Ethnographic Insights
GENS 5132, 2 credits, Winter 2019

Please see the e-learning site for the latest version of this syllabus

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Time: Wednesdays 13:30-15:10
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Place: Zrinyi 14, 411/A
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15:30-17:30, and by appointment

Course Description

This 2-credit course is a supplement to the 2-credit course taught in the same term called Qualitative Research Methods: Ethnographic Approaches (QRM). This course considers ethnography as a genre of research and writing; it aims to explore the relationship between ethnographic methods on one hand and theory and analysis on the other. Through readings, discussions, and reflections on our own research projects (for most students, planned thesis research), we will examine questions of positionality, ethics, and consent together with the particular imperatives of participatory research, feminist ethnography, and queer ethnography. Reading examples of published work, we will also consider ethnography as a form and art of writing.

This course is aimed at both MA and PhD students who plan to use ethnographic methods in their thesis research. No prior background in ethnographic methods is necessary but students must also be enrolled in QRM (or, with prior approval, have taken a similar practical course in qualitative methods that covers ethnography). PhD students must enroll in both courses to earn the full two PhD credits. Enrollment priority will be given to students in Gender Studies who need to fulfill their methods requirements.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Recognize and understand the implications for research and analysis of how ethnography is conducted and written, i.e. the relationship between method and knowledge production / theory
- Understand and critically discuss the concepts of feminist and queer ethnography
- Grasp the principles of ethical research, especially as articulated by queer and feminist researchers, and critically assess the dilemmas and debates associated with these areas
- Understand the elements that go into constructing a good ethnography and critically assess its effectiveness for uncovering and conveying research insights
- Be prepared to apply the insights gained from critical reading of ethnography to students’ own research projects

Grading and Assignments
Grades will be calculated as follows:

1. Class participation and attendance 20%
2. Book Review 30%
3. Reflections presentation 10%
4. Statement of ethics and positionality 40%

1. Participation and attendance: Attendance and participation are crucial to the functioning of this class and to students’ learning process. You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss assigned readings, participate in class exercises, and give meaningful feedback to your classmates. Points for participation assume not only quantity and evidence that you have done the reading, but also quality (thoughtfulness, constructiveness, critical insights, etc.) and include class exercises and group work. You must have a GOOD EXCUSE to miss class; your grade will be lowered by 0.5% for every unjustified absence. Whether you are excused or not, you are still responsible for the material covered in class (first ask a classmate to fill you in, then come to me with any questions).

2. Book Review: (ca. 800-1200 words). Write a critical assessment of one of the ethnographies we read, due in the second class meeting where we discuss that book. This should be a critique that reflects on: the clarity of the book’s message; effectiveness of the writing; how well the research design follows from the research questions posed; how well ethnographic and other research material are utilized in support of the book’s argument; how well any ethical issues are dealt with; how well the positionality of the researcher is presented and integrated into the writing; to what extent this ethnography lives up to the standards set forth by feminist and queer ethnography.

3. Reflections presentation: reflect on the place of ethnography in your own research plans. What has the reading of ethnographies in this class taught you about how and how not to conduct and write up your research? Do you have a model for the way you want to do things or what you want to avoid? How will you be positioned as a researcher, what issues might that raise, and how will you deal with them? (Time allotment and schedule will be adjusted according to class numbers.)

4. Methods and Research Design Statement: For those of you also taking QRM, this is an extension of the final assignment there, an additional 500-800 words, integrated into your Final Essay for the QRM class (see description in that syllabus). If you are not taking QRM, then you must write a full statement of the research design and methods for your thesis that also addresses ethics and positionality, 1300-2000 words in total. Descriptions of research site choices and your planned use of ethnographic methods must engage with the discussion and reading materials for this class. One section of your essay must consider the project from an ethical standpoint (is there any potential to do harm to people, groups, institutions, or to yourself? What steps will you take to mitigate these risks?) and reflect on your position as a researcher (how are participants likely to see you? Are you an insider or an outsider? How are you positioned in terms of power relations? How might this affect the material you collect? What will you do to overcome any potential issues raised?)

