Ethnographic Data Collection

Course Description

This course will introduce you to methods of ethnographic data collection. We will devote the first half of the term to learning techniques of behavior observation and interviewing. Systematic behavior observation will be learned through a class project observing children. Interviewing techniques will also be learned in the context of a class project.

During the remaining weeks of the term, students will work on fieldwork projects of their own choice. Class time during this period will be devoted to discussion about the progress and problems that students are facing with their projects, and lectures about other aspects and techniques of fieldwork.

Course Materials

- Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, fourth edition (required)

- Recommended: Martin and Bateson, *Measuring Behaviour: An Introductory Guide*, third edition (highly recommended for EE students; a copy will be on reserve)

- A very few additional articles, available on electronic reserve.

- See the class website http://anthro.utah.edu/~cashdan/fieldmeth for assignments and other materials. There will be no paper handouts other than this syllabus, and information on the web supersedes everything else (including this syllabus).

Course Requirements and Grading

There will be assignments during each of the first nine weeks of the course. These will be graded, with each week’s work weighted equally. There will be no assignments during the last six weeks other than occasional short readings, to allow time for students to work on the individual research projects. The final course grade will be based equally on the individual research project and the written assignments.

This is a “learn by doing” course, and participation is essential. Many of the early classes are group enterprises that cannot be made up if you miss the class. If there is an emergency and you must miss a class, please contact me ahead of time. Late work will be accepted but with a grade penalty of one full grade each week the assignment is late.

Contact Information

My office is 217A Stewart Hall and my office phone is 801-581-4672. Feel free to stop by anytime. If I am not in my office you may reach me via email (ecashdan@gmail.com) or by cellphone (801-918-0762). Please don’t hesitate.
Course Outline

Jan. 12

- **Class:** Introduction to course; art and science of fieldwork

- **Assignment for next week**
  - Read Bernard, chapters 1 (esp. 1–6, 18–27) and 2
  - Read Diamond, “Soft sciences are harder than hard sciences”
  - Read a fieldwork account and write a brief (1 page) review as per the assignment labelled “Fieldwork books” on the course webpage. Use Bernard ch. 1 as a reference. Be prepared to tell the class about it.
  - Complete “hypothesis generation worksheet” on the course webpage (use Bernard ch. 2 as reference if needed)

Jan. 19

- **Class:** Fieldwork reports; informal behavior observation

- **Assignment for next week**
  - Read Bernard pp 146-156 (sampling) and ch. 15 (observation); Martin/Bateson pp 15–18
  - 1/2 hour or more of informal observation of child behavior, with at least one other person (take notes, and compare them afterwards, note similarities and differences).
  - Write down one or more research questions and hypotheses for class project based on your informal observation (bring to class).
  - Sampling exercise (see course webpage).

Jan. 26

- **Class:** systematic behavior observation techniques; prepare code and sample for class exercise.

- **Assignment for next week**
  - read Martin and Bateson 36-41; ch. 5–7
  - behavior observation at Emery preschool (assignment on course webpage)

Feb. 2

- **Class:** Discuss observation experience; coding our data

- **Assignment for next week**
  - Code data collected last week and email to me (instructions on course webpage)
– Design an ethnographic time allocation study (refer to Bernard ch 15) on a topic of interest to you. It should include the research question, hypotheses, a behavior code, and decisions about how to sample and record (2 pages).

Feb. 9

• **Class:** Unstructured interviewing techniques; life histories; film

• **Assignment for next week**
  – Bernard, chs. 9 (unstructured and semistructured interviewing)
  – do two unstructured interviews, and write a critique of your work. See assignment on course webpage.

Feb. 16

• **Class:** Structured interviewing and surveys

• **Assignment for next week**
  – Bernard ch. 10 (structured interviews), 12 (scaling), rest of ch. 3 (157–168)
  – Write some really good questions on the topic we choose in class, and develop a scale to measure something related to this topic (see Bernard ch. 12). Email these to me by Friday noon (plain text, no attachments). I will put these on the class website (anonymously).
  – Write a short critique (about 1 page) of the questions I put up (which ones are poorly-constructed, and why?) to turn in.

Feb 23

• **Class:** Interview assignment; choosing a research topic; research ethics

• **Assignment for next week**
  – Interview 6 people.
  – Write a critique (about 1 page): what worked, what didn’t, what should we have done instead?
  – Decide on a topic for your research project (email me before class so we can discuss).

Mar 2

• **Class:** Develop a code for our interview; literature search

• **Assignment for next week**
  – Code the data from your interview and email to me (I will analyze).
  – Bernard, chs. 4 (literature search)
– Use at least two different electronic databases to research your topic, find about five usable references, and use them to write a brief literature review (max 1 page) of your research question.
– Benard, ch. 5 (research design)

Mar 2
• Class: research design; experiments; power
• Assignment for next week
  – Bernard chs. 8 (choosing informants) and 13 (participant observation)
  – Begin informal research for your project (reconnaissance, unstructured observation and interviewing, trying out methods, etc.).
  – Write a proposal for your fieldwork project (assignment on course website)

Mar 9
• Class: Discuss student research designs; beginning fieldwork; participant observation
• Assignment for next week:
  • Bernard ch. 11 (cultural domain analysis)
  • Data collection on individual projects

Mar 16
• Class: Cultural domain analysis
• Assignment for next week
  – Bernard, ch. 14 (note-taking)
  – Data collection on individual projects

Mar 23: Spring Break

Mar 30
• Class: Fieldnotes, the OCM, and the HRAF
• Assignment for next week
  – Work on individual projects
  – Email me with a progress report about your paper. What have you accomplished thus far? What problems, if any, are you having?

Apr 6
• Class: Censuses; genealogies; social networks
• **Assignment for next week:** Work on individual projects

Apr 13

• **Class:** Outdoor mapping exercise

• **Assignment for next week:** Work on individual projects

April 20

• **Class:** Oral Reports

• **Assignment for next week**
  
  – Work on individual projects
  
  – Email me with a progress report about your paper. What have you accomplished thus far? What problems, if any, are you having?

April 27

• **Class:** Oral Reports

• **Assignment for next week:** Work on individual projects