Syllabus for Design Anthropology

ANTH 4701/5110 | Dr. Christina Wasson | University of North Texas
Fall 2014 | W 6-8:50pm | Env 115

Course Description

In recent years, ethnography has become popular with designers of products and technologies as a way of learning about the experience of the users. This research approach has been applied to such diverse problems as:

- How to design office environments that encourage groupwork and collaboration
- How to design websites that fit the "mental models" and usage patterns of their target audiences
- How to design museum exhibits that maximize the engagement between visitors and displays

"Design anthropology" is a significant field of employment for those who wish to work in applied anthropology as well as design. In this course, students learn the fundamentals of the field. By collaborating on an applied project, they gain practice in applied research methods and video ethnography. Since students come from a mix of anthropology, design, and other disciplinary backgrounds, they also learn to engage in cross-disciplinary collaboration. Furthermore, they gain experience in working with clients to translate research into practical applications. Methodology and practice are situated in theoretical contexts through weekly discussion of readings in design anthropology.

In fall 2014, the class project will be an exploratory ethnographic study of the social life of the car. Our client is the Nissan Research Center Silicon Valley, which focuses on the development of driving assistance and self-driving cars. We will be working with Brigitte Jordan, a distinguished business anthropologist who has a standing consulting relationship with Nissan (http://www.lifescapes.org).

Office Hours and Communication with Instructor

My office is Chilton 330D. My office hours are Wednesdays 3-5. I would also be happy to meet at other times. You can make an appointment by calling me at 940 565 2752, or emailing me at christina.wasson@unt.edu.

Online Course Resources

Course materials are available at http://untdesignanth2014.wordpress.com. Some items are password-protected. The password will be shared in class.

There is also an email list for the class. Its address is design-anth@unt.edu.

Required Texts

A required set of articles is available on the Wordpress site for the course.

The reading assignments for each week are summarized in the course schedule, below, and article references are provided in detail at the end of the syllabus. Readings are **not** optional. Students will be thoroughly tested on them.

Project Overview: The Social Life of the Car

Research goals
This exploratory ethnographic study will generate a foundational understanding of how Americans understand and drive their cars. The study will lay the groundwork for future ethnographic research projects that take a deeper look at more narrowly defined topics.

The research questions for this study will be:
- Mapping out the social life of the car, that is, specifying the web of relationships and contexts in which the car is embedded
- Making driving visible – in parallel to Lucy Suchman's concept of "Making Work Visible" – what actually happens when people are driving? What do their interactions look like with different aspects of the car, its spaces, technologies, and tools, and other people inside or outside the car?

We will translate the research findings into design implications for driving assistance and future self-driving cars.

Research participants
- Recruited by students
- Located in Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex
- Mix of age, gender, income, race/ethnicity, but no quotas
- Car types
  - If anyone knows someone who drives a Leaf that would be cool but not required
  - Look for some cars with driver assistance, but in general just average cars
- Ensure a variety in terms of occupancy and purpose of trip

Fieldwork methods
Students will work in teams of two, interviewer and videographer. They will conduct three fieldwork activities, all videorecorded:
1. Pre-driving interview
   - ½ hour interview at home
2. Participant observation of driving
   - ½ to 2 hours in car
   - Include in-situ question-asking about driving difficulties
3. Post-driving interview
   - A week or so after the first fieldwork, to give researchers time to prepare follow-up questions
   - 1-2 hours at home of study participant

Documentation of fieldwork
- After the interview, the team will write careful fieldnotes. They will **place their fieldnotes and video clips from the interview on the Wordpress site for the class**, making sure to password-protect them.
- Students will sign up for a day to present findings from their fieldwork in class.

Data analysis
Much of the analysis process will be done in class, as a collective group. Data analysis will follow a trajectory of identifying instances, patterns, and models, and then using the models to develop design recommendations.

Report
Through collaborative in-class analysis, students will develop a list of topics to cover in the client report. Each student will write a chapter, or possibly students will team up to write chapters, depending on how many topics we end up with. They will analyze everyone's fieldnotes and videoclips to identify overall patterns regarding the topic of their chapter. Students will also present the information verbally during the final client presentation, with a couple of PowerPoint slides.

Client meetings
We will have three client meetings during the semester. On each occasion, Brigitte Jordan will visit us in Denton during regular class time.
1. An initial meeting, in **week 2, Sep 3**. This will be an opportunity for Brigitte to explain the project background and for everyone to meet face-to-face.
2. A meeting halfway through the project to check in, make sure we're on the right track, and get ideas. **Week 9**.
3. The final client presentation. **Finals week, Dec 10**.

