

## Qualitative Research Methods

ANT363 / PSC222 / SOC302

Union College

Fall 2007

Blue 105

TTh 10:55AM-12:40PM

<http://minerva.union.edu/fayd/07fallmethods>

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Office Hours:

Tuesday 1:30-2:30 PM, Wednesday 3-4 PM

or by appointment

### Course Overview

This course will introduce the methods used by anthropologists to undertake research describing and analyzing aspects of the social and cultural world around them. We will begin by examining the research act as a scientific endeavor and then continue by exploring and using common research methods employed by anthropologists today. Through a variety of in-class and outside of class exercises, you will gather and analyze some data on your own and assist me in analyzing data that I am currently working on in some of my own projects. By the end of the course, you should have a good idea about and some practical experience in evaluating the research of others and planning and conducting your own research in terms of 1) identifying reasonable research problems, 2) selecting appropriate research methods, 3) developing research strategies, 4) collecting and analyzing data, and 5) reporting research findings in written and oral form. Throughout the course, we will focus on the ethics of undertaking research and the effects of the political climate in which research takes place.

### Requirements

*Read this syllabus.* Understand the policies stated here. If anything is unclear, contact me for clarification. Always bring your syllabus to class in case changes are announced. Check it frequently to be sure you are aware of upcoming assignments and due dates. The syllabus is subject to change. I will announce all changes in class and post an updated version on the course web site.

*Attend class.* Attendance is required, and absences will be taken into account in determining the participation component of your grade (see below). If you expect to miss class due to an athletic event or other commitment please let me know at least a week in advance. If you miss class it is your responsibility to get notes, find out about any announcements, etc.

*Participate in class discussions.* This class is a group effort, and will include much dialogue and discussion. The more members of the class contribute and are actively engaged in our discussions, the better the class will be. Participation also counts towards your grade (see below).

*Do the readings listed prior to class.* For example, you should read the selections listed from the texts by Bernard and Agar for Tuesday, September 11. The readings be necessary for adequate class participation. You may be called on if you are not an active participant.

*Bring your texts to class.* If you've read something, it's because we're going to discuss it in class. I will frequently refer to specific pages and passages from the readings, and expect you to be ready to do the same.

*In the classroom:* Please turn off all cell phones, laptops, etc. You are welcome to eat and drink (from recyclable or reusable containers only) as long as you are not disturbing others.

*If you plan to take the course pass-fail,* you must contact the Registrar within the first three weeks of the term.

## **ADA Requirements**

It is Union College policy to make accommodations for individuals with disabilities. If you have any disability or special concern, please let me know what your needs are in order that they may be accommodated. All discussions will remain confidential to the extent permissible by law.

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations must also:

1. Register with and provide documentation to the Dean of Students Office.
2. Bring a letter to the instructor from the Dean of Students Office indicating you need academic accommodations. This must be done **within the first two weeks of the term.**

## **Required Texts (available for purchase at the Union bookstore):**

H. Russell Bernard, *Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology* (4th edition)  
Michael Angrosino, *Doing Cultural Anthropology* (2006 edition)  
Michael Agar, *The Professional Stranger* (1996 edition)

## **Assignments**

This course includes four short fieldwork exercises (we'll do some additional exercises in class), a midterm and a final. In addition, you will work on one sustained project throughout the term: a hypothetical (or not so hypothetical in the case of those of you who may be going on a study abroad opportunity next year or otherwise preparing to undertake a senior thesis) research proposal that you, the anthropologist, could carry out given funding and appropriate time to complete the project. The first three sections of the proposal will be due as separate, short papers during the course of the term. The completed research proposal will include at least the following elements: a) a statement of the topic under consideration (what you propose to study, why it is important), b) a review of the relevant anthropological and other literature that deals with the topic or methods you intend to employ in your research, c) a detailed statement concerning the methods that you propose to use to study the topic you have selected (how you intend to go about the research and why you have selected particular methods to use), d) a proposed budget to carry out the research, and e) the significance of your proposed project (why it should be undertaken and what it will contribute to knowledge – will it help settle a contended issue about human behavior, will it add to general knowledge, will it provide a retest of earlier work that was carried out by someone else, and so on. You will present a brief, ten-minute overview of your proposal at the end of the term.

## **Evaluation**

Participation in class 15%

This course will mostly be conducted as a seminar. I expect you to come to class prepared to talk. Most class time will be devoted to discussing the issues raised in the readings. A “Socratic method”

will be used in class: it requires students to answer and debate questions as a means of learning. This method helps you to learn to think on your feet. Classes will clarify and expand upon the main ideas, issues, and findings in the assigned reading largely through student questions, comments, and responses to the instructor's questions. It is necessary to have your text and class notes with you for every class. It is essential to the success of this course that you complete all of the assigned reading prior to each class. Seminars only work well when the participants (students and professor) come to class prepared. In seminars the emphasis is not on teaching as something the professor does but on collaborative learning as something we all do actively together. Again, this course requires that you: a) come to class prepared, which means having done the reading prior to each class meeting and written out answers to the assigned questions; and b) that you are willing to verbally express your views and ask questions. This course can be neither educational nor interesting without your active participation. Given that the term is so short, attendance is required. If you miss class, for any reason, you will be responsible for writing a one-page summary of the readings for that day or suffering a 1.5 point penalty on the discussion portion of your grade. Mid-term examination 20%

