

**Department of Sociology
Faculty of Social Sciences
South Asian University**

Qualitative Research Methods

(Optional Course for M.A.)

Total Credits: 04

Objectives of the Course

This course is designed as the second of two courses in research methodology for MA students. The course is compulsory and will focus primarily on qualitative data collection and analysis, with an emphasis on ethnographic fieldwork. It is designed with three goals in mind 1) to introduce students to the critical history and contemporary writing on ethnographic practice in social anthropology; 2) to allow students to be able to critically evaluate ethnographies as assembled texts, and most importantly 3) to provide students with a guided space within which to carry out field-research and gain familiarity with different ethnographic methodological strategies, an understanding of the role of ethics and ethical practice in the field, and how to prepare their data for analysis, including through the practice of writing ethnography. Given this, the course focuses both on reading ethnographies, as well as outlines a series of exercises whereby students can practice their own qualitative research skills. The first units of the course will focus on reading ethnography, while the second set of units involve student projects and exercises to be submitted to, and presented in the class for discussion.

Unit 1 Writing Ethnography: History and Contemporary Practice:

This unit examines the historical development of the practice of ethnography through classic readings. This is contrasted with critical discussions on doing ethnography that emerged in the 1990s focusing on critiques of ethnographic representation, and discussions of ethnographic authority, veracity and perspective. The third focus for the unit will be multi-sited, inter-textual, and interdisciplinary inquiry, as increasingly salient in a globalized world.

References

- Asad, T. 1973. *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*. New Jersey: Ithaca Press.
- Brown, Radcliff. 1922. *The Andaman Islanders*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press
- Malinowski, Bronislaw, 1922. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London: Routledge.
- Fabian, J. 1983. *Time and the Other: How Anthropology makes its Object*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Geertz, C. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson. 1997. *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Haraway, Doona. *The Haraway Reader*, London and New York: Routledge.
- Hobsbawm E and Ranger, T. eds. *The Invention Of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press
- Marcus and Clifford. 1984. *Writing Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Marcus, George. 1995. "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography". *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol.24, pp. 95-117.

- Rabinow, P. 1977. *Reflections of Fieldwork in Morocco*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Rosaldo, R. 1989. *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Stocking, George. 1983. *Observers observed: Essays on Ethnographic Fieldwork*.

Unit 2: Research Ethics:

This unit will focus on research ethics in the field primarily by reading key methodological texts including on anthropological controversies.

References

- Berg, Bruce. 2001. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, Boston: Allan and Bacon, chapter 3 "informed consent".
- "Briefing Paper on Informed Consent," AAA Committee on Ethics, <http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/bp5.htm>
- Bourgois, P. 1990. 'Confronting Anthropological Ethics: Ethnographic Lessons from Central America,' *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 27, no 1, pp.43-54
- Caplan, P. ed. 2003. *The Ethics of Anthropology: Debates and Dilemmas*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Denzin, N. K. 1994. "The Art and Politics of Interpretation" in , edited by E. G. a. Y. S. L. Guba *Handbook of Qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, Pp. 500-515.
- Meskel, L & P. Pels eds. 2005. *Embedding Ethics*. Oxford & New York: Berg.
- Nader, Laura. 1972. "Up the anthropologist: perspectives gained from studying up", in Dell Hymes (ed), *Reinventing anthropology*. New York: Pantheon, pp.284-311.
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. 1995. "The Primacy of the Ethical: Propositions for a Militant Anthropology" *Current Anthropology*, vol. 36, no.3, pp.409-40.
- Visweswaran, K. 1994. *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Unit 3 Reading Ethnography:

This unit is designed to focus on reading ethnographies as assembled texts and to allow students to gauge through close reading and discussions, how an ethnography is put together in terms of the interface between theory and ethnographic data, the questions of voice and perspective, the use of thick descriptions, the relationship between ethnographer and communities and individuals, and finally in building thematics across a monograph.