Course Requirements

1. Teamwork and participation (20%).
One of the key skills of a practitioner in applied anthropology is the ability to work well as part of a team. In this class, you will be evaluated on your teamwork skills, including:
- Active and thoughtful participation in class discussions, both about class readings and about the class project
- Staying focused on the client's needs
- Good communication and collaboration with your fieldwork partner
- Equal distribution of work between you and your fieldwork partner
- Carrying out your responsibilities in a timely manner
- Good communication with the team leader/professor

Obviously, if you are absent you cannot contribute to discussions, so a high level of attendance is required for a good grade. If you have more than one unexcused absence, your grade will go down. If you miss the first class, you may be dismissed from class, as there is a waiting list. If you miss two out of the first three classes, you may be dismissed from class.

Students are responsible for all materials and announcements presented in class, whether or not they were there. If you miss a day, you should first obtain class notes from a classmate. If you still have questions after that, you are welcome to contact me. Failure to stay current on all class material and assignments, regardless of attendance, will be cause for dismissal from class.

2. Two take-home essay quizzes (15% x 2).
These quizzes will test you on the readings. Instructions for each will be handed out two weeks before they are due.

3. Class project (50%).
The class project consists of a series of activities. Together these will add up to 50% of your course grade. For most of the activities, you will turn in several items. You will receive a grade when you have turned in all items for that activity.

In week 2, each team will sign up for a day to share their interview findings. That date will become your deadline to complete the items for Activities 2-4.

Activity	*Items Graded*	*% of Grade*
1. IRB Tutorial	• IRB Completion Certificate	N/A (gateway assignment)
2. Pre-driving interview	• Field Notes Uploaded to Website • Video Clips Uploaded to Website	5
3. Driving participant observation	• Field Notes Uploaded to Website • Video Clips Uploaded to Website	10
4. Post-driving interview	• Field Notes Uploaded to Website • Video Clips Uploaded to Website • Present Fieldwork Data in Class	15
5. Report	• Chapter of Written Report • Slides for Client Presentation • Verbal Presentation (if relevant)	20

Plagiarism Policy
The department of anthropology does not tolerate plagiarism, cheating, or helping others to cheat. Students suspected of any of these will be provided the opportunity for a hearing; a guilty finding will merit an automatic "F" in the course. In addition, I reserve the right to pursue further disciplinary action within the UNT legal system, which may result in dismissal from the university. Plagiarism is defined as misrepresenting the work of others (whether published or not) as your own. It may be inadvertent or intentional. Any facts, statistics, quotations, or paraphrasing of any information that is not common knowledge, should be cited. For more information on paper writing, including how to avoid plagiarism, and how to use citations, see http://anthropology.unt.edu/resources-writingpaper.php. For information on the University's policies regarding academic integrity and dishonesty, see the UNT Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities, http://www.unt.edu/csrr/.

Non-Discrimination Policy
It is the policy of the University of North Texas not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex,

age, national origin, disability (where reasonable accommodations can be made), disabled veteran status or veteran of the Vietnam era status in its educational programs, activities, admissions or employment policies. In addition to complying with federal and state equal opportunity laws and regulations, the university through its diversity policy declares harassment based on individual differences (including sexual orientation) inconsistent with its mission and education goals. Direct questions and concerns to the Equal Opportunity Office, 940 565 2456, or the Dean of Students, 940 565 2648. TDD access is available through Relay Texas, 800 735 2989.

Anthropology does not discriminate on the basis of an individual's disability as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. The program provides academic adjustments and aid to individuals with disabilities in its programs and activities. If you have a disability, you are strongly advised to contact the Office of Disability Accommodations (UU 318A) or by telephone at 940 565 4323. **It is the responsibility of the student to make the necessary arrangements with the instructors.**

Course Schedule

	Reading Topics and Assignments	Readings to Complete Before Class	Project Activities During Class
WEEK 1 Aug 25	Introduction and Course Objectives **Receive Instructions for IRB Online Tutorial**	N/A	Introduction to Project
WEEK 2 Sep 3	Design Anthropology/Ethnography of Cars **Completion Certificate Due for IRB Online Tutorial**	Wasson 2000 Young 2001	**Client Meeting** Choose Partner, Sign Up for Presentations
WEEK 3 Sep 10	Design Anthropology/Ethnography of Cars	Suchman 2005 Verrips and Meyer 2001	Design Fieldnotes Template and Finalize Interview Guide Training in Interviewing and Video Recording
WEEK 4 Sep 17	Design Anthropology/Analysis Methods	Wasson 2002 Ryan and Bernard 2003	Training in Fieldnotes and Analysis
WEEK 5 Sep 24	Design Anthropology/Ethnography of Cars	Wasson and Squires 2012 Healey 2013	
WEEK 6 Oct 1	Design Anthropology/Ethnography of Cars **Receive Quiz 1 Instructions**	Kersey 2014 Zafiroglu 2013	Three Teams Present Data Class Analyzes Data
WEEK 7 Oct 8	Design Research/ Psychology in Design Research	Frankel and Racine 2010 Norman 1988	Three Teams Present Data Class Analyzes Data
WEEK 8 Oct 15	Psychology in Design Research **Quiz 1 Due**	Norman 2007 Bannon 1991	Three Teams Present Data Class Analyzes Data
WEEK 9 Oct 22	Psychology in Design Research	Sunderland and Denny 2003	**Client Meeting** Class Analyzes Data
WEEK 10 Oct 29	Participatory Design **Receive Quiz 2 Instructions**	Ehn 1993	Class Analyzes Data Prepare Client Report and Presentation
WEEK 11 Nov 5	Recent Critical Approaches	Leach and Wilson 2013 Bala 2013	Prepare Client Report and Presentation Assign Chapters for Client Report

