Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology – Anthropology 139

Winter 2006
Tu & Th 9:30 – 10:45 a.m
Fowler A139

Sections – Haines 314
1A – Tu 12:00 – 12:50 p.m.
1B – Tu 1:00 – 1:50 p.m.
1C – W 2:00 – 2:50 p.m.

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Course Website: www.sscnet.ucla.edu/06W/anthro139-1/
Department of Anthropology Main Office: Haines 341 phone: 310-825-2055
Department of Anthropology Reading Room: Haines 352

Course Description:

The aim of this course is to equip students with a better understanding of research methods in cultural anthropology and how anthropologists think about and carry out their research projects. As an introductory survey course, it is intended to provide you with knowledge and skills that will help you to assess the research of others as well as give you some sense of what is involved in designing and carrying out research. You will learn about some of the tools that anthropological researchers use as well as gain insight into how theory and method are linked in sociocultural anthropology. This is not a course designed to actually prepare you for imminent fieldwork, but to give you a sense of what doing so is like. The focus of this class is primarily on the collection and management of data (not the analysis and write-up). Because ethnographic fieldwork is the hallmark of cultural anthropology and often considered a necessary prerequisite for becoming a bona fide cultural anthropologist, much of the course is devoted to exploring what is involved in “doing fieldwork" and what can be learned through ethnographic field research. However, we will also explore cross-cultural comparisons using ethnographic records available through the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF).

Required Texts:


Additional readings are posted on the course website.
Course Requirements:

Exercises/Class Participation (see below): 20% of grade  
Assignment 1: 15% of grade  
Assignment 2: 20% of grade  
Exam 1 (midterm): 20% of grade  
Exam 2 (final): 25% of grade

The final will draw more heavily on the material covered after the midterm but will also draw on concepts introduced before the midterm.

There will be several short exercises that will be discussed during class time. Most involve some additional preparation/activity outside of the classroom. While the completed exercises do not receive individualized grades, they do contribute points toward your grade. You will not receive full credit for completed exercises that are marginally acceptable or unacceptable. If you miss an exercise that involves material presented in class, it cannot be made up. Class attendance will also enter into the class participation component of the grade. **No late exercises will be accepted.**

All written assignments are to be typed (double-spaced with at least 1" margins and numbered pages). Please note that **all writing must be grammatically correct, spell checked, and easily understandable.** Anything that is not will be deemed unacceptable. Please keep copies of all written assignments. The copy you hand in should not be the only copy. **It is not my policy to accept late assignments. If (and the emphasis is on if) a late assignment is accepted, it will not receive full credit.**

If you will miss class for whatever reason on the date that something is due, it must be turned in before class at the main office of the Department of Anthropology. For anything turned in outside of regular class hours, please ensure that someone in the office records the date and time delivered on your assignment.

Assignments and exercises sent by e-mail will not be graded and will receive no credit.

If you miss a lecture or a section meeting, it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate. If you miss a handout that is distributed during a class session, it is your responsibility to obtain a copy from a classmate.

Any written course work (assignments, examinations) that students do not pick up will be held by the instructor until the end of Spring Quarter, 2006. After that time, they will no longer be available.

It is expected that students will complete the assigned readings before coming to class.

I will attempt to respond to your e-mails as promptly as possible. However, you should expect that it may sometimes take me several days to respond if I have other pressing commitments. If you have questions about the course mechanics, grading, the exercises or the assignments, please get in touch with the TA. If your question is one that would be useful for class discussion, a response will be provided through class discussion rather than as a personal written response to your e-mail. Please do not send either myself or the TA an e-mail requesting
information about what was covered in a class session you missed. Information about grades cannot be obtained by e-mail.

Exams

You are responsible for all the reading material, whether or not it is discussed in class. You are also responsible for the materials covered in lecture and discussion sections. The exams primarily will consist of short answer and essay questions.

Assignment 1.

