EER-7880: Fundamentals of Ethnographic Research
3 Credit Hours Winter 2014 Wayne State University
Dr. Karen L. Tonso
Education #375, Office Hours: Tues.-Wed. 3:00-4:15, or by appt.
ag7246@wayne.edu

Course Description: Fundamentals of Ethnographic Research will introduce post-positivist research in the Naturalistic-Interpretivist tradition to doctoral students nearing their qualifying exams. It will be empirical - that is, depend on observable events for its data sources. Students will learn various data-collection strategies, such as participant observation, interviewing (ethnographic, life-history, etc.), and artifact collection. Analysis strategies will center on ways to develop underlying patterns in the data (semantic domain analysis), to organize those patterns into sets of meaning (taxonomic analysis), and to compare meanings across meaningful contrasts (componential analysis). Ethical treatment of research participants, research quality, and issues of representativeness and applicability of results will be covered. The final stages of the course will encompass writing up research. Theoretical and methodological readings will be supplemented with selections from empirical educational research.

The course will be “hands-on” and all students will practice data-collection, analysis, and writing stages via a small-scale project. Along the way, we will work through the social science (dissertation) genre for empirical research, and make clear that designing theory-driven research means linking scholarly frameworks to site-selection, data-collection, analysis, and write-up strategies. But, this course will not cover explicitly theoretical underpinnings such as those needed in various education specialties, such as ed-admin, teaching, learning, special-education, multicultural-education, instructional technology, etc. Ideally, students should be far enough along in their graduate coursework to have taken theory courses in their specialty.

The course will require considerable out-of-class devotion to reading, practicing research, and writing. The tree-like nature of readings and their application will virtually preclude success for students who skim or fall behind. As doctoral students, I expect the highest levels of professionalism.

Classroom Policies: Late work will rarely be accepted. Anyone missing three assignments (or routinely tardy with assignments) will be asked to leave the course. Cell phones must be off at all times. Computers must be off unless needed for the class. Please arrive on time with items presented for feedback already printed. No printing in the classroom. Violations of course policies may be grounds for dismissal from that evening’s class.

Snow Policy/Class Cancellations: If it is not safe to travel, don’t! I’ll offer an attendance amnesty or alternative. If I must cancel class, I will send email to your WSU account. Please be sure those emails go to the email you read. If campus is open, I must teach and live close enough to manage to do so historically.

Readings: Two books are required:

These readings can be found on Blackboard for ERR-7880 under “Content” (please be thoughtful of environmental resources and only print if you must):
Grading and Assessment: Your grade will depend on
- Preparation for and participation in class (25%),
- Weekly assignments presented for feedback (30%),
- Final-class research recap (5%), and
- Final report (40%, in lieu of a final exam).

All work presented for feedback is expected on the date assigned at the beginning of class. I expect that you will take my feedback to heart in the final report. The important thing here is to stay on track and to get your best effort trying out a particular strategy in my hands so I can help you improve. Because my providing feedback on your work is continuous throughout the semester, weekly assignments presented for feedback must be on time.
- Readings will be challenging, making bluffing your way through discussion/research tasks impossible.
- Frequent tardiness, early departure, or absences will lower your grade.
- Incompletes will be given only in the case of extreme extenuating circumstances. Submit whatever you have.
- Because receiving graduate credit warrants your readiness to conduct research with vulnerable populations, no “marginal passes” will be given.
- Invariably, one of us will suffer a major crisis during the semester. Should that be the case for you, let me know and we will try to work out a way for you to complete the course.

Mini-Study Project: Over the semester, students will complete a mini-study, a “walk-through” of most aspects of an ethnographic study, allowing students to practice research tasks. Your research notebook will include a preliminary research report (summary of paradigms, research purpose, site selection, scholarly summary of methods used and why, research quality justification, and preliminary findings), along with an accumulation of research data and analysis. Samples of tasks will be evaluated during class or collected and assessed.

