

Graduate Program in Communications Studies
Advanced Research Methods - COMS741
Fall 2000

Professor: Timothy Buell

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Office Hours: Monday 11-2

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Day & Time: Thursdays 10:00 am - 12:50 pm

Course Website: www.ucalgary.ca/buell/coms741.html

Course Description

Doing violence to those we seek to represent comes with the territory. Misrepresentation is part of telling stories about people's lives, our own included. The issue is whether to skirt or to face head on such complicities. (Lather, P. 1999:4)

Drawing on case studies, "how to" materials, and writings from a variety of disciplines, this course is designed to help guide graduate students in how to think about, negotiate, and "do" methods in their research. We will focus on the theory, logic, and practice of fieldwork, specific methodological and ethical issues associated with studying people at first-hand, and current debates about what constitutes the bounds and limits of the ethnographic enterprise more generally.

Course Objectives

In the last two decades, emerging theories in qualitative research have drawn attention to the complexities inherent in research. In light of these theories, research can no longer be regarded unproblematic, objective, or value free, where data is neutrally and naturally collected, interpreted and textualized by disinterested researchers. Rather, research methodology has become a problematized and contested terrain depicting a double crisis of representation and legitimation. What is (and why) this double crisis? And what implications might it have for the field of qualitative research and for the researcher working (in) that field?

Attempting to answer those questions and the various issues underlying them is the primary objective of this course. We will do this by combining a theoretical and practical approach to the study of qualitative methodology in order to "learn to attend to the politics of what we do and do not do (as researchers)" (Lather, P. 1991: 13) and "to 'read out' the epistemologies in our various practices" (Hartsock, 1987: 206). The second objective of the course is to explore both the "hows" or research (providing ample opportunities for you to "practice" them) and, at the same time, examine the underlying assumptions and values of qualitative research practices —your own as well as a variety of other strategies and orientations.

The third and overarching objective of this course is to examine not only how one goes about “doing” those aspects of one’s work but also delve into a variety of ethical, epistemological, ontological and (naturally) methodological issues inherent in that “doing.”

Expected Learning Outcomes:

- Increased awareness of ethnographic work, including conceptualizing a study, observations, interviewing, analysis, and textualization;
- To learn to attend to the politics of what we do and do not do (as researchers). ☑ Increase critical thinking skills.
- Demonstrate this by seriously considering multiple viewpoints and perspectives in class discussions, in-class writing, group work, and the final paper.
- Apply course material to your own research. Demonstrate this through participation in in-class discussions and activities, and in applying course concepts to class assignments.
- Become active in the process of seeking, analyzing, and synthesizing information.

Required Texts

Van Maanen, John. 1899. *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Becker, Howard. 1998. *Tricks of the Trade. How to Think About Your Research While Doing It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Course pack

Requirements and Grades

This course is a graduate seminar course and, as such, will be mostly conducted as guided conversation/discussion. You will be expected to contribute to each of our learning through your active participation in class discussions/conversations.

The requirements for the course are:

Five reading responses/reflective journal entries (20%)

1. Interview Assignment (20%)
2. Critiquing a dissertation’s methodology (20%)
3. IRB and Informed Consent (10%)
4. Research Proposal (30%)

Five reading responses/reflective journal entries

You are required to write a set of five short (3-5 pages) reading responses to a group of readings that will be used/shared in class. **With the exception of the Becker book it is up to you to choose the set of readings that you will respond to.** These on-going short assignments may include either (a) a response to a, several, or all the readings assigned for class; (b) a commentary on readings for the previous class (following our class discussion) or (c) a response to reflection on an of the class interactions/discussions, etc. about issues relating to course topics.

The focus of a Reading Response (which should go beyond summary to include commentary and questions you are left with having engaged the reading/s) can be directed either toward a particular reading assigned for that day's class or to the readings as a whole—comparing them and possibly relating them to other readings, etc. Journal entries should be a critical reflection on a class discussion or interaction or on one (or a combination of several) of the course readings following our discussion in a previous class. Journal entries could relate to your own academic area of interest and/or (or as they pertain) to what you find to be significant issues addressed by the readings and/or during our in-class discussions—in a way, deconstructing, deepening, or extending them. Responses are to be handed in at the beginning a class.