Refer to “Carrying Out a Structured Observation” by Laurie Price in the Course Reader. Your write-up of this assignment should result in an approximately 5 page report on your observations (no more than 6 pages). Please do not choose “Northern Lights” on UCLA north campus as your observation site (an off-campus location is recommended). Please attach your raw field notes to your report. You may also want to attach a drawing of the physical layout and/or tables or other analyses of your field observations. These attachments do not count as part of the 6 page limit. As part of your report, you may comment on your experiences, including any difficulties that occurred in observing.

Assignment 2.

For a number of years, how to promote health and/or well-being has been a topic of much interest to many Americans and particularly among Californians. A research project on this topic could involve examining health and well-being on two college campuses, one in California (like UCLA) and the other in some other region of the United States. Drawing on what you have learned by taking this class, your task in this assignment is to develop a set of questions that can be used as an interview guide with students to explore their ideas about health and well-being and the types of things that promote health and well-being. Your interview questions should be clearly written so that an interviewer at the comparison campus would have no difficulty understanding the questions and using them to carry out interviews. You will use this interview format to conduct an interview with another class member (the person you interview will also interview you using his or her questionnaire). The target length of the interview should be no less than half an hour and no longer than an hour. Using what you have learned through this experience, revise your set of questions. In the revision process, it is fine to learn from others and to borrow or adapt questions that others have used. Use the revised set of questions to carry out an interview with another student (not in the class). Your write-up (no more than 8 pages) should discuss your rationale for your initial set of questions, discuss what happened during the first interview and what you learned from this experience, the rationale for the revision process, and what you learned from carrying out the second interview. Attach the following to your write-up:

> the original interview format (typed)
> your notes from both interviews (may be handwritten)
> the revised interview schedule (typed)

Note: For the initial interview, you should work with someone in the class whom you do not know or with whom you are only briefly acquainted. Do not work with someone you know well or interact with frequently. This means you should not team up with someone considered a friend or someone who works in the same place as you do. It will be helpful, though not essential, if you team up with someone who attends the same discussion section as you do.
Course Schedule

WEEK 1
JAN 10  Introduction to Class

Read before next class:
> Bernard, Skim “Preface”
> Bernard, Ch. 1 “Anthropology and the Social Sciences”

**Exercise to be handed in at beginning of class on Jan 12:** Observe a person eating and write a report (maximum length is 2 typed double-spaced pages). There are no additional written instructions for this exercise.

JAN 12  Anthropology and Methods in Historical Perspective
Why Methods?

Read before next class:
> Bernard, Ch. 2 “The Foundations of Social Research” (Note: We will be covering some of the basic concepts raised in this chapter in class for the next couple of weeks)

WEEK 2
JAN 17  Epistemology

Read before next class:
> Goulet
> Price  (Note: The reading by Price provides the guidelines for Assignment #1)

> **Optional readings** - Crane and Angrosino - “Project One: Proxemics,” and “Project Two: Making Maps.” (Note: These readings may also be useful in helping you think about Assignment #1.)

JAN 19  Epistemology; Basic Concepts

**Exercise due in class on Jan 19:** Operational Definitions (see instructions handed out in class on Jan 17)
Read before next class:
> Heider
> Start Reading Edgerton
WEEK 3  
JAN 24  Basic Concepts – Assessing Research Claims

Read before next class:
> Finish reading Edgerton, "On the Beach" pp. 1-32, 76-121
> Bernard, section entitled “HRAF: Cross-Cultural Content Analysis” (pp. 483-487) in Ch. 17 “Qualitative Data Analysis I: Text Analysis”

JAN 26  Assessing Research Claims (cont.); Reliability and Validity

Turn in answers to coding exercise (handed out on Jan 24); keep copy of responses and bring to your discussion section during Week 4

Read before next class:
> Rosenhan
> Bernard, from section entitled “True Experiments in the Field” (p.127) up to the start of the section on “Factorial Designs” (stop reading near the bottom of p. 138) in Chapter 5 “Research Design: Experiments and Experimental Thinking.”