The format of the notebook is attached. Please prepare a notebook with the appropriate dividers before the third class meeting.

You will select research sites where you already have access. During the semester, we will discuss how to gain access to research sites and procure informed consent for research, but will not do this for the mini-studies. Because these are for the purpose of practicing and there will be no human-subjects approvals in place, your reports CANNOT BE PUBLISHED, or the DATA USED, at any time in the future.

CITI Mandatory Training: Prior to engaging in any fieldwork associated with this course, please complete the online CITI Mandatory Training. CITI mandatory training is available at: https://www.citiprogram.org/Default.asp?

Please complete the training only for research with HUMAN participants (Human Investigation Committee or HIC). See the letter from Dr. Dorothy Nelson at: http://irb.wayne.edu/mandatory-training.php toward the middle of the page. Also, the CITI Detailed Guide link below Dr. Nelson’s letter will prove VERY helpful, so I recommend downloading it to get started. You are a SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESEARCHER and should do all of the modules that apply. Expect 5-6 hours. If you have completed this in a prior course, then I will accept a copy of your “completion” printout and you will have fulfilled this requirement.

Methods Summaries: Each week students will read new methodological scholarship. The mini-study project report will include a major section that explains your methodological decisions, their justification, and their grounding in scholarship. The methods section is, then, scholarly writing (recapping the research paradigm chosen, site, participants and their recruitment, data collection strategies, analysis strategies, and explanation of the extent to which research quality criteria are met) and it will be considerably easier to write if, on a weekly basis, you write a summary of that week’s readings, from which to draw the needed material later. I will read ONLY two drafts: research quality and site summaries, but not provide feedback on any of the others until the final project is submitted. One way to make your life more difficult is to safe this writing until the last possible point in the semester.

Sharing Our Research: Throughout the semester, we will discuss student research progress. On the last night of class, each will give a short mini-study recap (taking a few minutes) to provide a forum to celebrate student work. The recap should include central findings and struggles.

In-Class Presentations (15%): End-of-term informal presentations (<5 minutes) including your research purpose, brief description of site, amount and nature of participant-observation and interview data collection, at least one central finding, and one major “struggle” and how you dealt with it. Possibility of questions from the “audience.”
OTHER MATTERS:

Cancellations of Class & “Weather” Policy: If for any reason I must cancel class, I will change my campus voicemail, try to contact students via CAMPUS email, and ask my secretary to post a notice on my door and the classroom door. You must determine when it is not safe to travel. We come from a variety of locations and conditions always vary, so make good decisions based on your conditions and turn around if driving is not safe. If the campus is open, I must hold class.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism, Fabrication, and Cheating (http://doso.wayne.edu/student-conduct/Academic_Integrity.html):

**WSU Plagiarism Policy:** Plagiarism includes copying material (more than 5 consecutive words) from outside texts or presenting outside information as if it were your own or by not crediting authors through citations. (APA cites require author, year, and page number for direct quotes in quotation marks and for paraphrases with no quotation marks.) Plagiarism can be deliberate or unintentional. If in doubt about use of a source, cite it. It’s also troublesome – and plagiarism – to recycle your old papers or parts of them or ideas from them. Always, always, always check with the professor before you use something for two courses! [Please read these two web resources related to plagiarism to learn more: A good plagiarism definition and lots of good advice can be found at http://www.suite101.com/content/a-definition-for-plagiarism-a10232. Appropriate and inappropriate paraphrasing examples can be found at http://library.csusm.edu/plagiarism/howtoavoid/how_avoid_paraphrase.htm]

To enforce this policy, any piece of writing that seems to violate plagiarism criteria will be subjected to at least two plagiarism checks using available software. If plagiarized material is suspected, and deemed unintentional, the paper will be returned for correction without grading and a zero entered in the grade book until a revision is submitted. At the sole discretion of the professor, if a suspicious paper is deemed a case of intentional plagiarism, suitable academic procedures will be followed, as spelled out in the Student Handbook.

