

ETHN 202 Winter 2014  
Thursdays 10-12:50 SSB 103

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## Critical Ethnographic Methods: Research, Design, Technique, Execution<sup>1</sup>

Office hours:  
Tues. 1:30-3:30; Thurs. 1-2  
Social Sciences 228

### Course Description

*Doing violence to those we seek to represent comes with the territory.  
Misrepresentation is part of telling stories about people's lives, our own included.  
The issue is whether to skirt or to face head on such complicities (Lather, P.  
1999:4)<sup>2</sup>*

How can ethnography provide the tools to understand, change, and critically analyze the world in which we live? This intensive graduate research methods class is a hybrid seminar/practicum in which students engage in critical readings of ethnography and social theory while performing ethnographic exercises aimed at instilling an ethical approach that is attuned to the complexities of life worlds. During each seminar meeting we will spend the first half of the meeting discussing the readings and contextualizing the course, and the second half discussing research design and mini-ethnography preparations. By the end of the quarter you will have developed a systematic research design and conducted mini-ethnographic fieldwork, culminating in a short ethnographic essay.

### Course Assignments/Requirements

- **Weekly Response Papers:** Submit a one-page response to weekly readings beginning week 2. Try to work all of the assigned texts into your analysis by reading across them. You may also wish to speculate about the relevance of the reading(s) for your project. Please email me the responses no later than the beginning of class. You need not turn in a response the week you are facilitating discussion.
- **Facilitate discussion:** each student is responsible for facilitating discussion of the readings during one class session. On the day of the presentation, please distribute an outline to the class that includes your main points and discussion questions.
- **Research design proposal:** propose a critical ethnographic research project by the fourth seminar meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to Professor Kheshti for sharing her ETHN 202 syllabus, which I have borrowed heavily in preparing this syllabus.

<sup>2</sup> Patti Lather. 1999. "To Be of Use: The Work of Reviewing." *Review of Educational Research* 69 (1): 2-7.

- **Ethnographic Field notes:** Four sets of field notes (1-2 pp) submitted under the themes you identify as most salient for your ethnographic research.
- **Oral Presentations:** 1) Critique of a book of your choice; 2) Presentation of your research.
- **Ethnography:** Final project will be a critical ethnography presented in written, sonic, visual or performative form (12-15pp). For those who plan to turn in a visual or performative project, please also turn in a 5pp. reflection paper on the doing of the ethnography.

## Course Readings

- Saidiya Hartman. 2008. *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. [available for purchase at the UCSD book store and on reserve at Geisel library.
- All other **readings** available through the course's library eReserves page.

## Schedule of Readings and Discussions

### Week 1: Introduction

Please be prepared to discuss possible research sites for your fieldwork this quarter. Start where you are; the best places are places that you know best. The goal is to capture and archive the quotidian lived experiences of the communities that you care about.

### Week 2: What Is Critical Ethnography?

#### Discussant: America

- Sherry Ortner. 1995. "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37 (1): 173-193.
- Conquergood, Dwight. 1991. "Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics." *Communication Monographs* 58: 179-194.
- James Clifford. 1986. "Introduction: Partial Truths" in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*.
- Janet Finn. 1995. "Ella Cara Deloria and Mourning Dove: Writing for Cultures, Writing Against the Grain." Pp. 131- 147 in *Women Writing Culture*, edited by Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon.
- Ann Stoler. 2010. "Rethinking Colonial Categories" in *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. University of California Press

### Week 3- American Anthropology and Ethnographic Hegemony in the Pre-War US

#### Discussant: Jael

There is a genealogy of critical ethnographic methods that is as old as American anthropology. To what did these methods emerge in opposition? From what historical circumstances did critique arise?

- Lee Baker. 2010. "Intro" in *Anthropology and the Racial Politics of Culture*. Duke University Press.

- Kamala Visweswaran. 1998. "Race and the Culture of Anthropology." *American Anthropologist* 100(1): 70-83.
- Daphne Lamothe. 2008. Chapters 1 & 8 in *Inventing the New Negro*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Graciela Hernandez. 1995. "Multiple Subjectivities and Strategic Positionality: Zora Neale Hurston's Experimental Ethnographies" in *Women Writing Culture*, edited by Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon.

Assignment 1: Email me the full citation of the book that you have selected for your critique
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#### **Week 4. Research Design pt. 1**

##### **Discussant: Shamel**

Consider this week the numerous conditions that constitute the ethnographic encounter and to what degree and how these complex interactions constitute the conditions to which methods must respond.

