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# *Anthropological Field Methods*

## *ANTH 4011*

*WH 121. MWF 9:00-9:50am*

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Anthropologists “think” and “see” the world very differently than the average person. Perhaps it is both our pride and our curse that we are so “awake” to culture. When one begins to see things through the eyes of an anthropologist it’s as if a switch gets turned on...and stays stuck there. It’s when culture goes beyond our National Geographic imaginations and ventures into the minutiae of people’s everyday routines. This class is a workshop...this syllabus, a living document...where we will walk the footsteps of the anthropologist’s mind and train not only to see but to wrestle with culture. We begin with the most difficult culture to face, our own...

### Instructor

Professor Melissa Nelson  
melissa.nelson@unt.edu

### Office Hours

W/F 12:00-2:00pm

### Office

Department of Anthropology  
Chilton Hall, Rm. 330E  
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### Attendance

Everyone starts out with 100 points. 5 point deduction for unexcused absences. Excused absences are accompanied by a doctor’s note or at the instructor’s discretion if notified prior to the missed lecture. Two consecutive tardies= 1 absence.

### Concept Papers (5 papers)

Take home essay questions designed to help you think through some of the themes of fieldwork and ethnography. **200-300 words.**

### Fieldnote Reflections (4 reflections)

Take home essay questions following each fieldwork exercise (4x). These assignments are practice in analyzing your experiential work in terms of the concepts we are discussing in class. **300-500 words.**

### Midterm Exam

A take home essay targeting a concept based question.  
**500-700 words.**

### Final Exam

A take home essay that develops an original research question based on preliminary research encounters.  
**1000-1500 words.**

### Grade Breakdown

Attendance 5%  
Concept Papers 15%  
Fieldnote Reflections 15%  
Midterm 25%  
Final 40%

## *Formatting*

(margins) 1 inch (font) Times, 12 pt. (spacing) 1.5

Monday		Wednesday		Friday	
8/28	"The Ethnographer" by Borges (pgs. 334-335)	8/30	"Fieldwork as Art?" by "Wolcott (pgs. 15-24)	9/1	"Preface: For the Student" by Marti (pgs. xi-xii) <b>AND</b> "Methods: What are Methods?" by Madden (pgs. 24-34)
9/4	No Class	9/6	"Ethnography and Participant Observation" by Atkinson and Hammersley (pgs. 248-260)	9/8	"A Dispute in Donggo" by Monaghan & Just (pgs. 13-33) <b>HW: Concept Paper #1</b>
9/11	"Characterising Ethnography?" by Madden (pgs. 15-24) <b>Training Exercise: KULTURE CLUB INFILTRATION</b>	9/13	"In Pursuit of Culture" by Van Maanan (pgs. 13-44)	9/15	"Bee Larvae and Onion Soup: Culture" by Monaghan & Just (pgs. 34-52)
9/18	"Discipline and Practice" by Gupta and Ferguson (pgs. 1-46) <i>Fieldnotes Reflections on:</i> <b>KULTURE CLUB INFILTRATION</b>	9/20	"Participant-Observation" by Marti (pgs. 45-56)	9/22	"Field" trip to Starbucks  Debrief on Kulture Club Infiltration Exercise
9/25	"Being With People" by Madden <b>HW: Concept Paper #2</b>	9/27	"Body Ritual Among the Nacirema" by Miner (pgs. 503-507) <b>AND</b> "Studying at Home" by Marti (pgs. 11-16) <b>Training Exercise: AN EXTRA-ORDINARY DAY</b>	9/29	"How Native is a 'Native' Anthropologist" by Narayan (pgs. 671-686) <i>Fieldnotes Reflections on:</i> <b>AN EXTRA-ORDINARY DAY</b>
10/2	"The Perceiver and the Perceived" by Marti (pgs. 27-38) <b>MIDTERM EXAM RELEASED</b>	10/4	Debrief on An EXTRA-Ordinary Day Exercise	10/6	TBD Reading on Reflexivity
10/9	"On Ethnographic Authority" by Clifford (pgs. 118-146) <b>Training Exercise: FINDING A FIELD-SITE</b>	10/11	<b>Midterm Exam Due</b>	10/13	"Breaking Anthropologists' Taboos" by Marti (pgs. 3-10) <b>AND</b> "Access" by Hammersley and Atkinson (pgs. 54-79) Preliminary Field-Site Vetting Discussions

10/16	"How Should I Act in the Field?" by Marti (pgs. 17-25)	10/18	"Field Relations" by Hammersley and Atkinson (pgs. 80-123)	10/20	READING TBD <b>HW: Concept Paper #3</b>
10/23	"Interviews" by Marti (pgs. 67-76) AND "Conversation & Interviewing" by Madden (pgs. 64-75)	10/25	Discussion: Problems at the Field-site	10/27	Discussion: Problems at the Field-Site <b>HW: Concept Paper #4</b>
10/30	"Jottings" by Marti (pgs. 57-65) AND "Description: Writing 'Down' Fieldnotes" by Madden (pgs. 117-135) AND "Notes on (Field)notes" by Clifford (pgs. 47-70)	11/1	Fieldnotes Exercise in Class	11/3	Open Discussion on Themes <i>Fieldnotes Reflections on:</i> <b>PRELIMINARY FIELDWORK RESEARCH</b>
11/6	Presentations on Preliminary Field Research & Focusing a Research Question	11/8	Presentations on Preliminary Field Research & Focusing a Research Question	11/10	Presentations on Preliminary Field Research & Focusing a Research Question
11/13	In Class: <b>Concept Paper #5</b>	11/15	Guest Speaker	11/17	Guest Speaker <b>Training Exercise: WHERE IS MY QUESTION?</b> <i>Fieldnotes Reflections on:</i> <b>FORMULATING A RESEARCH QUESTION</b>
11/20	Practice Penning a Research Question	11/22	Practice Penning a Research Question	11/24	No Class
11/27	Research Question Presentations	11/29	Research Question Presentations	12/11	Research Question Presentations
12/4	Research Question Presentations	12/6	Wrap-Up: Last Class		



## *Works Cited*

- "The Ethnographer" in Collected Fictions  
Borges, J.L., 1998. Trans. By Andrew Hurley. Penguin Books: pp. 334-335.
- "Fieldwork as Art?" in The Art of Fieldwork.  
Wolcott, Harry. 2005. Altamira Press: Walnut Creek... pp.15-24.
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- "The Perceiver and the Perceived" in Starting Fieldwork: Methods and Experiences.  
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"Interviews" in Starting Fieldwork: Methods and Experiences.

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"Conversation & Interviewing" in Being Ethnographic: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography.

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