments can be made and discussed in class, but *not* in this assignment. Do not write that you didn’t understand something: your task as a scholar is to find a way to understand.
- Each abstract should be approximately one typed, double-spaced page, 12-pt font size.
- **Abstracts will be due on Canvas by the start of class on the due date.**
- **Collaborative annotated bibliography:** On Canvas, we will create an annotated bibliography (Chicago style) of readings in ethnography. Each student will be responsible for providing 7 ethnographic texts (of which at least 3 must be book-length studies) and annotations of about 5 sentences which discuss the basic topic of the work, briefly describe the approach used (including the disciplinary orientation of the author), and offer a critique of the work’s value/significance as an ethnography. (Please note, “critique” means an honest evaluation, which can be positive and/or negative.) Texts may not include sources from class.
- **Mini-ethnographies (x3):** These will be small observational/reflection exercises that will serve to introduce students to the processes of fieldwork, in preparation for the final project.
- **Mock IRB proposal:** Students will complete the CITI IRB training program at <https://citi.psu.edu/>, after which they will use templates from Penn State’s IRB to construct a research protocol and consent document. Portions of some class periods will be dedicated to developing a topic and doing preliminary work on developing an IRB protocol.
- **Final project – ethnographic research proposal:** The final will be a 10-page paper in which students will outline a plan of research for a potential ethnographic project.

Please note: I give detailed, constructive feedback on written work. The purpose of the feedback is to help you improve as a scholar and as a writer; as such, I tend not to include extensive praise in written feedback. This should not be taken as an indictment of your work, but rather as a sign of my serious engagement with your ideas and how you have expressed them. Note too that written feedback is only part of the feedback students receive; the rest consists of comments during class discussions, individual meetings, and, especially, grades on individual assignments and the course as a whole.

If you have concerns about feedback you have received, I encourage you to schedule a meeting to discuss them with me.

GRADES

• Preparation/participation:	100pts
○ (includes attendance, discussion, and in-class activities)	
• Critical abstracts:	200pts
○ (x4 @ 50pts each)	
• Mini-ethnographies:	150pts
○ (x3 @ 50pts each)	
• Collaborative annotated bibliography	200pts
• Mock IRB research protocol	100pts
• <u>Final paper:</u>	<u>250pts</u>
Total:	1000pts

You must complete **all graded assignments** to pass the course. Your final grade may also be adjusted to reflect your attendance and participation as described below.

Standard percentile ranges applied in this course:

100-93: A	79-77: C+
92-90: A-	76-70: C
89-87: B+	69-60: D
86-83: B	60 or below: F
82-80: B-	

COURSE POLICIES

Late and missed assignments:

All written work must be submitted by the times indicated on the schedule (before the start of class for critical abstracts; by 11:59pm for other work). Unless you make arrangements with me in advance, graded assignments will be penalized by 1/3 of a letter grade for each day they are late. Papers are considered late if they are submitted after the time specified in the class schedule below.

Participation:

Your attendance and participation are critical to your success as a student and to the success of the course. **You are expected to actively contribute to class discussion.** Since attendance is vital to active participation, failure to attend can affect your participation grade. **Students may**

miss TWO classes without penalty. Absences will be considered unexcused unless the student provides documentation indicating why absence was necessary (e.g., medical reasons). If you exceed the number of allowed absences, your participation grade may be lowered as follows:

<u>Total number of absences</u>	<u>Participation grade penalty</u>
3	-5 points
4	-10 points
5	-15 points
6	-20 points
7	-25 points
8	0 for Participation/preparation

If you have a special obligation that will require you to miss several classes (e.g. varsity athletics, military service, or religious observances), please talk with me at the beginning of the semester.

Participation by students in the course should not be disruptive or offensive to other class members. See <http://www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/42-00.html#42-27> for a complete description of what constitutes disruptive or offensive behavior.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty is not limited to simply cheating on an exam or assignment. The following is quoted directly from the "PSU Faculty Senate Policies for Students" regarding academic integrity and academic dishonesty: "Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception and is an educational objective of this institution. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating of information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students."