From http://www.suite101.com/content/a-definition-for-plagiarism-a10232: “Plagiarism is the act of taking credit for someone else's work. In college, this usually involves writing, but other kinds of work can be plagiarized as well, including music, ideas, and artwork. Taking credit for work that someone else created is stealing and is a violation of intellectual property law. So plagiarism is more than just a violation of school policies and a teacher's trust. It is an illegal activity that isn't so different than stealing someone's iPod or wallet.

**What actions are considered plagiarism?** Any time someone uses another author's words or ideas without correctly giving them credit, that's plagiarism. Here are some examples.

1. **Putting one's name on someone else's paper.** This is the most obvious example. Whether it came from one of the many college essay plagiarism websites that buy and sell term papers or from a friend, this is plagiarism.

2. **Putting one's name on someone else's phrases.** One doesn't have to steal a whole paper for it to be plagiarism. Sometimes students get lazy and throw in a few paragraphs or sentences from a book or website. If the original author is not credited for the writing, it's plagiarism.

3. **Putting one's name on something that's paraphrased.** A paraphrase is a rewording of a phrase, sentence, or paragraph that essentially says the same things. Paraphrases of someone else's work need to be cited just as a quote would. It's still someone else's idea, even if the words are changed.

4. **Taking someone else's idea.** This happens in academia sometimes. A graduate student has a great idea, and a professor steals it and writes a paper using the student's idea. Bad bad bad. It doesn't matter that words weren't stolen; it's the stealing of an idea that makes this a violation of intellectual property law.

5. **"Recycling" your old material.** Tweaking the contents of one assignment to meet the requirements of another assignment is both plagiarism and against college policies. (And professors talk to each other about their students' work, so don't try this!) There are some cases where a student wants to expand upon an idea from another paper in another class, and that's okay as long as you discuss this with the professor and get permission, and as long as it's truly an original and expanded work.

6. **Failure to put a quote in quotations marks, or providing incorrect information about where a source came from.** These are sloppy errors that are probably not malicious. But technically they are still
plagiarism. Learning how to cite sources correctly is an important skill! If you do not know how to do this well, talk to a professor or your college writing center.”

**WSU Fabrication:** Fabrication involves any intentional falsification of one’s expertise, such as by bulking up a list of references with citations that you did not examine/digest fully, listing sources in a bibliography that were not used in a research paper, or citing information not taken from the source indicated. The most common way that this occurs is that a scholar cites an unread primary source, instead of the secondary source that s/he read. That is, suppose you are reading a paper by Fred Smith and he quotes Mary Jones on some topic or another. APA requires that a scholar using Mary Jone’s quote, who got it via reading Smith, cite this quotation by writing: (Jones, quoted in Smith, 1999, p. 127). It is a fabrication of one’s expertise to say that one got the quote from Jones - ala (Jones, 1989, p. 14), which is where Smith got it. Another common way that fabrication is done by students is to revise a secondary source’s statement synthesizing findings from across a wide range of authors, especially by making it unrecognizable to plagiarism checkers, and instead of citing the secondary source the writer includes the string of primary sources, and then lists references from the primary sources in the bibliography, but has not actually read them fully.

**WSU Cheating:** Cheating involves using or attempting to use, or intentionally providing or attempting to provide, unauthorized materials, information, or assistance in any academic exercise. Examples include: copying from another student’s test paper or other work, allowing another student to copy from a test paper, and using unauthorized material such as a “cheat sheet” during an exam.

**Students who demonstrate a lack of academic integrity by plagiarizing, fabricating, or cheating will receive a failing grade.** To enforce this policy, a copy of all outside articles used in work presented for a grade must be submitted with assignments. University policy states that students can also be subject to multiple sanctions, from reprimand to expulsion as a consequence of academic dishonesty.

