

# Field Methods in Racial and Ethnic Communities

ETHN 190/USP 129

Winter 2006

Instructor: Thuy Vo Dang

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Class time: T/Th 5-6:20pm

Location: PCYNH 122

Office: SSB 231

Office Hours

Tuesday 3:30-4:30

Thursday 2:30-4:30

or by appointment

## Course Description

This class focuses on the training in and use of ethnography in understanding the locations of racial and ethnic communities in urban sites. Using a practical approach, we will exercise basic field methods that include actual observation and interviewing in urban communities throughout Southern California (Los Angeles-Orange County-San Diego-Riverside counties), home to highly diverse communities along lines of race, class, nationality, and sexuality. Each student will design a project and conduct an individual ethnography that will be reviewed by his/her peers. This structure will allow the class to perform a wide range of methods and explore topics in urban ethnography centering on student interests in a collaborative academic environment. The student researcher will be able to consider, among other topics, social geography, access to resources and social mobility, neighborhood and community formation and representation, cultural values, inter-ethnic relations, and group mobilization.

The course will emphasize critical, collaborative ethnographic practices from project design, through data collection, interpretation, and writing. In-class sessions will focus on developing critical reading and writing skills, contributing appropriately and extensively to class discussion, as well as giving and receiving peer feedback. In the field, students will practice critical listening, observing, and analyzing, and will also engage research through participation and conversation.

(\*adapted from Jesse Mills' Winter 2005 syllabus)

## Required Texts (all books are available at Groundwork Bookstore: 858.452.9625)

1. Rick Bonus. *Locating Filipino Americans: Ethnicity and the Cultural Politics of Space*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2000.
2. James Clifford and George E. Marcus. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: UC Press, 1986.
3. Carol B. Stack. *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*. New York: Basic Books, 1997.

4. **Course Reader** (available through University Readers: <http://www.universityreaders.com/students> )

## Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation:	20% (more than 2 absences will result in a failing grade)
Field Observation Paper	25%
Interview Paper	25%
Ethnography Paper (final)	30%

\* *Late papers and assignments will not be accepted.*

- \* To pass this course and/or receive a final grade, all course requirements must be completed satisfactorily.
- \* Detailed paper guidelines will be handed out in section.

## Schedule

\*All readings must be done prior to attending sections.

### INTRODUCTION TO ETHNOGRAPHY

#### Week 1

- Harrison, Faye V. "Ethnography as Politics"
- Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson. "Culture, Power, Place: Ethnography at the End of an Era"
- *Writing Culture*, "Introduction: Partial Truths"

#### Week 2

- Ong, Aihwa. "Making the Biopolitical Subject: Cambodian Immigrants, Refugee Medicine, and Cultural Citizenship in California"
- Duong, Lan. "Desire and Design: Technological Display in the Vietnamese American Café and Karaoke Bar"
- *All Our Kin*, Introduction
- *Locating Filipino Americans*, Introduction

#### Week 3: Project Design

- *All Our Kin*, Chapters 1-2
- *Locating Filipino Americans*, Chapters 1-3
- *Writing Culture*, "Fieldwork in Common Places"

### COLLECTING DATA

#### Week 4: Participant Observation I: Locating Self and Subject

- Vo, Linda Trinh. "Performing Ethnography in Asian American Communities: Beyond the Insider-versus-Outsider Perspective"
- *All Our Kin*, Chapters 3-5

#### Week 5: Participant Observation II: Taking Field Notes

- Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. "Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research"
- *All Our Kin*, Chapters 6, 7, Conclusion

No class meeting on Thursday, Feb. 9.

*Field Observation Papers due in section (5-6 pages)
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#### Week 6: Interview I

- *Locating Filipino Americans*, Chapters, 4, 5, Conclusion

#### Week 7: Interview II

- Readings TBA

No class meeting on Thursday, Feb. 23.

\*Interview Papers due in section (5-6 pages)

## WRITING ETHNOGRAPHY

### Week 8

- *Writing Culture*, "Hermes' Dilemma"
- *Writing Culture*, "From the Door of his Tent"

### Week 9

- Abu-Lughod, Lila. "Writing Against Culture"
- Wolf, Margery. "Writing Ethnography: The Poetics and Politics of Culture"

\*First Draft of Ethnography Paper due in section (4-5 pages)

### Week 10: **Revision Workshop/Presentations**

\*March 21: Final Ethnography Paper due (5-6 pages)