All University and Penn State Harrisburg policies regarding academic integrity/academic dishonesty apply to this course and the students enrolled in this course. Refer to the following URL for further details on the [academic integrity policy of Penn State Harrisburg](http://harrisburg.psu.edu/academics/academic-guidelines-and-policies): <http://harrisburg.psu.edu/academics/academic-guidelines-and-policies>. Each student in this course is expected to work entirely on her/his own while taking any exam, to complete assignments on her/his own effort without the assistance of others unless directed otherwise by the instructor, and to abide by University and Penn State Harrisburg policies about academic integrity and academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty can result in an assignment of "F" or "XF" as the final grade for the student. **This course will use Turnitin to verify the originality of submitted work.**

DISABILITY ACCESS

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. Every Penn State campus has a Student Disability Resources office. Student Disability Resources at Penn State Harrisburg is located in SEC 205. The Disability Services Coordinator, Alan Babcock, can be reached via email at aub15@psu.edu or phone [717-948-6025](tel:717-948-6025).

To receive consideration for accommodations, you must contact Student Disability Resources (SDR), participate in an intake interview, provide documentation of your disability, and complete a Self-Assessment. Additional information is available on the [Disability Services website](http://harrisburg.psu.edu/disability-services) (<http://harrisburg.psu.edu/disability-services>). If the documentation supports requests for reasonable accommodations, SDR will provide you with an accommodations letter, which you will give to your professors. You will receive accommodations after you give your accommodations letters to your professors. You should share your accommodations letters with your professors as early in the semester as possible. Professors do not provide accommodations retroactively.

COUNSELING SERVICES

Students may face a variety of concerns over the course of their time at PSH- depressed mood, anxiety, stress, family concerns, body image, substance use, sexuality and many others- that may interfere with their ability to focus on their studies. Counseling Services provides FREE mental health and social support for all currently enrolled students. Staff follow strict legal and ethical guidelines concerning the confidentiality of counseling. Counseling services is located in SEC 205 and can be reached by phone at [\(717\) 948-6025](tel:717-948-6025). You can find more information at the Counseling Services webpage, <http://harrisburg.psu.edu/counseling-services>

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

Penn State takes great pride to foster a diverse and inclusive environment for students, faculty, and staff. Acts of intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and/or incivility due to age, ancestry, color, disability, gender, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, or veteran status are not tolerated and can be reported through Educational Equity at the Report Bias site: <http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/statement>.

Direct all inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policy to our Penn State Harrisburg Office of Student Affairs at the following link <https://harrisburg.psu.edu/webform/office-student-conduct-incident-report-form>

Personal Digital Devices

Personal digital devices such as cell phones, smartphones and personal digital assistants (e.g., itouch, droids), laptop and netbook computers, ipads and tablet computers can help students in academic settings but can also distract from learning. As a matter of policy, I insist that cell phones be turned off or silenced; texting and other communication on the cell phone are strictly prohibited in class. Laptops, netbooks, and tablet computers enabling note-taking and viewing

of course materials are permitted but students must not engage in non-classroom tasks such as emailing, web browsing, e-shopping, and social networking in class. ***If students do not abide by this guideline, use of their devices in class will be prohibited.***

Learning Center Writing Tutoring and Other Academic Support

The Russell E. Horn Sr. Learning Center provides tutoring for writing assignments as well as for other aspects of the academic experience. You can make an appointment in one of the four ways listed below. An appointment is recommended, though not required.

Website	Online Scheduler	Phone	In Person
harrisburg.psu.edu/ learning-center	psuh.mywconline.com	717-948-6475	SEC 201H

Writing

The Learning Center provides tutoring support for writing assignments in this class. Do you need help developing your thesis and ideas? Do you need objective feedback when you're drafting or revising your papers? Do you have questions about MLA, APA, or Chicago styles? Do you want to improve your academic writing skills? The writing tutors at the Learning Center are experts at helping students improve their writing. Writing handouts are available at psu.box.com/v/WritingResources and in print in SEC 201.

Other Academic Support

The Learning Center's **Academic Skills Consultants** can help with time management, organization, and study skills. They also have tutors who can help you deliver speeches and improve your presentations.

MANDATED REPORTING

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. I also have a mandatory reporting responsibility related to my role as an educator. It is my goal that you feel able to share information related to your life experiences in classroom discussions, in your written work, and in our one-on-one meetings. I will seek to keep information you share private to the greatest extent possible. However, per University policy AD85 (<https://policy.psu.edu/policies/ad85>), I am required to share information regarding sexual misconduct or information about a crime with the University including incidents of sex-based discrimination and harassment (discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and retaliation). While faculty are ethically bound to report any information as it relates to University policy, we are also a resource and want to be sure you are aware of the services available to you.