Interview Assignment: due October 14th (20 points)

For this assignment you will select a person (or a group of people) and conduct an interview with them. Your paper should provide: (a) a brief description of the person/people you interviewed, why you interviewed them, and what you hope to achieve through this interview (what you hoped to learn); (b) an interview protocol; (c) a transcript of the interview; (d) an analysis of the interview. The analysis should include two dimensions: 1) what you learned about the topic you were inquiring about through this interview, and 2) what you learned methodologically from this interview. That is, what you learned as a researcher about interviewing from this experience and how might you use what you learned in your future research.

Critiquing a dissertation's methodology: due November 18th (20 points)

(not simply its methods but its methodology). For this assignment, you should select a dissertation (there are various of those in the library) and, using what we have learned in the course, provide a critique of its methodology. By critique I do not mere criticism (this is what is bad with this dissertation) but rather a way to explore—conduct a critical conversation with—the politics of knowledge production in that dissertation: what is the dissertation about? How did the researcher go about producing and making claims to knowledge? What methods did the researcher use? Do you believe those methods were conducive to answer the study's particular questions and make its particular claims to knowledge and knowing? If so, how? If not, why? To what degree do you believe the methods used in this study matched/enhanced/contradicted the epistemological understandings underlying the topic being studied (in other words, did the study produce a methodology or merely a set of methods)? What do you believe are some of the methodological strengths of this study (and why do you believe that)? What do you believe are some of the methodological weaknesses of this study (and why do you believe that)? What did you learn from this critique about conducting qualitative about conducting qualitative research? How might this knowledge direct you in thinking about your own study? **What are some of the notes absences and silences in this study? On what is this study's methodology silent? Why? With what consequences? How, if at all, does this study deal with the ethical issues and those pertaining to power?**

IRB and Informed Consent: due November 18th (10)

Complete the online IRB training. Reflect on the process. What methodological questions does this exercise raise for you. Also complete an Informed Consent form for your project. Again, provide a reflection on this process and the document you produce.

Final paper: due December 10th (20 points)

The purpose of this assignment is to “consolidate” your learning in/from this course. The intent is for you to use this assignment to begin writing (or to consolidate) your research proposal. Your research proposal should include the following: 1) an explanation of the “problem” to be studied; 2) your research questions; 3) a review of the literature that contextualizes the “problem” and identified gaps in the literature your study hopes to fill in; 4) the ontological, epistemological, and methodological lenses and frames you are bringing to your research; 5) explanation of your choice of location, participants, etc. and the methods (strategies) to be applied in your study (those ought to correlate with what you provided in #4. **Also: gaining access, your role as researcher, how are you going to deal with ethical and power issues pertaining to your study.**

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Week One: September 9th . Introduction to Fieldwork and Ethnography

Atkinson, Paul and Martyn Hammersley. “ethnography and Participant Observation,” In Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (eds.) Handbook of Qualitative Research. Sage, 1994.

Atkinson, Paul. “Ethnography and the Representation of Reality,” in Robert Emerson (ed.) Contemporary Field Research: Perspectives and Formulations. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 2001.

Hammersley, Martyn. “Ethnography and Realism,” in Robert Emerson (ed.) Contemporary Field Research: Perspectives and Formulations. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 2001.

Week Two: September 16th . Defining Fieldwork and Ethnography

Van Maanen, John. Chp. 1 (“Fieldwork, Culture, Ethnography”), Chp. 2 (“In Pursuit of Culture”) in Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography. University of Chicago Press, 1988.

Geertz, Clifford. “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture,” pp. 3-30 in The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Geertz, Clifford. “deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,” in The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays. New York: Basic Books, 1973. Emerson et al. “Fieldnotes in Ethnographic research,” In Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes. University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Week Three: September 23rd . Sites, Settings, and Entry

Anderson, Elijah. “The Setting,” pp. 1-29 in A Place on the Corner. Chicago. The University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Meyerhoff, Barbara. "So what do you want from us here?" pp. 1-39 in Number our Days: Culture and Community Among Elderly Jews in an American Ghetto. New York: Penguin, 1979.