**WSU Disability Services Policy:** If you have a documented disability that requires accommodations, you will need to register with Student Disability Services (SDS) for coordination of your academic accommodations. The Student Disability Services (SDS) office is located at 1600 David Adamany Undergraduate Library in the Student Academic Success Services department. SDS telephone number is 313-577-1851 or 313-577-3365 (TDD only). Once you have your accommodations in place, I will be glad to meet with you privately during my office hours to discuss your special needs. Student Disability Services’ mission is to assist the university in creating an accessible community where students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to fully participate in their educational experience at Wayne State University. Please be aware that a delay in getting SDS accommodation letters for the current semester may hinder the availability or facilitation of those accommodations in a timely manner. Therefore, it is in your best interest to get your accommodation letters as early in the semester as possible.

**WSU Religious Observance Policy:** Because of the extraordinary variety of religious affiliations represented in the University student body and staff, the Wayne State University calendar makes no provision for religious holidays. It is University policy, however, to respect the faith and religious obligations of each individual. Students who find that their classes or examinations involve conflicts with their religious observances are expected to notify their instructors well in advance so that alternative arrangements as suitable as possible may be worked out.

**WSU Withdrawal Policy:** Students who withdraw from a course after the end of the 4th week of class will receive a grade of WP, WF, or WN:

- WP will be awarded if the student is passing the course (based on work due to date) at the time the withdrawal is requested
- WF will be awarded if the student is failing the course (based on work due to date) at the time the withdrawal is requested
- WN will be awarded if no materials have been submitted, and so there is no basis for a grade

Students must submit their withdrawal request on-line through Pipeline. The faculty member must approve the withdrawal.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Readings (date discussed in class)</th>
<th>Fieldwork &amp; Research Tasks Performed Between Classes</th>
<th>Weekly Assignment Due</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-8</td>
<td>Intro &amp; Ethics: Overview, Mini-Study Plan, Cyclical Nature of Ethnography (constant comparative method with tightening focus), Keeping a Researcher Journal Lincoln &amp; Guba 289-331,</td>
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<td>1-15</td>
<td>Intro to Ethnography &amp; Paradigms: LeCompte &amp; Schensul Bk 1: p. 1-86 Tonso (Impact of Cultural Norms)</td>
<td>Start keeping researcher journal</td>
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<td>1-22</td>
<td>Identifying &amp; Designing Research Project: LeCompte &amp; Schensul Bk 1: 129-172 Tonso, Jung, &amp; Colombo (Teacher Teams)</td>
<td>Start to locate site and gain access Write paradigm summary Write journal entry.</td>
<td>Notebook “Inspection”</td>
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<td>2-12</td>
<td>Independent Fieldwork: No Class</td>
<td>Collect and type up 2 Field Notes of one-hour each Write Researcher Journal Write data-collection summary.</td>
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<td>2-19</td>
<td>Independent Fieldwork: No Class</td>
<td>Collect 1 one-hour interview. Transcribe interview. Journal.</td>
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<td>3-5</td>
<td>Independent Analysis Work: No Class</td>
<td>Interview (transcribe!). Write Researcher Journal Write analysis II summary.</td>
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<td>3-12</td>
<td>Spring Break – No Class</td>
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<td>3-19</td>
<td>Analysis II: In class workshop (Bring all your data and your analysis so far) Analysis: FN2, Interview 1. Write analysis III summary.</td>
<td>Analysis of data</td>
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<td>3-26</td>
<td>Vignettes: VanMaanen 45-72, Revisit: TJC-TeacherTeams &amp; Tonso-Impact Finalize analysis (all data) Start writing up findings. Model your findings on the way find are reported in Tonso, et al, and Tonso</td>
<td>Vignette</td>
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<td>4-2</td>
<td>Writing: In-class workshop (Bring at least 5 paragraphs – draft written from analysis) Revisit TJC-TchrTeams &amp; Tonso-Impact More Analysis? (all data) Write up findings. Write!</td>
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<td>4-9</td>
<td>Independent writing</td>
<td>Gather appendices; revise intro, paradigm, &amp; methods summaries. Finalize write up of findings</td>
<td>Final Report/Notebook</td>
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<td>4-16</td>
<td>In-class short presentations</td>
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**FINAL PROJECT**

EER-7880: Ethnographic Research Methods

Dr. Karen L. Tonso

**Final Project (40% of course grade):** The final project will be a research report of your mini-study, not only a preliminary draft (research purpose, research questions, method, and preliminary findings), but also an accumulation of your research data and analysis worksheets…. Because there were no human subjects approvals in place, your reports are for coursework only and CANNOT BE PUBLISHED/PRESENTED at any time.