References:

- Abu-Lughod, L. 1986. *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Aneesh, A. 2015 *Neutral Accent: How Language, Labor, and Life Become Global*. Duke University Press.
- Biehl, J, 2005. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bhuthalia, U. 1998. *The Other Side of Silence: Voices From the Partition of India*. Delhi Penguin books.
- Bourgois, Philippe. 2003. *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Daniel, E. Valentine. 1996. *Charred Lullabies-Chapters in an Anthropography of Violence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Ho, K. 2009. *Liquidated: An Ethnography of Wall Street*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Klima, A. 2002. *The Funeral Casino: Meditation, Massacre, and Exchange with the Dead in Thailand*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ortner, Sherry. 2001. *Life and Death on Mt. Everest: Sherpas and Himalayan Mountaineering*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Spencer, Jonathon. 1990. *A Sinhala Village in a Time of Trouble: Politics and Change in Rural Sri Lanka*. Delhi, Oxford University Press.
- Stewart, Kathleen. 1996. *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an 'Other' America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Tsing, Anna. 2005. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Unit 4: Preparing for the Field: Research Questions, Sampling, Framing the Study, Building Rapport

From this unit, students will start putting together their own field research project for the class, possibly drawing on fieldwork for the MA dissertation. This unit presupposes students have developed a research question and proposal in Research Methods 1, and will focus on the questions of defining a field of study, access to informants, and entry into the field, including building rapport. To operationalize this, the class will include readings, and discussions of student projects as presented in class, as well as an evaluation of students' written submissions outlining their own project in the form of a topic analysis.

References:

- Agar, M. 1996. *The Professional Stranger: An informal Introduction to Ethnography*, San Diego: Academic Press, chapters 3, 4, 5.
- Berg, Bruce. 2001. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, Boston: Allan and Bacon, chapter 2.
- Creswell, J. H. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, chapters 2 and 6.
- Robben A, and Sluka J (eds.) 2007. *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*, Malden: Blackwell, section 2 'Fieldwork Relations and Rapport'.
- Russell, Bernard. 1994. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, chapters 3, 4, 5, 6
- Schensul, J and LeCompte M. 2013. *Essential Ethnographic Methods: A Mixed Methods Approach*. Plymouth: Altamira Press, chapters 1 and 2.

Unit 5: Qualitative Inquiry: Participant Observation, Social Mapping, and Fieldnotes

Apart from reading key texts, this unit will involve a series of exercises to allow students to undertake participant observation, begin writing fieldwork, as well as start a process of social and/or spatial mapping as required by their research project. Students will present their exercises in class and also submit written versions to the instructor.

References:

- Agar, M. 1996. *The Professional Stranger: An informal Introduction to Ethnography*, San Diego: Academic Press, chapter 6.
- Berg, Bruce. 2001. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, Boston: Allan and Bacon, chapter 6.

- Geurts, Kathryn Linn. 2003 *Culture and the senses: Bodily ways of knowing in an African community*. University of California Press.
- Delaney, Carol. 2004. "Spatial Locations." *Investigating Culture: An Experiential Introduction to Anthropology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, pp. 35-63.
- Emerson, R, Fretz R and Shaw, L. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, chapters 3, 4, 5.
- Murchinson, J. 2010. *Ethnographic Essentials*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, chapter 5 and 6.
- Russell, Bernard. 1994. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, chapters 7, 8, 9, 14 and 15.
- Robben A, and Sluka J (eds.) 2007. *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*, Malden: Blackwell, section 8 'Sensorial Fieldwork'.
- Schensul, J and LeCompte M. 2013. *Essential Ethnographic Methods: A Mixed Methods Approach*. Plymouth: Altamira Press, chapters 3 and 4.
- Sanjek, R (ed.) *Fieldnotes: The Making of Anthropology*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Unit 6: Qualitative Inquiry 2: Structured and unstructured interviews, Focus groups, Biography, and Oral histories.