WEEK 12 Nov 12	**Quiz 2 Due**	N/A	Prepare Client Report and Presentation
WEEK 13 Nov 19	**Report Chapter and PPT Slides Due**	N/A	Finalize Client Report and Presentation
WEEK 14 Nov 26	**Revisions to Chapter and PPT Slides Due**	N/A	NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING
WEEK 15 Dec 3		N/A	Rehearse Presentation Send Report to Client
FINALS Dec 19			**Client Presentation**

Full References for Readings

Bala, Poline. 2013. Redeploying technologies: ICT for greater agency and capacity for political engagement in the Kelabit Highlands. In *Subversion, conversion, development: Cross-cultural knowledge exchange and the politics of design*, ed. James Leach and Lee Wilson. Cambridge: MIT Press, 105-126.

Bannon, Liam. 1991. From human factors to human actors: The role of psychology and human-computer interaction studies in system design. In *Design at work: Cooperative design of computer systems*, ed. Joan Greenbaum and Morton Kyng. Hillsdale, NU: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 25-44.

Ehn, Pelle. 1993. Scandinavian design: On participation and skill. In *Participatory design: Principles and practices*, ed. Douglas Schuler and Aki Namioka. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 41-77.

Frankel, Lois and Martin Racine. 2010. The complex field of research: For design, through design, and about design. *Proceedings of the Design Research Society International Conference*. Montreal, 7-9 July.

Healey, Jennifer. 2013. Car smarts. In *Radical Flux*, ed. Tony Salvador. Portland: Intel Corporation, 87-94.

Kersey, Jennifer Cardew. 2014. Beyond research: Adding value as an anthropologist. Pra*cticing Anthropology* 26(2):37-40.

Leach, James and Lee Wilson. 2013. Anthropology, cross-cultural encounter, and the politics of design. In *Subversion, conversion, development: Cross-cultural knowledge exchange and the politics of design*, ed. James Leach and Lee Wilson. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1-6 (excerpt).

Norman, Donald. 1988. The psychopathology of everyday things. In *The design of everyday things*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1-33.

Norman, Donald. 2007. Servants of our machines. In *The design of future things*. New York: Basic Books, 91-116.

Ryan, Gery W. and H. Russell Bernard. 2003. Techniques to identify themes. *Field Methods* 15(1):85-109.

Suchman, Lucy. 1995. Making Work Visible. *Communications of the ACM* 38(9):56-64.

Sunderland, Patricia L. and Rita M. Denny. 2003. Psychology vs anthropology: Where is culture in marketplace ethnography? In *Advertising cultures*, ed. Timothy deWaal Malefyt and Brian Moeran. Oxford: Berg, 187-202.

Verrips, Jojada and Birgit Meyer. 2001. Kwaku's car: The struggles and stories of a Ghanaian long-distance taxi-driver. In *Car Cultures*, ed. Daniel Miller. Oxford: Berg, 153-184.

Wasson, Christina. 2000. Ethnography in the field of design. *Human Organization* 59(4):377-388.

Wasson, Christina. 2002. Collaborative work: Integrating the roles of ethnographers and designers. In *Creating breakthrough ideas: The collaboration of anthropologists and designers in the product development industry*, ed. Susan Squires and Bryan Byrne. Westport: Bergin & Garvey, 71-90.

Wasson, Christina and Susan Squires. 2012. Localizing the global in the field of technology design. In *Applying anthropology in the global village*, ed. Christina Wasson, Mary Odell Butler and Jacqueline Copeland-Carson. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, 251-284.

Young, Diana. 2001. The life and death of cars: Private vehicles on the Pitjantjatjara Lands, South Australia. In *Car Cultures*, ed. Daniel Miller. Oxford: Berg, 35-57.

Zafiroglu, Alexandra. 2013. Street smarts. In *Radical Flux*, ed. Tony Salvador. Portland: Intel Corporation, 75-86.