**Required Elements (written in prose form):**

**Introduction**
- Paradigm Discussion
- Research Purpose [The purpose of this study is to examine... where, who, what doing]
- Research Questions [Actors, Actions, Situation - What is going on here? Who is doing what? What sort of place is it?]

**Research Method** (I expect you to write a scholarly piece grounded in course readings, quote authors to support your decisions)
- Site Selection and Summary
- Participants and Their Recruitment
- Data Collection Strategies (and how different data sets intersect and inform one another)
- Analysis Strategies
- Research Quality

**Research Findings** (“pieces” and how they hang together)
- Analytic/Descriptive – What is going on here? Who is doing what? What sort of place is it?
- Comparative – how do things vary? What are the components/regularities of variation?

(Optional) Potential for Expansions or Extensions

**Appendices** (May be handwritten. Include everything, especially papers presented for feedback with my comments.)
- Fieldnotes
- Interview Transcripts or Notes
- Analysis “Chits” and Worksheets
- Researcher Journal (On-going record of 1) fieldwork efforts, 2) emerging conjectures/preliminary findings that must be checked in data collected, 3) your impact on site and its impact on you and how you will minimize researcher bias – seeing the world from your vantage point instead of from that of your participants.)

**Grading/Evaluation:** Completeness counts, as does demonstrating an appreciation of the research-methods and strategies discussed in the readings. Data “display” means quotes, which are referenced to data sources. (See examples in both Tonso and Tonso & Colombo articles.) I will do a Research Quality check: Can I see where the information came from? Are findings reasonable? Triangulated? Clarity of claims? Appropriate representation of “strength” of findings? Organization of findings? I will read as preliminary findings, expecting gaps and confusions. Noticing these will be part of your demonstrating understanding of qualitative research methods.

Feel free to use your best writing. I will copy-edit papers, but not incorporate that in the grade. (See attached evaluation worksheet, which I appreciate your including in the notebook.)

An outstanding project will be complete and demonstrate an understanding of the readings, especially putting them to work guiding one’s own research data collection, analysis, and writing.

An adequate project will have missing items and demonstrate at least a superficial understanding of the readings, and somewhat less skill applying and extending this knowledge to one’s own research.

An inferior project will have substantive omissions and errors in understanding the readings, and little or no facility applying or extending them to one’s own research.
# Mini-Study Evaluation Worksheet – EER-7880 Final Project (Dr. Tonso)

Scale: “+” = doing fine  “√” = inconsistent  “-” = often needs work

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Project</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>√</th>
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<th>Comments</th>
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<td><strong>Writing Mechanics</strong></td>
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<td>General punctuation/capitalization</td>
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<td>“ - clauses</td>
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<td>subject-verb agreement</td>
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<td>Sentences (run-on, fragments)</td>
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<td>Hyphenation</td>
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<td>Possessives</td>
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<td>Typographic errors</td>
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<td>Paragraph construction</td>
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<td>Transitions</td>
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<td>flow of argument</td>
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**Introduction**

- Paradigm & Research Purpose
- Research Questions

**Research Method**

- Site selection
- Data collection (field notes) (interviews)
- How fieldnotes & interviews interconnect
- Analysis

**Research Quality**

**Research Findings**

**Expansions/Extens’ns (optional)**

**Appendices**

- Field notes
- Interview transcripts/notes
- Analysis “chits” & worksheets
- Researcher journal

**Overall Evaluation**