EER-8710: Advanced Ethnographic Research

4 Credit Hours  Winter 2014  Wayne State University

Professor: Dr. Karen L. Tonso

Office Hours: Tues & Wed 3-4:15 or by appointment
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Course Description in Graduate Bulletin:

8710 Advanced Ethnographic Research. Cr. 4

Prereq: EER 7880. Use of fieldwork to learn group interview, video collection and analysis, ethnographic survey, narrative and poetic analysis; deepening the understandings about culturally-sensitive research, rigor, and the politics of representation. (W)

Purpose: This class extends the ethnographic research methodologies learned in EER-7880, especially adding focused-group interview, ethnographic survey, and videotape data-collection strategies, narrative, poetics, and videotape analysis. In addition, it provides students an opportunity to use these strategies to develop and present multi-media research findings. The course will be “hands-on;” students will work alone and in small groups to practice data-collection, analysis, and writing stages via a shared interest in making methods meaningful, i.e., useful for one’s own research. The course will require out-of-class devotion to reading, practicing research, and writing. The tree-like nature of readings will virtually preclude success for students who skim, miss class, or fall behind.

The course will take a post-structural, ethnographic approach to performing research, that is, holistic investigations done over a long-enough period of time and with a wide-enough look at persons situated in a purposeful social setting to make sense of complex sociocultural situations. Such a research stance is among the most comprehensive, though similar strategies can be modified to perform slice-in-time, or other smaller-scale (but equally important) studies. Research in this tradition means being responsive to the research situation, not being able to control it.

Because of the inclusion of technology: video cameras, hand-held tape recorders, and tape transcription machines, there will be many non-text literacies learned. These will easily take as much time and energy as readings, and bring the added bonus of frustration at times. Thus, throughout the course a certain amount of improvisation and entrepreneurial activity will ensue, for both professor and students. In other words, there will be decidedly more opportunity for students to make decisions about when to do what and many fewer professor-directed rules for research tasks or products. This will, I hope, move us away from making decisions based on professor directives and toward decisions grounded in the demands of good research practice.

Readings: I require two texts (the first two referred to as L & S V1 & V3, respectively). In addition, 2 chapters from Schensul, Schensul, and LeCompte V2 will be provided on the:


Grading and Assessment: Your grade will depend on preparation for and participation in class (15%), periodic items collected for feedback (25%), final portfolio (40%), and in-class presentation (20%). The final project will include videotape data, a focused group interview, with an explicit focus on a narrative of personal expression and its analysis, poetic re-presentation of data, and an ethnographic survey (protocol, not fielding and analyzing it). All “assignments” are expected in hard-copy format on the date assigned; a few will be completed in class. [Alas, I cannot accept email assignments.]

- Readings will be challenging, making bluffing your way through discussion impossible. I will provide reading guidelines to aid your preparation, and to guide your reflection for your portfolio, but will not collect or evaluate them.
- Frequent tardiness, early departure, or absence will lower your grade. Incompletes will be given only in the case
of extreme extenuating circumstances.

- 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.

Other Matters:

Cancellations of Class & “Snow” Policy: If for any reason I must cancel class, I will change my campus voicemail, try to contact students via CAMPUS email, and inform my secretary (Sheri Martini, 313-577-1614, don’t bug her if campus is open). 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.

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.) It can be deliberate or unintended. If in doubt about the use of a source, cite it. University policy states that students can be subject to multiple sanctions, from reprimand to expulsion as a consequence of academic dishonesty. Students caught plagiarizing information from other sources will receive a failing grade in the course. To enforce this policy, all outside references must be submitted with assignments. [KTons added: Check out web resources related to plagiarism to learn more. For instance a good plagiarism definition can be found at: http://www.suite101.com/content/a-definition-for-plagiarism-a10232; and paraphrasing examples good and bad at http://library.csusm.edu/plagiarism/howtoavoid/how_avoid_paraphrase.htm] Or from the 1500s:

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.

Final Project: Your final portfolio is NOT intended to be a cohesive research project, but to contain SHORT (a page or two) SUMMARIES of each of the research data-collection or data-analysis strategies that we study AND HOW YOUR USE OF THEM TOOK THER ADVANTAGES SERIOUSLY, along with THE WORK that you will have turned in along the way for feedback and revised. All materials in APA (times new roman, size 12, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, pages numbered), though single-spaced is fine for data and analysis products. [WORD TO THE WISE: Write methods summaries soon after reading and discussing!]

