

**Qualitative Research Methods in Education III:
Educational Ethnography and Advanced Qualitative Inquiry**

16:300:517:01

Fall 2011
Professor Beth Rubin

Class: Tuesday 4:50-7:30

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Office Hours: M, T 2:00-4:00 or by
appointment

- Do you want to go further with your understanding and use of qualitative methods of inquiry?
- Are you interested in what anthropological theories and approaches might offer to your research process?
- Do you think you could benefit from the support a group of fellow advanced learners as you pursue a qualitative research project?

...then *Qualitative Research Methods in Education III: Educational Ethnography and Advanced Qualitative Inquiry* might be for you.

This course is designed to advance the knowledge and skills of the doctoral student who already has a working understanding of qualitative methods. The core of the course will be collective “workshopping” of aspects of each student’s individual project. We will also enhance our understanding of qualitative research by reading methodological texts, anthropological theory and exemplary ethnographic studies.

This course is also an introduction to doing and thinking about educational ethnography. Ethnography is the study of culture and social organization through fieldwork. Participant observation and interviews are the primary tools of the ethnographic trade. Ethnographic research is descriptive and interpretive in nature. Ethnographic research represents the various ways that people live and make sense of their experiences, and it describes the types of social organizations (for example, gender relations, class relations, racial/ethnic formations, local and national contexts) that, in part, structure social actions and meanings.

Thus the goals of this course are multiple:

DRAFT SYLLABUS - SOME ITEMS MAY CHANGE BEFORE FALL 2011

- 1) to support one another as we pursue qualitative inquiry projects by creating a community of practice dedicated to producing rigorous, meaningful research
- 2) to develop an understanding of the theory and practice of ethnography and deepen our understandings of qualitative inquiry in general
- 3) to learn to read ethnographic accounts with a critical eye
- 4) to consider ethical issues and dilemmas inherent in conducting ethnography and qualitative inquiry in general

Prerequisites: Qualitative Research Methods 1, or the equivalent.

Required Readings:

Books available at the Rutgers Bookstore:

- 1) Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- 2) Weiss, R. (1994). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. New York: Free Press.
- 3) Lareau, A. & Shultz, J. (Eds.). (1996). *Journeys through ethnography: Realistic accounts of fieldwork*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- 4) Lewis, A. E. (2005). *Race in the schoolyard: Negotiating the color line in classrooms and communities*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- 5) Wolcott, H. (2002). *Sneaky Kid and Its Aftermath: Ethics and Intimacy in Fieldwork*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- 6) Behar, R. (2003). *Translated woman*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

All other articles are on the course Sakai site.

Notation for Readings:

- * Books for sale at bookstore
- ** Articles available on Sakai

Course Assignments:

1. Fieldnotes write-up:
2. Interview transcript

3. Two in-progress presentations of your work

Each seminar member will have the opportunity to make a presentation about his/her work two times during the course of the semester. The presentation can focus on any aspect of your project, but should be planned in advance so that the seminar participants can engage in a productive conversation about it. The presentation should focus on any aspect of your project that you would like to puzzle through. Some examples of presentation topics: defining codes, building an assertion, delving into key underpinning concepts, fine tuning research questions, researcher/participant relationships. Come prepared with a question/questions and something for us to look at (i.e.)

4. Ethnographic study review

5. Final project - self selected (dissertation proposal, research write-up, chapter draft, etc...).

Set your calendar (or follow recommended calendar) and choose your final project by the 3rd week of the course.

September 6

- Introduction & overview of course
- Participant Projects
- Topic discussion, syllabus adjustment

September 13: Culture and Ethnography

- 1) **Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In *The interpretation of Cultures* (pp. 3-30). New York: Basic Books.
- 2) ** Eisenhart, M. (2001). Changing conceptions of culture and ethnographic methodology: Recent thematic shifts and their implications for research and teaching. In V. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching*. Fourth Edition (pp. 209-225). Washington D.C.: American Educational Research Association.

Project presentation 1

September 20: Doing Fieldwork

- 1) *Lareau, A. (1996). Common problems in fieldwork: A personal essay. In A. Lareau & J. Shultz (Eds.), *Journeys through ethnography: Realistic accounts of fieldwork*, pp. 195-249.
- 2) *MacLeod, J. (1996). On the making of *Ain't no Makin' It*. In A. Lareau & J. Shultz (Eds.), *Journeys through ethnography: Realistic accounts of fieldwork*, pp. 111-148.

Project presentation 2

September 27: Ethnographic Accounts

- 1) *Lewis, A. (2005). *Race in the school yard*
- 2) **Maxwell, J. A. (1996). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Chapter 4. London: Sage.

