

**RESEARCH METHODS
IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY**
Anthropology 412 (CRN 40085) / 512 (CRN 40089)
Winter 2009
MWF 10:15 – 11:20

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to give the student a working familiarity with the tools of anthropological analysis and the techniques of research design. Individually or in groups, students will initiate a field site in the Portland area, performing a study on a topic meaningful to the local community. Within this larger context, students will hone their skills in applying theoretical knowledge to practical research, and will explore various research methods of the discipline, including interviewing and participant observation. For their final projects, students will write a detailed proposal for a hypothetical research project based on preliminary research performed during the quarter. Class readings and discussions will focus not only on research design and methodology but also on ethical and experiential considerations surrounding ethnographic fieldwork and writing. By the end of the class, students should feel confident initiating contacts in a field site, obtaining information through a variety of methods, analyzing data, and crafting proposals.

COURSE PREREQUISITES

Anthropology 304 and/or 305 are strongly recommended.

REQUIRED READINGS

Many class materials are posted on Blackboard (see below). You may either read these documents online or print off a copy for personal use.

Bernard, H. Russell

2006 Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, fourth edition. New York: Altamira Press.

DeVita, Philip R., ed.

2000 Stumbling Toward Truth: Anthropologists at Work. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press.

CLASS REQUIREMENTS

Policy on grades, illness, emergency, and extensions

Students taking this course Pass/ No-Pass are required to earn at least the equivalent of a 'C-' to pass the class. Grades will be based on a quiz (20%), a short essay (35%), and a final individual or group proposal for future study (45%). Students will

make two presentations: an individual presentation of research data and an individual or group proposal presentation. Class attendance and participation are essential and required; students with more than five unexcused absences will not receive a passing grade.

Graduate students can either undertake the same assignments as the undergraduates do or arrange with the instructor to dovetail their work in this class with their thesis research.

Late papers will lose one letter grade for each day past due except in the event of severe illness or emergency. Requests for extensions on deadlines should be made in writing ahead of the due date. All work must be completed for students to receive a passing grade. Students with a documented disability needing accommodations in this course should immediately inform the instructor.

Plagiarism (intellectual theft) is a very serious academic offense. Any assignment containing plagiarized material will receive a failing grade. You are responsible for reading and understanding the department handout on plagiarism posted on Blackboard. Please ask the instructor if you have any questions.

Blackboard

Many class materials, including the syllabus, readings, questions for the quiz, and instructions for the essay and proposal assignments will be posted on Blackboard. Blackboard is accessible at <http://psuonline.pdx.edu/> and its use will be demonstrated on the first day of class. All students can access Blackboard with an Odin username and password. If you do not have an Odin account, you can sign up to get one at <https://www.account.pdx.edu>. Please contact the instructor if you encounter difficulties in accessing this resource.

Take-home Quiz: Analysis of Methodology (20%) (Due Monday 2 February)

Students will read an article (posted on Blackboard) and answer a series of questions about it regarding the research design, methodology, ethical issues, data collection and analysis, and theoretical perspectives employed in the study. Further instructions will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class.

Essay: Analysis of Data (35%) (Due Wednesday 18 February)

Each student, even students working on group projects, will write an individual analysis of data essay. In this assignment, you will elect, describe, and analyze data that you have gathered during your on-going fieldwork. In a 6-page essay, briefly discuss your field site and the specific question you will address. Describe your theoretical approach to the question, and explain the method(s) you used to gather your data. (Possible methods include: participant observation, interviews, life histories, surveys, studies of proxemics, mapping, archival research, photography, etc.) Describe the data you have gathered to answer your question, and interpret and analyze your findings in light of your theoretical approach. Further instructions will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class. **Sample papers** are available for consultation at the Anthropology Department office, 141 Cramer Hall.

Individual Presentation of Data and Analysis (P/NP) (16– 25 February)

Each student will give one 8-minute presentation on his or her research. Students will describe their research site, their specific topic of investigation, the methods they use most often, the data they have gathered, and the analysis of their findings. This presentation can be based on the short data-analysis essay described above or can cover new ground. Sign-up sheets for presentation dates will be circulated early in the quarter.

Proposal for Future Study (45%) Due by noon, Mon. 16 March, 141 Cramer Hall.

Using fieldwork performed during the quarter as a basis, working individually or in groups, students will write a 10-12 page, double-spaced research proposal. Detailed instructions for proposal-writing will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class.

The proposal will require as much research and writing as a term paper.

Work for this proposal will take place in a series of cumulative steps, including initiating a quarter-long research project, writing an annotated bibliography pertaining to this research, writing a first draft of the research proposal, and revising the draft based on feedback from the instructor.