Writing guidelines

All assignments must be submitted both in hard copy and uploaded as a Word file to the e-learning site (no pdf format, please). Use 12-point font (Times New Roman, Arial, or other standard font) and double- or 1½-space with page numbers at the bottom. Please print double-sided. Electronic documents (uploaded or emailed) must include your name in the file name. And remember to back up your files so you don’t have to repeat your work! Provide full references for all literature cited, including those on our syllabus, and avoid plagiarism. If you are unsure about rules for citations and avoiding
plagiarism, please see me or the Center for Academic Writing and consult CEU’s policy on academic dishonesty listed in the program Handbooks. Plagiarism and academic misconduct will be taken very seriously and could result in failure of assignments or even the whole course.

**Classroom policies**

Please have your readings, notes, and other relevant materials for discussion in front of you at every class. You are encouraged to use hard copy print-outs and take notes by hand, as these have been shown to best facilitate learning and retention. If you must use a screen, please keep fiddling and typing to a minimum (do not open other programs during class unless asked to look something up). Phone use is not allowed; they must be put away and in silent mode during class.

This class works best if everyone participates and completes all tasks on time. Questions and reflections based in your own research experience, previous reading, and current development of research plans are highly encouraged. The goal is for all of us to learn from each other’s different backgrounds and strengths; please help to create and maintain an atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable speaking up.

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**Class Meetings and Assignments**

**Note on readings:** There is a small reader for this course which covers assigned readings up to week 4. These can also be found on the moodle in pdf format. The rest of the readings consist of three full books which cannot be made available in a reader or posted online. One copy of each assigned book is on reserve in the CEU library. Please consider buying your own copy and/or sharing among yourselves. Students in this class also have access to the moodle site for QRM – on both sites you can find additional resources beyond the assigned readings.

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<th>Week 1</th>
<th>1. Introduction and discussion on the goals and effects of ethnography</th>
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<th>Week 2</th>
<th>2. Tools of ethnographic writing</th>
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| Week 3 | 3. Feminist ethnography |

3 of 5
Jan. 23  

Week 4  
4. Reflexivity and positionality  
Jan. 30  


Week 5  
No class (reading)  
Feb. 6

Week 6  
5. Ethnography #1: Veiled Sentiments, part 1  
Feb. 13  
The set-up: methodology, research design, and positionality of the researcher  
Read Chapters 1-4 (pp. 1-167)  


Feb. 15  
6. Ethnography #1, Veiled Sentiments, part 2  
15:30-17:10  
The arguments: turning field research into analysis and theory  
Read Chapters 5-8 (pp. 171-259)

Week 7  
7. Ethnography #2, Citizens of an Empty Nation, part 1  
Feb. 20  
The set-up: methodology, research design, and positionality of the researcher  
Read Introduction and Chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-102)  


Week 8  
8. Ethnography #2, Citizens of an Empty Nation, part 2  
Feb. 27  
The arguments: turning field research into analysis and theory  
Read Chapters 4-6, Conclusion, and Epilogue (pp. 105-191)

Mar. 1  
9. PhD reflections: what will you do with the tools of ethnography?  
15:30-17:10  
Time allotment and schedule to be determined

Week 9  
10. Ethnography #3, Out in the Country, part 1  
March 6  
The set-up: methodology, research design, and positionality of the researcher
Read Preface, Chapters 1-4, and Appendix (pp. xi-118, 185-195)


**Week 10**  
11. *Ethnography #3, Out in the Country, part 2*  
March 13  
The arguments: turning field research into analysis and theory  
Read Chapters 5-7 and Epilogue (pp. 121-183)

**Week 11**  
12. *MA reflections; concluding discussion*  
March 20  
Time allotment and schedule for reflections presentations to be determined  
Final 20-30 minutes: be prepared to discuss your overall reflections on the class  
(no class or office hours in Week 12)

**Final Essay due (Friday, March 29 by 5pm)**

Late papers will only be accepted with a legitimate reason and if you notify me before the deadline. Unexcused late papers will be graded down one grade notch (i.e. B+ to B) for each day they are late.

*All the best for successful thesis research!*