Ethnographic Methods

http://content.csbs.utah.edu/~cashdan/fieldmeth

Course Description

This course will introduce you to methods of ethnographic data collection. We will begin with an introduction to research design, and will then devote the first half of the term to learning techniques of behavior observation and interviewing. Observation techniques will be learned through a class project observing children. Interviewing techniques will be learned through an individual oral history interview and a class survey.

During the remaining weeks of the term, students will work on a fieldwork project of their own choice. Class time during this period will be devoted to discussion about student projects and lectures about other fieldwork techniques.

Course Materials

- Bernard, Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches, fifth edition, and a few reserve readings.

Course Requirements and Grading

There will be 10 written assignments (6 points each = 60%) and a final report on your individual project, 40%. Assignments will be minimal during the last few weeks of the term, to allow time for students to work on the individual research projects. Written work will be submitted to turnitin.com so that I can comment online. class ID: 10380073, password: methods.

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).
Provisional Course Outline

Aug. 24

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

- **Assignment for next week**
  - Read Bernard, chapters 1 and 2
  - Read Diamond, “Soft sciences are harder than hard sciences” (course webpage)
  - Read one article based on ethnographic fieldwork by any one of the department’s ethnographic faculty\(^1\). Write (turnitin) a brief (max 500 words) summary of the research question and the methods used to answer it. Think about the pros and cons of the methods used (all methods have pros and cons). You may address that in the essay if you wish.

Aug. 31

- **Class:** Discuss articles; intro to research design

- **Assignment for next week**
  - Read Bernard chapters 3 and 4,
  - Fill out (turnitin) the “hypothesis generation worksheet” on the course webpage (don’t bother about the form, just answer the questions).
  - Watch “Social life of small urban spaces” (streamable at Marriott)
  - Write (turnitin) a brief review (max 500 words) of the video. Consider: (a) What was his research question(s)? (b) Name a few variables that he measured, and describe how he measure them. (c) What did he learn about them?

Sept. 7

- **Class:** Labor day, no class

- **Assignment for next week:** Start to think about a topic for your individual fieldwork project. Email me with a few ideas (research questions, or populations, or topics), and I’ll write back.

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\(^1\)Bell, Cashdan, DiPaolo, Hawkes, Jones, Kramer, Macfarlan, Wiessner, Milicic
Sept 14

- **Class:** discuss film, introduction to behavior observation
- **Assignment for next week**
  - Read Bernard ch. 14 (observation)
  - Read Martin and Bateson ch. 3 and 5 on reserve
  - Informal observation: Observe children at Emery Bldg for 30-60 minutes looking for any gender differences in behavior (along with whatever else you find interesting); 30 minutes should be spent observing with a classmate. Take notes (not to turn in) and bring to class.
  - Write down (turnitin) 2 or 3 research questions and hypotheses for our class project, and how we might measure the variable(s) in your hypotheses.

Sept. 21

- **Class:** systematic behavior observation
- **Assignment for next week**
  - read Bernard ch.5 (sampling)
  - do 6 ten-minute behavior observations at Emery preschool (assignment on course webpage)

Sept. 28

- **Class:** Discuss observation experience; coding our data
- **Assignment for next week**
  - Code data collected last week and email to me (instructions on course webpage)
  - Write (turnitin) a brief critique of our study (max 500 words)
  - Read Bernard ch. 8 (unstructured and semistructured interviewing)

Oct. 5

- **Class:** Unstructured interviewing techniques and oral history
- **Assignment for next week**
  - do two oral history interviews
  - write (turnitin) a brief summary and critique of the experience (how did it go? what worked well, what didn’t, what you might do differently next time).
Oct. 12 Fall break

Oct. 19

- **Class**: Structured interviewing and surveys: question construction

- **Assignment for next week**
  - Bernard ch. 9 (questionnaires), 11 (scaling)
  - Write some really good questions on the topic we choose in class, about 6 suitable for a self-administered questionnaire, and 6 for a semi-structured interview (the topic can be the same). Email these to me by Thursday noon. I will put these on the class website.
  - Critique (turnitin) the questions of your classmates: What problems do you see? If you see problems, rewrite the questions to make them better. (Your grade will be based on both your questions and your critique.)

Oct. 26

- **Class**: Discuss class interview project. Research ethics.

- **Assignment for next week**
  - Interview 6 people
  - Submit to turnitin a report on the experience (max 500 words): 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).

Nov 2

- **Class**: Coding our interview data; literature search; how to write a proposal.

- **Assignment for next week**
  - Code the data from your interview and email to me (I will analyze).
  - Begin informal research for your project (e.g., reconnaissance, background info, participant observation)
  - Use at least two different electronic databases to research your topic, find about five usable references
  - Use the references to write (turnitin) the project aims and background sections of your proposal (see assignment on course webpage).
Nov 9

- **Class:** Discussion of projects.
- **Assignment for next week**
  - Read Bernard chs. 7 (nonprobability samples and choosing informants) and 12 (participant observation)
  - Continue informal research for your project and pilot methods
  - Write (turnitin) the methods section of your proposal (see assignment on course website)

Nov 16

- **Class:** Network analysis
- **Assignment for next week**
  - Work on individual projects
  - Bernard ch. 10 (cultural domains)

Nov 23

- **Class:** Cultural domain analysis
- **Assignment for next week:**
  - Bernard, ch. 13 (field notes and database management)
  - Data collection on individual projects

Nov 30

- **Class:** Guest lecture: Fieldwork
- **Assignment for next week**
  - Data collection on individual projects

Dec 7

- **Class:** TBA (Censuses? genealogies? mapping?)
  - **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?

Dec 14

- **Class** Oral Reports on your research