Liebow, Elliot. "A Soft Beginning." Pp. vii-xxi in Tell Them Who I Am. NY: The Free Press, 1993.
Markham, Annette. "Going Online," Chapter 1 in Life Online: Researching Real Experience in Virtual Space. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira, 1998.

Week Four: September 30th . Field Relations: Self and Other

Bourgois, Philippe. "Violating Apartheid in the United States," pp. 19-47 in In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Duneier, Mitchell and Hakim Hassan. "Introduction' and "Afterword," in Sidewalk. NY: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1999.

Zavella, Patricia. "Feminist Insider Dilemmas: Constructing Ethnic Identity with Chicana Informants,' pp. 138-159 in Diane Wolf (ed) Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996.

Lavie, Smadar. "The One Who Writes Us," pp. 287-308 in The Poetics of Military Occupation. University of California Press, 1990.

Week Five: October 7th . Questions of Power and Privilege

Hughes, Everett. "Who Studies Whom?" Human Organization. 33, 1974: 209-215
hooks, bell. "Is Paris Burning?" pp 145-156 in Black Looks: Race and Representation. Boston: South End Press, 1992.

Twine, France Winddance. "Racial Ideologies and Racial Methodologies," in France Winddance Twine and Jonathan Warren (eds.) Racing Research, Researching Race: Methodological Dilemmas in Critical Race Studies. New York University Press, 2000.

Nadar, Laura. "Up the Anthropologist—Perspectives Gained From Studying Up," pp. 456-470 in Johnetta Cole (ed.). Anthropology from the Eighties. New York: The Free Press, 1982.

Gusterson, Hugh. "Studying Up Revisited." Political and Legal Anthropology Review. Vol. 20, No.1 (May 1997): 114-119.

Week Six: October 14th . Rethinking Observation. From Method to Context

Hermes, Mary. 1998. "Research Methods as a Situated Response: Towards a First Nations' Methodology." Qualitative Studies in Education 11:155-168.

Segall, Avner 2001. "Critical Ethnography and the Invocation of Voice: From the field/in the Field—Single Exposure, Double Standard?" Lather Patti 2001. "Validity as an Incitement of Discourse."

Kemmis, Stephen and Robin McTaggart. 2000. "Participatory Action Research." Pp. 567-606 in *Handbook of Qualitative Research, Second Edition*, edited by N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

RECOMMENDED

Kincheloe, Joe and Peter McLaren 2000. "Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research." Pp. 279-313 in *Handbook of Qualitative Research, Second Edition*, edited by N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Week Seven: October 21st . Ethics

Jackson, Bruce. "Being Fair," in Fieldwork. Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Horowitz, Richard. "Just Stories of Ethnographic Authority," in Carolyn Bretell (ed.) When They Read What We Write: The Politics of Ethnography. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1993.

Thorne, Barrie. "'You Still Takin' Notes?' Fieldwork and the Problems of Informed Consent," Social Problems 27(3), Feb. 1980: 284-297.

Grindstaff, Laura. 2000 "Epilogue: Airing Another Kind of Dirty Laundry," in The Money Shot: Trash, Class, and the Making of TV Talk Shows. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Jackson, Bruce. "The Perfect Informant." Pp. 206-226 in Bruce Jackson and Edward Ives (eds.) Reflections on the Fieldwork Process. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996.

RECOMMENDED

Wax, Murray. "Paradoxes of Consent to the Practice of Fieldwork." Social Problems 27(3) Feb. 1980: 272-283

Week Eight: October 28th . Interviewing

Jackson, Bruce. "Interviewing," in Fieldwork. Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Ostrander, Susan. "Surely You're Not in This Just to be Helpful." (pp 7-27) and Thomas, Robert. "Interviewing Important People in Big Companies" (pp. 80-90) in Journal of Contemporary Ethnography. 22 (1) (April 1993).