This unit will focus on different modes of qualitative analysis primarily through key readings, as well as by assigning students individual exercises in 1) conducting structured and unstructured interviews 2) writing a biography or oral history. Students will be expected to workshop their efforts with other class participants, and submit written versions in the class. The unit will also introduce students to techniques of conducting focus groups.

References:

- Ritchie, D. 2003. *Doing Oral History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, chapter 3.
- Berg, Bruce. 2001. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, Boston: Allan and Bacon, chapters 4, 5, and part of chapter 9.
- Creswell, J. H. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, chapter 7.
- Murchinson, J. 2010. *Ethnographic Essentials*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, chapter 5 and 6.
- Russell, Bernard. 1994. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, chapters 10 and 11.
- Schensul, J and LeCompte M. 2013. *Essential Ethnographic Methods: A Mixed Methods Approach*. Plymouth: Altamira Press, chapters 6, 7 and 8.
- Spradley, j. 1979. *The Ethnographic Interview*, NY: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, pp. 461-474.
- Portelli, A. 1981."The Peculiarities of Oral History, *History Workshop*, Vol.12 (Autumn), pp. 96-107.

Unit 7: Building Contexts, Validity and Triangulation

This unit will have two central foci namely 1) Building a Triangulation grid to ensure that data collected is triangulated as well as to assess how different informants may view a situation from different perspectives, as well as identify gaps in data collection. 2) The unit will also include an exercise to determine the kinds of primary and secondary documentation that students could utilize for their research project, including the development of a historical, and if required multi-scaler perspective to frame contemporary research. Like other units, this unit will include readings, and written exercises to be presented and submitted in class.

References:

- Agar, M. 1996. *The Professional Stranger: An informal Introduction to Ethnography*, San Diego: Academic Press, chapter 7.
- Creswell, J. H. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, chapter 10.
- Edwards, David B. 2007. "Afghanistan, Ethnography, and the New World Order," in Robben A, and Sluka J (eds.) 2007. *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*, Malden: Blackwell, pp. 347-358.
- Flick U, Steinke, I and von Kardorff, E eds. 2009. *A Companion to Qualitative Research*, London and Delhi: Sage
- Gray, Ann, *Research Practice for Cultural Studies*, London: Sage, chapter 5.
- Hannerz, Ulf. 2003. "Being There... and There... and There! Reflections on Multi-Site Ethnography." *Ethnography*, Vol.4, no.2, pp. 201-216.
- Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, 1995. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, London: Routledge, chapter 6 'Documents'.
- Murchinson, J. 2010. *Ethnographic Essentials*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, chapters 8, 9, 10, 11.
- Rajagopal, A. 2011. "Urban Segregation and the Special Political Zone in Ahmedabad: An Emerging Paradigm for Religio-Political Violence," *Samaj*, vol.5.
- Schensul, J and LeCompte M. 2013. *Essential Ethnographic Methods: A Mixed Methods Approach*. Plymouth: Altamira Press, part of chapter 9 and chapters 10 and 11.
- Ravi Sundaram, 2013. *No Limits: Media Studies from India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, selections

Unit 8: Data Analysis and Ethnographic Writing

This unit will focus on the following forms of data analysis 1) coding, 2) building thick descriptions and narratives and 3) the interface of theory and ethnographic data. Students will be asked to read key essays as well as submit and present their own data analysis in the class as part of the final examination.

References:

- Murchinson, J. 2010. *Ethnographic Essentials*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, part 3 'analyzing and writing'.
- Emerson, R, Fretz R and Shaw, L. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, chapters 6 and 7.
- Russell, Bernard. 1994. *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, chapter 16.
- Gray, Ann, *Research Practice for Cultural Studies*, London: Sage, chapter 8 and 9.
- Agar, M. 1996. *The Professional Stranger: An informal Introduction to Ethnography*, San Diego: Academic Press, chapter 8.
- Creswell, J. H. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, chapter 11.
- Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, 1995. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, London: Routledge, chapters 8 and 9.
- Berg, Bruce. 2001. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, Boston: Allan and Bacon, chapters 11 and 12.