

Writing 100 E **Observing Culture, Writing Ethnography**

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Fall semester 2007
Course meetings: 10:20 – 11:30am Tues & Thurs
Course location: 301 Memorial
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Course overview: This course will focus on the process of reading, interpreting, and producing written accounts of culture (i.e., ethnography). You will gain experience in conducting fieldwork in cultural anthropology, experiment with different writing styles, and produce an original ethnography based upon your fieldwork. During the semester, you will learn how to define and refine a research topic, conduct a literature review, carry out participant-observation, write and process fieldnotes, and write and revise a major paper. This course requires at least 2 hours of weekly participant observation outside of the classroom. The objective of the work is to reflect on the meanings of culture in our daily lives and to produce a written account of the ways in which individuals and groups participate in social behavior and construct knowledge, values, and belief systems.

Required texts

Gottlieb, Alma and Phillip Graham. 1994. *Parallel Worlds: An Anthropologist and a Writer Encounter Africa*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Hacker, Diana. 2002. *The Bedford Handbook*, 6th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Sunstein, Bonnie Stone and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater. 2007. *FieldWorking: Reading and Writing Research*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martins.

Course requirements:

Ethnography portfolio (30%) – Your ethnography portfolio includes a rough draft of your ethnography, your final ethnographic paper, and the cultural artifacts you collect. Your final paper will be 12-15 pages in length. It will report on your observations in the field and will be organized around a topic that is agreed upon by yourself and the instructor. You will turn in a rough draft of your ethnography for peer review on Nov. 15. The final draft will be due on Dec. 6. The research portfolio is worth 30% of your total course grade.

Fieldnotes (20%) – Fieldnotes are the primary means of recording information from participant observation at your research site. You will capture the detail of observations and conversations in your weekly fieldnotes. You will be trained how to write fieldnotes which will become the primary source of information for your final ethnographic project. Fieldnotes will periodically be discussed and peer reviewed in class so that you can receive ongoing feedback on your observations and the content of your fieldnotes. You are expected to complete five (5) sets of

fieldnotes over the course of the semester. Your completed fieldnotes binder will be submitted at the end of the course. Fieldnotes are worth 20% of your total course grade.

Writing portfolio (20%) – Your writing portfolio is a collection of your informal written work (which does not include your fieldnotes, ethnographic portfolio, or literature review). Some of your entries will be completed in class while others will be completed outside of class. Assignments with an asterisk (*) under the course schedule of the syllabus are due in class and are considered part of your writing portfolio. The 2-3 page book review that is due on Nov. 15 is also part of your writing portfolio. These entries will be collected periodically and the completed writing portfolio will be submitted at the end of the course. The writing portfolio is worth 20% of your total grade.

Literature review (10%) – You will be expected to conduct a literature review to learn what has been written about the social group or topic that is the focus of your fieldwork. You will draw from at least 4 sources (books and scholarly articles) to write a 3-4 page review of this literature which will provide background information for your ethnography. This review will be incorporated into your final project with appropriate citations. The literature review is worth 10% of your final grade.

Oral presentation (10%) – You will be required to give an oral presentation of your research findings. You will be provided with a grading rubric for your presentation. This presentation is worth 10% of your final grade.

Attendance and participation (10%) – The course will entail discussion, short lectures, group activities, peer reviews, and in-class writing assignments. Your regular class attendance and active participation in discussion, group work, and assignments are required. Multiple absences will negatively affect your grade.

Grading:

Research portfolio	30%
Writing portfolio	20%
Fieldnotes	20%
Literature review	10%
Oral presentation	10%
Attendance/Participation	10%

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is passing off others' work as your own. The Moravian handbook states, "All work that students submit or present as part of course assignments or requirements must be their own original work unless otherwise expressly permitted by the instructors" (p. 26). Plagiarism can involve directly quoting passages from a text, the web, or any other document. It can also involve having a student write a paper for you or purchasing a paper from a writing service. Any case of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Academic Affairs Office. Plagiarism will be handled in accordance with the college policy on academic honesty (see Moravian handbook).

Course schedule

Aug. 28: Introduction to the course
Handout: Miner, Body Ritual among the Nacirema

Understanding cultures

Aug. 30: FieldWorking, pp. 1-20
* Box 1: Looking at subcultures
* Box 2: Making the ordinary extraordinary

Sept. 4: FieldWorking, pp. 20-44
* Box 3: Engaging the ethnographic perspective

Sept. 6: FieldWorking, pp. 44-64
* Groundwork activity

Writing fieldnotes

Sept. 11: FieldWorking, pp. 65-90
* Box 4: Exploratory writing

Sept. 13: Observations

Sept 18: FieldWorking, pp. 91-115
Fieldnotes due

Describing place, space and language

Sept. 20: FieldWorking, pp. 175-194; 200-220
* Box 16: Writing a verbal snapshot
* Box 18: Finding a focal point

Sept. 25: FieldWorking, pp. 220-236
Fieldnotes due
Visit to the Writing Center

Sept 27: FieldWorking, pp. 307-325
* Box 25: Listening for Words: Creating a Glossary

Reading self, reading cultures

Oct. 2: FieldWorking, pp. 117-138
Fieldnotes due

Oct. 4: FieldWorking, pp. 143-173

*Box 13: Reading an artifact

Oct. 9: NO CLASS: HAPPY FALL BREAK!

Oct. 11: Parallel Worlds, Preface and Chapter 1, xvii-xix & 3-23

Oct. 16: Parallel Worlds, Chapter 2, pp. 24-57

Visit to Reeves Library

Oct. 18: Parallel Worlds, Chapter 3, pp. 58-82

The Bedford Handbook, Writing APA Papers, pp. 698-755

FieldWorking, pp. 414-415

Oct. 23: Parallel Worlds, Chapter 4, pp. 83-110

Fieldnotes due

Oct. 25: Parallel Worlds, Chapter 5, pp. 111-141

Literature review due

Writing it up

Oct. 30: Parallel Worlds, Chapter 6, pp. 142-173

Fieldnotes due

Nov. 1: FieldWorking, pp. 419-457

Nov. 6: Parallel Worlds, Chapter 7, pp. 174-208

Fieldnotes due

Nov. 8: Parallel Worlds, Chapter 8, pp. 209-248

Nov. 13: Parallel Worlds, Chapter 9, pp. 249-278

Nov. 15: Parallel Worlds, Chapter 10, pp. 281-312

*Book review due

Writing portfolio due

Nov. 20: FieldWorking, pp. 460-462

Ethnography rough drafts due (bring in two copies for peer review)

Nov. 22: NO CLASS: HAPPY THANKSGIVING

Presenting your research

Nov. 27: Presentations

Nov. 29: TBA

Dec. 4: Presentations

Dec. 6: Presentations

Ethnographic portfolio due