

Fall 2023

## **HUMA 5770 Field Research: Theory and Practice**

Course instructor: Ma Jianxiong

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Time & Venue: Room 1026, LSK Bldg Thursday, 9:00AM-11:50AM

Office: Room 3342

Office Hours: Wednesday, 3:00PM-6:00PM

### **Descriptions:**

In this course we explore theories, methods, and techniques in ethnographic field research. The current discussions on writing ethnography and textural representation are also covered in the course. Students are required to start their field research projects at the beginning of semester. The experiences and problems of students' fieldwork will be examined in the seminar.

### **Learning outcomes after completion of the course:**

- Understand the anthropological approach of conducting field research.
- Understand the advantages and limitations of the anthropological field research method.
- Acquire a holistic perspective in conducting field research.
- Master the basic field research techniques.

### **Requirements:**

- All course participants need to submit **a one-page reading response paper** on the required readings of each week **before** the class through email to the course instructor.
- All course participants need to exercise doing field work and **to submit the field notes each week**.

### **Texts:**

Crang, Mike and Cook, Ian

2007 *Doing Ethnographies*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Hammersley, Martyn and Paul Atkinson

2007 *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. London (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.): Routledge.

Davies, Charlotte Aull

1999 *Reflexive Ethnography*. London and New York: Routledge.

Whyte, William Foote

1993 *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Shostak, Marjorie,

1981 *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman*, New York: Vintage Books.

2000 *Return to Nisa*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

### **Seminar Topics, Readings, and Assignments:**

**Week 1 (September 7). Course organization, field work, nature of culture and ethnography**

**Assignment:** Review an ethnography and write an analysis of how the field data was collected, being used and presented in the ethnography. The first reading report is due **on September 28.**

**Readings:**

Haviland. Ch. 2.

Ortner, Sherry B.

1984 "Theories in Anthropology since the Sixties", in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.26, No.1, pp. 126-166.

Geertz, Clifford

1973 "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." In *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.

Watson, James L. and Rubie S. Watson

2004 "Fieldwork in the Hong Kong New Territories (1969-1997)." In *Village life in Hong Kong: Politics, Gender, and Ritual in the New Territories*, pp. 3-18. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.

**Week 2 (September 14). No class, Fieldtrip (TBA).**

**Week 3 (September 21). Choosing a field site; research proposal**

**Assignment due: field notes due on very weekend since week 3.**

**Readings:**

Burgess, Robert G.

1982 "Approaches to Field Research." In *Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual*, pp. 1-11. Ed. Robert G. Burgess. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Conaway, Mary Ellen

1986 "The Pretense of the Neutral Researcher." In *Self, Sex, and Gender in Cross-Cultural Fieldwork*, pp. 52-63. Eds. Tony Iarry Whitehead, and Mary Ellen Conaway. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Keyes, Charles F.

1983 "The Observer Observed: Changing Identities of Ethnographer in a Northern Thai Village." In *Fieldwork: The Human Experience*, pp. 169-194. Eds. Robert Iawless, Vinson H. Sutlive, Jr., and Mario D. Zamora. New York: Gordon and Breach.

**Week 4. (September 28). Participant-observation and Audio-visual recording**

**Readings:**

Becker, Howard S. and Blanche Geer

1960 "Participant Observation: The Analysis of Qualitative Field Data." In *Human Organization Research: Field Relations and Techniques*. Reprinted in *Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual*, pp. 239-50. Ed. Robert G. Burgess. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Gans, Herbert J.

1968 "The Participant Observer as a Human Being: Observations on the Personal Aspects of

Fieldwork.” In *Institutions and the Person: Papers Presented to Everett C. Hughes*, pp. 300-17. Eds. Howard S. Becker, Blanche Geer, David Riesman, and Robert S. Weiss. Chicago: Aldine. Reprinted in *Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual*, pp. 53-61. Ed. Robert G. Burgess. London: Allen & Unwin (1982).