- Lucy Mae Burns. 2012. Intro and Ch. 2 in *Puro Arte: Filipinos on the Stages of Empire*. NYU Press.
- Zora Neale Hurston. Introduction & Ch. 1 in *Mules and Men*.
- E. Patrick Johnson. 2008. Intro and Ch. 5 in *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Dwight Conquergood. 2002. "Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research." *The Drama Review* 46: 145-153.

Assignment 2: Research Design due
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#### **Week 5 - Research Design pt. 2**

##### **Discussant: J-Mo**

What experience does your ethnography represent? While much ethnography seeks out subjugated knowledges, what forces complicate the capacity to represent these knowledges? Whose knowledge does it become when it is translated and interpreted through a scholarly lens and archived for scholarly posterity?

- Chs 1 & 2 in Diana Taylor. 2003. *The Archive and the Repertoire*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Nadine Naber. 2012. "Introduction: Articulating Arabness," pp. 1-24 in *Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism*. New York University Press.
- Adria Imada. 2013. "Modern Desires and Counter-Colonial Tactics: Gender, Performance, and the Erotics of Empire." Ch. 2 in *Aloha America: Hula Circuits through the U.S. Empire*. Duke University Press.

#### **Week 6 -- Ethnographic Objects/Ethnographic Subjects**

##### **Discussant: Martin**

- Vine Deloria Jr. 1969. Ch. 4 in *Custer Died for Your Sins*. Toronto: Macmillan.

- Cecil King. 1997. "Here Come the Anthros," Ch. 6 in *Indians and Anthropologists: Vine Deloria Jr and the Critique of Anthropology*. Biolsi and Zimmerman, eds. University of Arizona Press.
- Audra Simpson. 2007. "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, 'Voice,' and Colonial Citizenship." *Junctures* 9: 67-80.
- Maria Eugenia Cotera. 2010. Ch. 1 "Standing on the Middle Ground" in *Native Speakers: Ella Deloria, Zora Neale Hurston, Jovita Gonzalez, and the Poetics of Culture*. University of Texas Press.

Assignment 3: field notes due
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### **Week 7—"Fieldsites"**

#### **Discussant: Daniel**

What happens when diasporic subjects make origins and homelands into fieldsites? Similarly, what happens when cultural productions are traced as ethnographic objects?

- Soyini Madison. 2010. "Intro" & "Act 1" in *Acts of Activism: Human Rights as Radical Performance*. Cambridge University Press.
- Saidiya Hartman. 2008. *Lose Your Mother*. Prologue, Chs 1, 3, 8.
- Steven Feld. 2012. "Head Again, Vamp Out" in *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra: Five Musical Years in Ghana*. Duke University Press.

Assignment 4: field notes due
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### **Week 8: Critiquing a Book's Methodology**

For this assignment, select a book and, using what we have learned in the course, provide a 15-minute oral critique of its methodology:

- What is the book about?
- How did the author go about producing and making claims to knowledge?
- What methods did the author use? Do you believe those methods were conducive to answer the study's particular questions and make its particular claims to knowledge and knowing? If so, how? If not, why?
- Do you believe the methods matched/enhanced/contradicted the epistemological understandings underlying the topic being studied?
- What do you believe are some of the methodological strengths and weaknesses of this study and why?
- What did you learn from this critique about conducting ethnographic research? How might this knowledge direct you in thinking about your own study?
- What are some of the noted absences and silences in this study? Or what is this study's methodology silent? Why? With what consequences? How, if at all, does this study deal with the ethical issues and those pertaining to power?

Assignment 5: field notes due
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### **Week 9: Interpretation, Analysis and Writing**

#### **Discussant: Leslie**

- Paula Ebron. 2002. Pp. vii-xv, Intro, and Ch. 7 in *Performing Africa*. Princeton University Press.
- Avery Gordon. 1997. Chs. 1 & 3. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Carol Greenhouse. Ch. 7 in *The Paradox of Relevance: Ethnography and Citizenship in the United States*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Kamala Visweswaran. 1994. Chs. 1 and 9 in *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*. University of Minnesota Press.

Assignment 6: field notes due
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**Week 10: Writing: Making Meaning**

Presentations. Each student will have 10-15 minutes for a presentation, followed by a 5-10 minute discussion of the research.

Assignment 7: Critical Ethnography due Wednesday of Finals Week
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