WEEK 4  
JAN 31  Observation

Read before next class:
> Bernard, section entitled “What are Samples and Why Do We Need Them” on pages 141-142 of Ch. 6 “Sampling.” (Note: Chapter 6 “Sampling” and Chapter 7 “Sampling Theory” are recommended. Unfortunately, we will not have the time to cover them in class)

> Bernard, Ch. 15 “Direct and Indirect Observation” (Note: We will not have time in class to cover much of what is in this chapter. Bring questions about material not covered in lecture to your discussion section during week 5.)

FEB 2  Observation; Natural Experiments; Unobtrusive and Covert Research - Ethical Dimensions

Assignment #1 due at the beginning of class

WEEK 5  
FEB 7  Midterm Review

FEB 9  Midterm Examination

Read before next class:
> Bernard, Ch. 9 “Interviewing: Unstructured and Semistructured.”
WEEK 6
FEB 14 Overview of Research Strategies; Introductory comments on Interviewing

Read before next class:
> Spradley, pp. 45-91
> Bohannon

FEB 16 Interviewing continued

Read before next class:
> Bernard, Chapter 10 “Structured Interviewing: Questionnaires.”
  Note: You are not responsible for all of the material in this chapter. You should read and understand the key points (but not all the details) from the beginning of the chapter (p. 240) up to “Using Interviewers” on p. 251. Just quickly skim the next section (you will not need to review this section for the final examination). The section starting with “Closed vs. Open-Ended: The Problem of Threatening Questions” (p. 254) up to the section entitled “The Response Rate Problem” (middle of p. 263) is the most important part of the chapter for you. The discussion of the wording of questions will be very helpful with regards to Assignment #2. You should also read the section entitled “Pretesting and Learning from Mistakes” (pp. 270-271). With that exception, you do not need to read from the section entitled “The Response Rate Problem” to the end of the chapter.
> Bernard, Ch. 11 “Structured Interviewing: Cultural Domain Analysis”
  Note: In this chapter, focus on the sections with headings printed in bold face and skim the sections with headings printed in italics. On page 296, Bernard states “Rank ordering produces interval-level data. . .” This is incorrect and you should be able to tell me the correct level of measurement.)

Optional Readings: Young and Garro, Garro

WEEK 7
FEB 21 Questionnaires & Structured Interviews

Read before next class:
> Briggs
> Bernard, section entitled “Choosing Informants” from page 187 to the start of section entitled “The Cultural Consensus Model” around middle of page 193. Read also the section on “Paying Informants” (bottom of p.200 - 202) at the end of the chapter.

FEB 23 Comments on Briggs; Key Informants
Read before next class:
> Bernard, Ch. 13 “Participant Observation”
> Start reading Raybeck, Douglas “Mad Dogs, Englishmen and the Errant Anthropologist”
> To accompany Raybeck's comments on the "semantic differential technique," read the brief section on this technique in Bernard, pp. 316-318, see also the example on p. 260 in Chapter 11: Structured Interviewing: Questionnaires

WEEK 8
FEB 28  Participant Observation

Read before next class:
> Continue reading Raybeck

Optional Readings: Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard (excerpt from “The Nuer”)

MAR 2  Participant Observation (continued)

Read before next class:
> Finish reading Raybeck, Douglas “Mad Dogs, Englishmen and the Errant Anthropologist”
> Scheper-Hughes, Ire in Ireland
> Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association (available online at the Association’s website)

Assignment #2 is due in class

WEEK 9
MAR 7  Ethics

Optional Readings: Chagnon, Evans-Pritchard (excerpt from “Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande), Scheper-Hughes (“Parts Unknown”)

Read before next class
> Bernard, Ch. 14 “Field Notes: How to Take Them, Code Them, Manage Them” (up to p. 381)
> Bernard, pp. 180 -187 (until start of section entitled “Choosing Informants”)

MAR 9  Fieldnotes, Sampling in Ethnographic Research

WEEK 10
MAR 14  Wrap-up and Review

MAR 16  Examination #2