Minimum requirements include methods summaries, and your use reflections, of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Included material:</th>
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| 1 | FGI  
FGI Protocol (must include key event item, domain elicitation item, and narrative of expressions/experience item)  
FGI Transcription (of entire FGI)  
Preliminary analysis (outline/taxonomy of potential findings) |
|---|---|
| 2 | Video  
Video (at least 45 minutes)  
“Observation” Guidelines done before gathering video data  
Video Log of entire video  
Selected 10-12-min Transcription of audio track  
Vignette (descriptive prose) drawn from the video  
Preliminary analysis (outline/taxonomy of potential findings) |
| 3 | Ethnographic Survey (only final protocol, you do not have to field/run it) |
| 4 | Poetics (at least 16 lines each, 1 narrative, 1 analytic) (should connect to either video or group interview findings) |
| 5 | Culturally Sensitive Research (reflection should include how Tillman’s advice might impact your research strategies) |

Raw video footage must be at least 45 minutes long and be of an action scene, something happening in the real world, not an interview or contrived event. You can/should interact with those being videotaped especially to have them explain something on camera that they have been doing so that you will capture a narrative of experience (see LeCompte and Schensul on Interviewing where that was covered in EER-7880).

A video log is an analysis product that serves as a “roadmap” of the video, something to take the place of line/page numbers in a transcript. It is often presented in tabular form (Excel) and covers the entire video and includes columns for:

- the running time or footage marker (something that is available on the screen so that one can jump to a particular place in the video without watching the entire video),
- a brief description of the scene, and
- things you wish to remember about the video and be able to return to with ease.

Thinking in terms of the video as a movie and the video log as a list of scene and acts within scenes may help. It should be fairly fine-grained and enable the researcher to move around in the video and work with these data. It should mark important turning points, changes in tone/events/activities, and so on. Remember the requirements of an AUDIT TRAIL, and imagine that someone might be coming behind you and using your data and analysis products. What would they need to know to use your videotape and to be persuaded of your sense of the findings?

Focused group interview must have at least 4 people ideally and their interview typically relates to one other data-collection form. The protocol must include key-event, narrative-of-experience, and domain-elicitation items, as well as provide a vehicle for a general conversation about some topic that takes full advantage of FGIs.

**In-Class Presentation:** This will be a 10-minute presentation (or so) that can be made with PowerPoint or iMovie (or it’s Windows alternative) or DVD. It is intended to demonstrate the PRESENTATION of research findings that cannot be printed on a page. It will be FINDINGS, so grounded in analysis – all of the forms we have been studying this semester (i.e., I do not need to see full SDA, taxonomic, or componential, just whatever you needed to do the poetic analytic form). I expect all work to be done by YOU and not your tech-savvy buddy. If PowerPoint is used, then a movie must be created with movie-editing software and exported to a universally readable format and then kept on the same CD or DVD as the PowerPoint. That is, the movie must be inserted in PowerPoint and played from it. It should also cover at least one narrative and one poetics, and tell us about your semester’s findings.
**Tentative Course Schedule:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week of</th>
<th>Readings (discussed on this date)</th>
<th>Work On During the Week</th>
<th>Weekly Items Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-13</td>
<td>Ethnography &amp; Course Overview, Mini-Study, Technology [Ragtime Demos] Interview Overview, Focused Group Intrvws, L&amp;S V3, 51-119</td>
<td>Setting up group interview</td>
<td>FGI Protocol written in class</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-20</td>
<td>Group Interview (Independent)</td>
<td>Write FGI Summary Conduct FGI</td>
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<td>1-27</td>
<td>Group Interview Data Management (independent)</td>
<td>Transcribe FGI</td>
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<td>2-3</td>
<td>Audiovisual, L &amp; S V2, 1-25, 40-50 (on Blackboard)</td>
<td>Collect video and audio track that can be transcribed during the week</td>
<td>FGI Transcription Video “Observation” Guidelines (in class)</td>
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<td>2-10</td>
<td>Video-Data Management/Analysis (independent)</td>
<td>Create video log Select audio Write vignette</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-17</td>
<td>Video-Analysis/Editing Work</td>
<td>Write video summary</td>
<td>Video Log, Selected 20-min Transcription, Vignette</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-24</td>
<td>Ethnographic Survey L &amp; S V2, 165-199 (on Blackboard)</td>
<td>Finalize survey Write summary</td>
<td>Start survey in class</td>
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<td>3-3</td>
<td>Independent work on narratives</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-10</td>
<td><strong>NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK</strong></td>
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<td>3-24</td>
<td>Tillman “Culturally sensitive research approaches: An African American perspective” (Educational Researcher, 2002, 31(9), 3-12)</td>
<td>Write summary</td>
<td>2 Poetics (at least 16 lines each, 1 analytic-Glesne-Richardson-Tonso/Prosperi, 1 narrative) Survey Protocol Final</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-31</td>
<td>Independent project work</td>
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<td>4-7</td>
<td>Course wrap-up and project practice-runs (meet if needed)</td>
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<td>4-14</td>
<td><strong>Project Presentations</strong></td>
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<td>Final Portfolio</td>
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**Note:** For example, in week of January 13, students arrive for class ready to discuss focused group interviews and at the end of class will have an interview protocol for their interview.