

**Community Ethnography I: Method and Theory**  
**Ethnic Studies 241A**  
**Winter 2005**

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Office hours:  
Monday 1-2 and  
Wednesday 1- 3

The purpose of this course is to understand the construction of “the ethnographic” and how it has changed since its inception. We will review the methodological and conceptual foundations of ethnography, including social-cultural interpretation, analysis and “description.” This necessarily involves a critical review of anthropology (as the founding discipline of ethnography) and the uses of ethnographic methodology in interdisciplinary venues. Rather than provide a guide to the actual “doing of ethnography” the course will tease out both the multiple venues in which ethnography is conducted, the variation in basic methods and the role/position of the ethnographer. A principle theme of the course is the conceptual and theoretical foundation of ethnography as an organizing framework in representing “community” perceptions, and social-cultural understanding.

January 4- **Introduction:** overview of course structure and readings. Why Ethnography?  
Ethnography, ethnicity and epistemology.  
Doing and Writing Ethnography: Methodology and Analysis.

**Part I- Method and Concept**

January 11- The History of Fieldwork and the “invention” of ethnography.  
Reading assignment: Stocking: The Ethnographer’s Magic pp. 1-212, skim pp. 212-372

January 18- The Ethnographic and Fieldnotes  
Reading assignment: Wolf. A Thrice Told Tale entire text.  
Sanjek: Fieldnotes “The Secret Lives of Fieldnotes” pp. 187-270.

January 25 Where is “the Field”: doing ethnography in the global age  
Reading assignment: Gupta and Ferguson: Anthropological Locations (entire text except for Chapters 6 and 7).

February 1-Fieldnotes  
Reading assignment: Sanjek pp. Xi-161;273-303;

February 8- Writing “the ethnography”  
Reading assignment: Van Maanen: Tales of the Field  
Geertz: “Thick Description”  
Sanjek: Fieldnotes pp. 343-356; 371-418

**Part II. The Ethnographic Text**

February 15- Indigenous ethnography  
Reading assignment: Zavella: Women’s Work and Chicano Families

February 22– Ethnography and “Place”

Reading Assignment: Basso: Wisdom Sits in Places.

March 1- Ethnography as analytical evaluation

Reading assignment: Mullings and Wali: Stress and Resilience: The Social Context of Reproduction in Central Harlem.

March 8- Looking inside “American” culture:

Reading assignment: Lutz: Homefront

### **Course Assignments:**

**1) Reading response papers.** For each week’s assigned reading, class participants will write a two page response paper (double-spaced with one inch margins). **These assignments are to be handed in at the beginning of each class on the day that reading is scheduled for discussion.**

In addition to the following questions (if applicable), the discussion should address your own research concerns and ideas when appropriate.

- A) What is the main theme(s) and theoretical framework of the reading?
- B) What is the author’s relation to the primary objective of the book?
- C) What does the author tell you about her research methods and design?
- D) What does this reading tell you about “ethnography”?
- E) What are the positive contributions of this reading?
- F) What is your primary critique of this reading?

**2) Term Paper.** Class participants are responsible for a term paper of about 10-15 pages in length based on your own research interests. **The paper is due on the final week of class – Friday March 11.** The paper should address:

1. A Definition and description of your research interest.
2. The principle ethnographic understanding of your research interest, i.e. What does the ethnographic record tell you about your research topic? (This is basically a literature review).
3. How ethnography can help develop a better understanding/explanation of your research interest. Specific ethnographic models, methods and theoretical framework(s) appropriate for your own research interests and why these are important.

### **Bibliography of Required Texts:**

Basso, Keith

1996 Wisdom Sits in Places University of New Mexico Press: Albuquerque

- Gupta, Akil and James Ferguson  
1987 Anthopological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science. University of California Press: Berkeley.
- Lutz, Catherine A.  
2003 Homefront. An American Military City. Beacon Press: New York.
- Mullings, Leith and Alaka Wali  
2001 Stress and Resilience: The Social Context of Reproduction in Central Harlem. Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Sanjek, Roger  
1990 Fieldnotes: The Making of Anthropology. Cornell University Press: Ithaca.
- Stocking, George W. Jr.  
1992 The Ethnographer's Magic and other Essays in the History of Anthropology. University of Wisconsin Press: Madison.
- Zavella, Patricia  
1987 Women's Work and Chicano Families. Cornell University Press: Ithaca.
- Van Maanen, John  
1988 Tales of the Field. On Writing Ethnography. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.
- Wolf, Margery  
1992 A Thrice Told Tale. Stanford University Press: Stanford