Frankenberg, Ronald

1963 “Participant Observers.” *New Society*, 7:22-23. Reprinted in *Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual*, pp. 50-52. Ed. Robert G. Burgess. London: George Allen & Unwin (1982).

Whyte, William Foote.

1994. “Learning to Be a Participant Observer.” In his *Participant Observer: An Autobiography*, pp. 67-84. Ithaca: ILR Press.

Banks, Marcus

1998 “Visual Anthropology: Image, Object and Interpretation.” In *Image-based Research: A Sourcebook for Qualitative Researchers*. Ed. Jon Prosser, pp. 9-23. London: Falmer Press.

Collier, John, Jr. and Collier, Malcolm

1986 *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press. Ch. 1, 2, 11, & 12.

**First Reading Report Due:** *Ethnography: Principles in Practice (Mammersley & Atkison, third edition)*

**Assignment due:** A map of your field site (legends have to be provided). The map should reveal some forms of social relations. A short description of the map has to be provided (not more than a page).

**Week 5 (October 5) Field notes**

**Assignment due: Photos of the field and activities.**

**Readings:**

Burgess, Robert G.

1982 “Keeping Field Notes.” In *Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual*, pp. 191-94. Ed. Robert G. Burgess. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Ottenberg, Simon

1990 “Thirty Years of Fieldnotes: Changing Relationships to the Text.” In *Fieldnotes: The Making of Anthropology*, pp. 139-160. Ed. Roger Sanjek. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Werner, Oswald, and G. Mark Schoepfle

1987 *Systematic Fieldwork*, Vol. 1, pp. 257-287. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.

**Week 6 (October 12) Interviewing and key informants**

**Assignment due: Short description of the field site.**

**Readings:**

Burgess, Robert G.

1982 "The Unstructured Interview as a Conversation." In *Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual*, pp. 107-110. Ed. Robert G. Burgess. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Termblay, Marc-Adelard

1957 "The Key Informant Technique: A Non-Ethnographic Application." *American Anthropologist*. 59.4:688-701. Reprinted In *Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual*, pp. 98-104. Ed. Robert G. Burgess. London: George Allen & Unwin (1982).

Whyte, William Foote

1960 "Interviewing in Field Research." In *Human Organization Research: Field Relations and Techniques*, pp. 352-74. Eds. R.N. Adams and J.J. Preiss. Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey Press. Reprinted in *Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual*, pp. 111-122. Ed. Robert G. Burgess. London: George Allen & Unwin (1982).

### **Second Reading Report Due: *Street Corner Society* (Whyte)**

#### **Week 7 (October 12). Life history, oral history and local document (I)**

##### **Readings:**

Angrosino, Michael V.

2007 "Conducting a Life History Interview." In *Doing Cultural Anthropology: Projects for ethnographic data collection*, pp. 33-62. Ed. Micheal V. Angrosino. Long Grove: Waveland Press.

Burgess, Robert G.

1982 "Personal Documents, Oral Sources, and Life Histories." In *Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual*, pp. 131-135. Ed. Robert G. Burgess. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Grele, Ronald J.

1985 "Movement Without Aim: Methodological and Theoretical Problems in Oral History." In *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History*, pp. 126-154. Ed. Ronald J. Crele. 2nd rev. ed. Chicago: Precedent.

#### **Week 8 (October 19). Life history, oral history and local document (II)**

##### **Readings:**

Mandelbaum, David G.

1973 "The Study of Life History." *Current Anthropology*. 14.3:177-82, 195-6. Reprinted in *Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual*, pp. 146-51. Ed. Robert G. Burgess. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Portelli, Alessandro

1981 "The Peculiarities of Oral History." *History Workshop Journal*. 12:96-107.

Watson, I.C.