Nippert-Eng, Christena. "Appendix: Consent Form and Interview Questionnaire." Pp. 293-306 in Home and Work: Negotiating Boundaries through Everyday Life. Chicago/London. The University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Montell, Frances. "Focus Croup Interviews: A New Feminist Method," The National

Women's

Studies Association Journal 11(1) Spring 1999: 44-71.

RECOMMENDED

DeVault, Marjorie. "Talking and Listening from Women's Standpoint: Feminist Strategies for Interviewing and Analysis," Social Problems. 37(1) (February 1990): 96-115.

Week Nine: November 4th . Documenting and Analyzing

Lindlof, Thomas. "Creating and Analyzing Texts in the Field," In Qualitative Communication Research Methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 1995.

Lareau, Annette. 2000. "Appendix: Common Problems in Field Work: A Personal Essay." Pp 187-223 in Home Advantage: Social Class and Parental Intervention in Elementary Education. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Duneier, Mitchell. "Appendix: A Statement on Method" in Sidewalk. NY: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1999.

Week Ten: November 11th . More Documenting and Analyzing

Emerson et al. Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Richardson, Laurel. "Writing: a Method of Inquiry," in Denzin and Lincoln (eds.) Handbook of Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1991, pp. 516-29.

Atkinson, Paul and Amanda Coffey. "Realism and Its Discontents: on the Crisis of Cultural Representation in Ethnographic Texts," pp. 41-57 in Barbara Adam and Stuart Allan (eds.) Theorizing Culture: AN Interdisciplinary Critique after Postmodernism. NY: New York University Press.

Week Eleven: November 18th . IRB and Informed Consent DUE

Complete the online IRB training.

Week Twelve: November 25th . READING WEEK - NO CLASSES

Week Thirteen: December 2nd . The Ethnographic Text: Writing and Representation

Hammersley, Martyn and Paul Atkinson. "Writing Ethnography," in Ethnography: Principles in Practice, 2nd Edition. London/NY: Routledge, 1995.

Richardson, Laurel. "Writing: a Method if Inquiry," in Denzin and Lincoln (eds.). Handbook of Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1991, pp 516-529.

Atkinson, Paul and Amanda Coffey. "Realism and Its Discontents: on the Crisis of Cultural Representation in Ethnographic Texts," pp 41-57 in Barbara Adam and Stuart Allan (eds.) Theorizing Culture: An Interdisciplinary Critique after Postmodernism. NY: New York

University Press.

Week Fourteen – Fifteen December 9 & 15 WRAP UP

Closing comments and informal presentations.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

This course is conducted in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP). As one consequence, **students should identify themselves on all written work by placing their name on the front page and their ID number. Also you will be required to provide a piece of picture identification in order to pick up an assignment or look at a final exam from SS320 after classes have ended.**

For more information see also <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, although to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Grading System

The following grading system is used in the Department of Communication and Culture:

	Grading Scale
A+	96-100
A	90-95.99
A -	85-89.99
B+	80-84.99
B	75-79.99
B-	70-74.99
C+	65-69.99
C	60-64.99
C-	55-59.99
D+	53-54.99
D	50-52.99
F	0-49

Where a grade on a particular assignment is expressed as a letter grade, it will normally be converted to a number using the midpoint of the scale. That is, A- would be converted to 87.5 for calculation purposes. F will be converted to zero.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin.

This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such sources. Please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor Taylor Family Digital Library, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>) if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link;
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of the course.

Students' Union

For details about the current Students' Union contacts for the Faculty of Arts see
<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html>

Student Ombudsman

For details on the Student Ombudsman's Office see
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

Emergency Evacuation and Assembly points

For information on the emergency evacuation procedures and the assembly points see
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

"SAFEWALK" Program -- 220-5333

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night -- call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot booths.

Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see The Department of Communication and Culture Research Ethics site: <http://www.comcul.ucalgary.ca/ethics> or the University of Calgary Research Ethics site: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/cfreb>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

A daily schedule of lectures and readings, as well as detailed assignment descriptions, will be handed out on the first day of class.