The first resource that you should contact is Felicia Brown-Haywood Penn State Harrisburg Title IX Office E131 Olmsted Building – 717-948-6180

Course Schedule (subject to change)

Week/Date	In-class activities	Readings	Assignments Due
1: 8/29 Course Intro			
2: 9/5	Exercises 3-5 on <i>DET</i> , p. 12-13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Doing Ethnography Today</i> ch. 1. • Malinowski, <i>Argonauts</i>, ch. I-XI 	
3: 9/12		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Doing Ethnography Today</i>, ch. 2 • Malinowski, <i>Argonauts</i>, XII-end • Boas, “The History of Anthropology” (JSTOR) 	Critical Abstract 1 (on Malinowski)
4: 9/19	Initial IRB discussion. Developing ideas for ethnographic project proposal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Doing Ethnography Today</i>, ch. 3 • Lawless, “‘Reciprocal’ Ethnography: No One Said It Was Easy” (JSTOR) • Harper, “People and Places” (on Canvas under Files/Readings) 	Mini-ethnography 1 due by 11:59pm.
5: 9/26	First interview for mini-ethnography 2 will take place in class.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Doing Ethnography Today</i>, ch. 4 • Tedlock, “From Participant Observation to the Observation of Participation: The Emergence of Narrative Ethnography” (JSTOR) • Clifford, “Notes on (Field)notes” (on Canvas under Files/Readings) 	CITI training completion (https://citi.psu.edu/). You will receive course completion emails after completing the course—please forward these to me no later than 11:59pm tonight.
6: 10/3	IRB work session. Developing protocol and consent documents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hurston, <i>Tell My Horse</i> 	Critical Abstract 2 (on Hurston)
7: 10/10		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture” (on Canvas under Files) • Toelken, “The Yellowman Tapes, 1966-1997” (JSTOR) • Goldstein, “The Secularization of Religious Ethnography and Narrative Competence in a Discourse of Faith” (JSTOR) 	Mock IRB Protocol document and consent form due on Canvas by 11:59pm.
8: 10/17		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lévi-Strauss, <i>Tristes Tropiques</i>, part 1-6 	Mini-ethnography 2 due by 11:59pm.

9: 10/24		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lévi-Strauss, <i>Tristes Tropiques</i>, part 7-end 	Collaborative Annotated Bibliography due by 11:59pm.
10: 10/31		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clark, "Tricks of Festival: Children, Enculturation, and American Halloween" (online—Anthrosource) Eaton, "'Give us a Sign of Your Presence': Paranormal Investigation as a Spiritual Practice" (academic.oup.com) Bowie, "Building Bridges, Dissolving Boundaries: Toward a Methodology for the Ethnographic Study of the Afterlife, Mediumship, and Spiritual Beings" (https://academic.oup.com/jaar/article/81/3/698/939836) 	Critical Abstract 3 (student choice)
11: 11/7		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bauman, "Verbal Art as Performance" (Online-Anthrosource) Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths" (from <i>Writing Culture</i>, on Canvas under Files/Readings) Mary Louise Pratt, "Fieldwork in Common Places" (from <i>Writing Culture</i>, on Canvas under Files/Readings) 	Mini-ethnography 3 due by 11:59pm.
12: 11/14		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abu-Lughod, "Can there Be a Feminist Ethnography?" (Canvas under Files/Readings) Ellis, "Autoethnography: An Overview" (JSTOR) Hufford, "Interrupting the Monologue: Folklore, Ethnography, and Critical Regionalism" (JSTOR) 	
13: 11/21		Dorst, <i>The Written Suburb</i>	Critical Abstract 4 (on Dorst)
14: 11/28	No class - Thanksgiving		
15: 12/5	Final project working session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography" (https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.an.24.100195.000523) Monaco, Jeanette. 2010. "Memory Work, Autoethnography and the Construction of a Fan- 	Come prepared to discuss your progress on your final paper, and provide feedback to your peers. Should have at minimum 2-3 pages written.

		Ethnography” (Canvas under Files/Readings)	
16: 12/12		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stoller, “Globalizing Method: The Problems of Doing Ethnography in Transnational Spaces” (https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1525/ah.1997.22.1.81) • TBA 	
17: 12/16	(No class meeting this week – Final Project due Monday 12/16 @ 11:59pm)		Final Project due on Canvas by 11:59pm