Project presentation 3

October 4: What kinds of questions does ethnography answer?

- 1) Human Subjects Certification Course.
- 2) Review AAA Code of Ethics at
<http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ehtcod.htm>

Project presentation 4

Due: Project proposal due
Evidence of completion of Human Subjects Certification Course

October 11: Ethnographic Accounts (continued)

- 1) Choose second ethnography to read and discuss. You can choose from the provided list or you can choose one on your own. If you do choose one on your own, please check it out with me first.

Project presentation 5

Due: Critical reading of ethnography

October 18: Participant Observation and Fieldnotes

- 1) *Emerson, et al. *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chapters 1-5

Project presentation 6

Fieldnotes due, bring copies, discussion in class

Project presentation 6

October 25: Documents and Archival Research

- 1) **Hammersley, M & Atkinson, P. (1995). *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. 2nd Edition. New York: Routledge. Chapter 6.

Finish Fieldnotes discussion if needed

Project presentation 7

November 1: Interviewing

- 1) *Weiss, R. *Learning from Strangers* Chapters 1-5

Interview transcript due, bring copies, discussion in class

November 8: Data Analysis

- 1) *Emerson et al, Chapter 6
- 2) *Weiss, Chapter 6

Finish interview discussion if needed

Project presentation 8

Due: Interview transcript. Bring copies for class.

November 15: Ethnographic Writing

- 1) *Emerson et al, Chapters 7-8
- 2) *Weiss, Chapter 7
- 3) Gottlieb, A. & Graham, P. (1996). Choosing a host. In A. Lareau & J. Shultz (Eds.), *Journeys through ethnography: Realistic accounts of fieldwork*, pp. 75-110.

Project presentation 9

Project presentation 10

Due: Emic concept assignment. Bring copies for class.

November 22 - NO CLASS

November 29: Dilemmas of Representation

- 1) **Luttrell, W. (2000). "Good enough" methods for ethnographic research. *Harvard Educational Review* 79 (4): 499-523.
- 2) **Foster, M. (1994). The power to know one thing is never the power to know all things: Methodological notes on two studies of black American teachers. In A. Gitlin (Ed.), *Power and Method: Political activism and educational research* (pp. 129-146). New York: Routledge.
- 3) ** Behar, R. (1996). *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that breaks your heart*. Chapters 1 & 3.

December 6: Ethnography and Social Action

1) **Fine, M. & Weis, L. (2004). *Working method: Research and social justice*. Introduction, chapter 1 and chapter 5.

December 13: Presentations

Due: Final Project report

Course Guidelines/Expectations

A successful class will depend on every member of the group being actively engaged as both learners and teachers. It is my assumption that each of us has valuable perspectives and experiences that will inform our collective, developing knowledge.

Class attendance is a requirement. Students are expected to be on time and prepared for class. If, for extraordinary reasons, you are unable to attend class one week, please let me know. In general, inconsistent attendance will result in a lowered grade. Missing a significant number of classes will result in no credit for the course.

This class is a discussion-oriented seminar and workshop. For this class to be effective, all students must come prepared to discuss the week's assigned readings and to participate in the ethnographic exercises.

All assignments are required to pass this course. An "A" assignment is an exceptional one. It is not an assignment that merely meets the requirements outlined in the syllabus. All written work is graded on thoroughness, quality of analysis, level of support from data and/or literature, organization and clarity.

Students are expected to turn in all work on time. If you need an extension, be sure to ask for it before the due date. Extensions will only be granted for legitimate reasons. Extensions cannot be granted on the five assignments that are due for particular class dates as we will work on these together as a class.

Learning in this class will require your active participation and a high degree of independence, responsibility, and intellectual resourcefulness.

You will conduct a mini ethnographic study. This will be time consuming as it requires that you conduct fieldwork and spend time writing up field notes, transcribing audio-tapes, analyzing data and writing a final report.

All assignments and papers must be typed.

It is very important that you let me know if you have questions or concerns during the semester. Feel free to use e-mail to pose questions if raising them in class is difficult.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

**Please read Rutgers University policy on academic integrity at:
<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>**

Assignments

- 1) **Five short assignments due in-class (observation exercise; critical reading; human subjects certification course; draft of interview; emic concept). See syllabus for due dates. (25% of final grade)**
- 2) **Conduct small-scale ethnographic study. This requires that you prepare and submit six things at different times during the semester: a proposal; sample field notes; part of a transcribed interview; sample data analysis; an outline, and a final report. See syllabus for dates. (75% of final grade)**