1985 "The Life History as a Subjective Document." In *Interpreting Live Histories*, pp. 30-57. Eds. Lawrence C. Watson and Maria-Barbara Watson-Franke. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

## **Week 9 (October 26) Working with online communities**

- 2012 “Working with online communities”, In Bonnie Stone Sunstein, Elizabeth Chiseri-Starter, *Fieldworking: Reading and Writing Research*, fourth edition pp. 155-161..
- 2012 “Other Data Collection Methods for Virtual Worlds Research”, in Tom Boellstorff, Bonnie Nardi, Celia Pearce, T. L. Taylor, *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, B Pp.113-128.

## **Week 10 (November 2). Fieldwork ethic**

### **Assignment due: Oral history report.**

#### **Readings:**

American Anthropological Association

- 1986 “Statements on Ethics: Principles of Professional Responsibility.”  
(<http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/ethstmnt.htm>)
- 1998 “Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association.”  
(<http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm>)

Jarvie, I.C.

- 1969 “The Problem of Ethical Integrity in Participant Observation.” *Current Anthropology*. 10.5:505-508. Reprinted in *Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual*, pp. 68-72. Ed. Robert G. Burgess. London: George Allen & Unwin (1982).

Joralemon, Donald

- 1990 “The Selling of the Shaman and the Problem of Informant Legitimacy.” in *Shamanism: Critical Concepts in Sociology*, vol. III, pp. 3-16. Ed. Andrei A. Znamenski. Londdon & New York: Routledge Curzon.

Thorne, Barrie

- 1980 “‘You Still Takin' Notes?’ Fieldwork and Problems of Informed Consent.” *Social Problem*. 27.3:284-97.

Wax, Murray I.

- 1980 “Paradoxes of 'Consent' to the Practices of Fieldwork.” *Social Problems*. 27.3:272-83.

**Third Reading Report Due:** *Nisa: The Life and Words of a !Kung Woman & Return to Nisa* (Shostak)

## **Week 11 (November 9). Strategies of analyses**

#### **Readings:**

Geertz, Clifford

- 1973 “Thick Description.” In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 3-32. New York: Harper and Row.
- 1983 “From the Native’s Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding.” In *Local Knowledge*, pp. 55-70. New York: Basic Books.

Pratt, Mary Louise

- 1986 "Fieldwork in Common Places." In *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, pp. 27-50. Eds. James Clifford and George E. Marcus. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Jianxiong, Ma

- 2019 "Beyond the border of disciplines and societies: Insights from fieldwork among the Lahu and the history of *bazi* basins", in Thomas David DuBois and Kiely Jan, *Out of the Archives*, London & New York: Routledge.

## **Week 12 (November 16) Writing ethnography**

### **Readings:**

Clifford, James

- 1983 "On Ethnographic Authority." *Representations*, 1.2:118-46.

Crapanzano, Vincent

- 1977 "On the Writing of Ethnography." *Dialectical Anthropology*. 2:69-73.

Marcus, George E., and Dick Cushman

- 1982 "Ethnographies as Texts." *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 11:25-69.

Throop, C. Jason & M. Murphy, Keith

- 2002 "Bourdieu and Phenomenology: A Critical Assessment." *Anthropological Theory*, 2.2:185-207.

Rabinow, Paul

- 1986 "Representations are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology." In *Writing Culture: The Poetics of Ethnography*, pp. 234-261. Eds. James Clifford and George E. Marcus. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

## **Week 12. (November 23 & November 30) Project presentations**

**The research paper is due on December 20, 2023.**

### **III. Course requirements and grading:**

Students are required to attend the seminar, to do presentations, to participate in class discussions, and to join fieldtrips. Assignments and the research paper should be submitted according to the schedule. All the assignments have to be typed and in double spacing.

**Grading Scheme:**

Assignments

Class attendance, presentations, response papers	20 points
Short description of the field site and research proposal	5
Map of the field site	5
Photos of the field and activities	5
Oral history report	5
Review of ethnographies	10
Field notes and journals	10
Research paper	40
Total:	<u>100 points</u>
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Documentary:

*Margaret Mead and Samoa: The fake anthropology research unmasked by Derek Freeman*, GN671/S2/M37/1988; 51 mins.