Seminar: Research Methods in Anthropology (L48 501)
Fall 2013, Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00-11:30pm
McMillan 150

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Course Description
This course is geared specifically to graduate students who are already engaged in, or are in the process of developing, research projects. The purpose is to introduce a range of methods that are used for systematically collecting qualitative and quantitative data in relation to specific research questions. Meetings will include discussions of readings, hands-on exercises of various methods, and fine-tuning methodologies to fit individual research projects.

Most of the class will be devoted to developing and practicing the standard ethnographic methods of participant observation and interviewing. Participant observation, long considered the trademark method in cultural anthropology, is treated as a way to (a) gather data that can be used directly to address a research question, (b) gather contextual information that can help in the recognition of topics for investigation, (c) identify potential informants for subsequent interviewing, and (d) build rapport in the fieldwork setting. A range of interviewing types and strategies are introduced and critically assessed, including focus groups, unstructured interviewing (informal encounters and conversations), semi-structured interviewing (person-centered, life story, focus groups), and structured interviewing (cultural domain analysis and formal survey questionnaires). We also deal with technical aspects of interviewing such as recording and transcribing. According to need, we will spend time on how to develop an effective survey, how to do some basic statistical analysis of survey data, and how to integrate qualitative and quantitative data. Finally, we will spend time discussing visual data: what can be gathered, and how it can be analyzed.

Required Readings
Articles: I will distribute pdf copies of articles.
RESERVE: A few readings will be placed on reserve in a file in the anthropology office.

Research Methods Journals (you may find these helpful)
Field Methods (edited by Russ Bernard)
Previously dedicated to anthropology, now open to all social sciences. Recent years tend to focus more on survey research.

Forum: Qualitative Social Research
German-based, open-source journal that is cutting edge and quite useful.

Journal of Ethnographic and Qualitative Research
Somewhat marginal, but occasionally has good articles. Much focus on education.
Assignments
You will be assigned five projects during the course of the semester. The following project descriptions are general guidelines that are subject to change. Please turn in assignments on time.

**Research Question (10 points)**  Length: 2 pages  Due Date: Sept. 3rd
Write a research question that you plan to investigate. The question can be, but does not have to be, stated as a hypothesis. Justify why this question is important to investigate (the hook), and why you think it is feasible to investigate given the time and resource constraints you confront as a PhD student.

**Site Selection Essay (10 points)**  Length: 2 pages  Due Date: Sept. 24th
Write an essay in which link your research question with the selection of a site for ethnographic research. Given your research question, develop a set of criteria for defining the ideal research site. Speculate on feasibility. How will you gain access? Which institutions do you need to go through or partner with?

Revised Fall 2013 (Note: in response to weak research question assignment)

**Site Selection Essay (10 points)**  Length: 2 pages  Due Date: Sept. 24th
Write an essay in which you (1) succinctly state your research question, (2) justify the importance of your research question, (3) and identify your unit of analysis. In the context of 1-3, either develop a set of criteria for defining the ideal research site or provide a strong justification for why the site you have already selected is ideal for this research.

**Participant Observation (30 points)**  Length: 5 pages  Due Date: Oct. 1st
Develop a research question that can be addressed through participant observation, then choose an appropriate setting where participant observation can be used to gather data pertinent to the research question. Any research question will do for this project – it does not have to relate to your stated research interests or any project that you are currently involved with. Go to that setting, do some participant observation, systematically document (mentally, on paper, or voice record) your observations, then write a paper that includes:

1. Statement of your research question.
2. Explanation for why participant observation is an appropriate method for gathering data that will help you to answer this particular research question.
3. Details on why you chose a particular setting for participant observation. How did you gain access to the site? What issues arose in gaining access to the site?
4. Details on what you did, how you interacted with people, the type of data you recorded, and how you recorded that data.
5. Brief explanation of how the data can be used to address the research question.
6. Reflections on various factors, such as people’s reflexivity or your own feeling of awkwardness, that may have influenced the type of data you gathered. If given a second chance, how would you do things differently?

**Interviewing Project (30 points)**  Length: 5 pages  Due Date: Oct. 15th
Conduct an interview with a person of your choice on a topic of your choice. Record the interview and transcribe a 10 minute segment. Write an essay that states your research question, details why you chose this particular person to be your informant (i.e., your selection criteria, or why you consider this person to be an appropriate informant given the research question), what type of interviewing strategy you used, and what you learned about the research question by interviewing this person. Be sure to include some reflective criticism about your interviewing strengths, weaknesses, and what you may have done differently to get better results. Your final project should include (1) the essay (5 pages); (2) the cassette or digital file of the recorded interview; and (3) the transcript of a 10 minute segment of the interview.
Transcription Guidelines: [http://www3.baylor.edu/Oral_History/Styleguiderev.htm](http://www3.baylor.edu/Oral_History/Styleguiderev.htm)

**Visual Data Project (20 Points)**  Presentation: 10 Minutes  Due Date: Nov. 12th
Select an image or group of images that somehow relate to your research interests. Using the readings from class and your outside readings from visual anthropology as guides, analyze the images and present your results in class.