

**Anthro 4169/5169**  
**Wed 2:0–4:30**

**Prof. E. Cashdan**  
**Stewart 103B (Seminar Room)**

## **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 exercise in writing good questions for semi-structured and structured interviews and questionnaires.

During the remaining weeks of the term, students will work on a fieldwork project of their own choice. Assignments will be minimal during the last few weeks of the term, to allow time for students to work on the individual research projects. Class time during this period will be devoted to discussion about student projects, practical fieldwork issues, and lectures on other fieldwork techniques (participant observation, network analysis, cultural domain analysis, and other techniques depending on student interests).

The course will address both qualitative and quantitative methods, with a bias toward the latter, and to scientific approaches within anthropology.

### **Course Materials**

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

### **Course Requirements and Grading**

There will be 8 short written assignments. Written assignments plus satisfactory completion of unwritten assignments will be worth 60%, and a final report on your individual project, 40%. Written work will be submitted to turnitin.com so that I can comment online. See the course website for instructions on using turnitin.com (the course does not use Canvas). The turnitin class ID is 15933488 and the enrollment key is “methods”.

Some homework assignments are described in detail only on the website, so bookmark the site and refer to it regularly.

This is a “learn by doing” course, and participation is essential. Many of the early classes are group projects 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. The best way to reach me is via email ([ecashdan@gmail.com](mailto:ecashdan@gmail.com)).

## Course Outline

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

Aug. 23

- **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<sup>1</sup> or postdocs<sup>2</sup>. The article you choose must describe and analyze ethnographic data collected by one of the authors of the study. To find an article, type their name in google scholar ([scholar.google.com](http://scholar.google.com)). Submit to 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) and address that in the essay also.

Aug. 30

- **Class:** Research design
- **Assignment for next week**
  - Read Bernard chapters 3 and 4.
  - Read “The price of motherhood” (on the course webpage; a great example of experimental thinking in non-experimental research)

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<sup>1</sup>Adrian Bell, Elizabeth Cashdan, Marianna DiPaolo, Kristen Hawkes, Doug Jones, Karen Kramer, Shane Macfarlan, Bojka Milicic

<sup>2</sup>Helen Elizabeth Davis, Ryan Schacht

- Read “Science isn’t broken” (on the course webpage) and do the “assignment” in the article “hack your way to scientific glory.” Find a set of variables showing that Republicans are better for the economy, and another showing that Democrats are better for the economy. Write up a short review of your analyses and what you learned from the exercise, and submit to turnitin.

Sept. 6

- **Class:** research design (continued): sampling, discuss reading
- **Assignment for next week:**
- Read Bernard ch. 5 (sampling), and ch. 14 (observation)
- Watch “Social life of small urban spaces” streamable at Marriott: <https://stream.lib.utah.edu/index.php?c=details&id=1020>. Be prepared to discuss Whyte’s research question, some of the variables he measured, how he measured them, and what he learned about them.
- 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.

Sept 13

- **Class:** introduction to behavior observation
- **Assignment for next week**
  - Read Martin and Bateson ch. 3 and 5 on reserve
  - Observation study (1). See course website for assignment details.

Sept. 20

- **Class:** systematic behavior observation. Examples of systematic behavior observation in anthropology. Recording techniques. Reliability (compare notes).
- **Assignment for next week**
  - Observation study, part 2. Do 6 ten-minute behavior observations at Emery preschool. See course website for instructions.

Sept. 27

- **Class:** Discuss observation experience; coding our data
- **Assignment for next week**
  - Code data collected last week (instructions on course webpage). Enter data on a shared google spreadsheet.
  - Submit to turnitin a brief critique of our study (max 500 words). What did we do right/wrong? How might it be done better?
  - Read Bernard ch. 8 (unstructured and semistructured interviewing)

Oct. 4

- **Class:** Unstructured interviewing techniques and oral history
- **Assignment for next week**
  - Review Bernard ch. 8 and do two oral history interviews (guidelines on course webpage)
  - Submit to turnitin a brief summary and critique of the experience (how did it go, what worked well, what didn't, what might you do differently next time).

Oct. 11 Fall break

Oct. 18

- **Class:** Structured and semi-structured interviews: question construction
- **Assignment for next week**
  - Question construction and critique (3 parts; See instructions on course webpage; you must start this assignment promptly).
  - recommended: ch. 11 (scaling)
  - optional: Warwick and Lininger, chs. 6–7 from *The Sample Survey: Theory and Practice* (on reserve)

Oct. 25

- **Class:** literature search; how to write a proposal.
- **Assignment for next week**
  - Begin informal research for your project, e.g., reconnaissance, background info, participant observation. (Assignment is continued on next page...).

- Use at least two different electronic databases to research your topic, find about five usable references
- Use the references to write the project aims and background sections of your proposal (see assignment on course webpage).

Nov 1

- **Class:** Ethics and the IRB; Discussion of projects
- **Assignment for next week**
  - Continue informal research for your project
  - Submit to turnitin the methods section of your proposal (see assignment on course webpage)

Nov 8

- **Class:** Fieldwork, participant observation, choosing informants
- **Assignment for next week**
  - Read Bernard ch. 7 (nonprobability samples and choosing informants) and ch. 12 (participant observation).

Nov 15

- **Class:** Network analysis; HRAF
- **Assignment for next week**
  - Work on individual projects
  - Read Bernard, ch. 13 (field notes and database management)

Nov 22

- **Class:** Fieldwork roundtable; Database management
- **Assignment for next week:**
  - Read Bernard ch. 10 (cultural domains)
  - We will try out some of the methods described in ch. 10. Think of a research question that would be suitable for (a) free listing, (b) triads, and (c) pile sorts (three questions in all). Submit to turnitin a brief description of each question and how you would use the method to answer it (300-500 words).

Nov 29

- **Class:** Cultural domain analysis
- **Assignment for next week**
  - Data collection on individual projects

Dec 6

- **Class:** TBA (Censuses? genealogies? mapping? text analysis?)
  - **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 13 or date TBA

- **Class** Oral Reports on your research

Dec 17: Final project due