- ◆ **Week 3** (Friday 23 January) Turn in a preliminary statement explaining your chosen research site and project topic. Students may work individually or in groups, and will continue research at their fieldsite throughout the quarter. (Groups may turn in one statement, with all group members' names listed.)
- ◆ **Week 8** (Monday 23 February): Read widely on topics related to your research topic. Turn in an **annotated bibliography** of articles and books of **topical, locational, and theoretical relevance** to your project. Annotated bibliographies for individually-conducted research projects should include at least 10 items; bibliographies for group projects should include at least 8 items selected by each individual, with several other items read by two or more of the group members. (Groups may turn in one bibliography, with all group members' names listed, including indication of who has read and annotated which sources.) (This bibliography will form the basis of the "review of the literature" section in your research proposal.)
- ◆ **Week 9** (Wednesday 4 March): Turn in a **draft** of your group or individual proposal. (Groups should turn in only one document.) This draft will be returned with suggestions and comments. Failing to turn in a draft on the due-date will result in a deduction of 10 points on the assignment grade.
- ◆ **Exam week** (Monday 16 March, by noon): Turn in a final draft of your proposal to the Anthropology Department. (Groups should turn in only one document. All group members will receive the grade assigned to their collective work.)

Sample annotated bibliographies and proposals are available for consultation at the Anthropology Department office.

Individual or Group Proposal Presentation (2 – 13 March) (P/NP)

Working individually or in groups, students will give 12-minute presentations of their proposals. A 5-minute question-and-answer period will follow during which classmates will provide critical and supportive feedback.

MATERIAL POSTED ON Blackboard

Geertz, Clifford

1973 Chapter 1: Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture.
In The Interpretation of Cultures. Pp. 3-30. New York: Basic Books.

American Anthropological Association

1998 Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association.
<http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethicscode.pdf>. Accessed 8
December 2002. Posted June 1998.

2001 Selections from the American Anthropological Association's El Dorado
Task Force Papers. http://www.aaanet.org/edtf/final/vol_one.pdf
Accessed 8 December 2002. Posted 18 May 2002.

Nuremburg Code, Belmont Report, and Informed Consent Requirements

From the PSU application for Human Subjects Research Review

TBA: An article for analysis in conjunction with the Methodology Quiz

Proposal-writing materials

PSU Writing Center: Guide to Writing in Anthropology

PSU Anthropology Department: Documents on Plagiarism

CLASS SCHEDULE

Note: This schedule is subject to adjustment and change.

Readings are referred to as follows:

- RMA: Research Methods in Anthropology (followed by chapter numbers).
Chapters in parenthesis can be skimmed.
- STT: Stumbling Toward Truth (followed by chapter numbers)
- BB: Blackboard materials (followed by description or author's name)
- ADR: Anthropology Department Reserve. Materials are available in the
professor's mailbox; inquire at the main Anthropology Department office
window. You will be asked to leave a photo ID in exchange for borrowed
materials.

Week	Day	Date	Month	Readings, due dates	Class activities
1	M	5	January		Introductions
	W	7		Read: RMA 1; BB Geertz	Is socio-cultural anthropology "scientific"?
	F	9		Read: STT 2, 3, 4	Presentation: CAE on community partners.
2	M	12		Read: RMA 2; STT 7, 10, 11	Variables, measurement, validity
	W	14		Read: RMA 3, 5	Moving between data, analysis, and theory
	F	16		Read: RMA (6), 8	Sampling
3	M	19			PSU Closed: Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday

Week	Day	Date	Month	Readings, due dates	Class activities
3	W	21		Read: BB AAA Ethics statement, El Dorado report; STT 16	Ethics, first person narratives
	F	23		Due: research site and topic selection	Guest lecture: Human Subjects Research
4	M	26		Read: RMA 9, (10), 11, (12)	Interview exercise
	W	28		Read: RMA 13, (15)	Participant observation exercise
	F	30		Read: ADR sample ethnographies	Evaluation of ethnographic projects; Review for quiz
5	M	2	February	Quiz: Methodology	Mapmaking exercise, taping and transcribing
	W	4		Read: RMA 4	Literature reviews
	F	6		Read: STT 17, 18	Kinship exercise, visual anthropology
6	M	9		Read: RMA 16, 17, (18)	Analysis of data
	W	11		Read: RMA (14)	Guest lecture: Dr. Carstens
	F	13		Read: STT 24	Life histories
7	M	16		Read: STT 28, 29	Individual presentations
	W	18		Due: Analysis of data essay	Individual presentations
	F	20			Individual presentations
8	M	23		Due: Annotated bibliography	Individual presentations
	W	25			Individual presentations
	F	27		Read: BB proposal-writing materials	Guest presentation: Writing Center on writing proposals
9	M	2	March		Proposal presentations
	W	4		Due: Draft proposal	Proposal presentations
	F	6			Proposal presentations
10	M	9			Proposal presentations
	W	11			Proposal presentations
	F	13			Proposal presentations
11	M	16		Due: Proposal, by noon, Anth Dept., CH 141.	