Final examination 20%

Fieldwork exercises 20% (taken together)

Research proposal 25% (completed proposal)

### **Important Dates**

9/13 first fieldwork exercise due

9/20 proposal problem statement

9/27 second fieldwork exercise due

10/4 third fieldwork exercise due

10/9 midterm

10/16 lit review due

10/23 fourth fieldwork exercise due

10/30 methods section due

11/13 proposal due

TBA final exam

**Do not schedule your trip home until the final exam schedule is posted!**

## Class Schedule

### Week One - Introduction

**Thu Sep 06** Introduction to the course and the syllabus

### Week Two - The Nature and Art of Research: Defining the Problem

**Tue Sep 11** Bernard, Chapters 1-3, pages 1-95 ("Anthropology and the Social Sciences", "The Foundations of Social Research" and "Preparing for Research")

Agar, Chapter 2, pages 66-72 ("A Research Biography")

Agar, Chapter 9, pages 226-236 ("The Ethnographic Research Proposal")

### Searching the Literature / Framing Your Proposal

**Thu Sep 13** Bernard, Chapter 4, pages 96-108 ("The Literature Search")

Agar, Chapter 3, pages 73-90 ("Getting Started")

Guidelines for Faculty and Students Engaged in Human Subjects Research at Union College (www)

First fieldwork exercise due

### Week Three - Narrowing the Focus and Hypothesis Testing

**Tue Sep 18** Agar, Chapter 1, pages 1-51 ("Ethnography Reconstructed")

Bernard, Chapter 5, pages 109-145 ("Research Design: Experiments and Experimental Thinking")

**Thu Sep 20** Wolf, "Childhood Association and Sexual Attraction" (jstor)

Lefkowitz, "Status Factors in Pedestrian Violation of Traffic Signals"

Problem Statement due

### Week Four - Sampling and Finding Informants

**Tue Sep 25** Bernard, Chapters 6-7, pages 146-185 ("Sampling" and "Sampling Theory")

N. Chalmers and C. Fabricius, "Expert and Generalist Local Knowledge about Land-cover Change on South Africa's Wild Coast: Can Local Ecological Knowledge Add Value to Science?" (www)

**Thu Sep 27** Bernard, Chapter 8, pages 186-209 ("Nonprobability Sampling and Choosing Informants")

Agar, Chapter 7, pages 167-185 ("Narrowing the Focus")

Second fieldwork exercise due

### Week Five - Participant Observation and Fieldnotes

**Tue Oct 02** Bernard, Chapters 13-15, pages 342-437 ("Participant Observation", "Field Notes", and "Direct to Indirect Observation")

Agar, Chapters 4 ("Who Are You to Do This?") and 5 ("Ethnography"), pages 91-131

Agar, pages 161-166 ("Fieldnotes")

**Thu Oct 04** Angrosino, Chapter 1, pages 9-18 ("Becoming a Participant Observer")

Angrosino, Chapter 9, pages 99-106 ("Designing a Questionnaire for Cross-Cultural Research")

Third fieldwork exercise due

### Week Six

**Tue Oct 09** Midterm

### Unobtrusive Measures

**Thu Oct 11** Bernard, Chapter 15, pages 437-450 ("Unobtrusive Observation")

Roberts, "Games in Culture" (reserve)

Angrosino, Chapter 5, pages 63-70 ("Reconstructing a Community through Archival Research")

Angrosino, Chapter 6, pages 71-80 ("Using a Museum as a Resource for Ethnographic Research")

### Week Seven - Interviews and Surveying

**Tue Oct 16** Bernard, Chapter 9, pages 210-250 ("Interviewing")

Agar, Chapter 6, pages 134-161 ("Beginning Fieldwork")

Bernard, Chapter 11, pages 299-317 ("Structured Interviewing II: Cultural Domain Analysis")

Angrosino, Chapter 8, pages 91-98 ("Carrying Out a Structured Observation")

Literature Review due

**Thu Oct 18** Bernard, Chapter 10, pages 251-298 ("Structured Interviewing I: Questionnaires")

R. Wilson, *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa*, pp. 38-51

Angrosino, Chapter 11, pages 115-122 ("Planning and Moderating Focus Group Research")

**Week Eight - Scales and Qualitative Data Analysis**

**Tue Oct 23** Bernard, Chapter 12, pages 318-341 ("Scales and Scaling")  
Fourth Fieldwork Exercise due

**Thu Oct 25** Bernard, Chapter 16, pages 451-463 ("Intro. to Qual. and Quant. Data Analysis")  
Agar, Chapter 8, pages 185-221 ("Informal to Formal: Some Examples")  
Bernard, Chapters 17-18, pages 463-548 ("Text Analysis", "Models and Matrices")  
Angrosino, Chapter 4, pages 45-62 ("Analyzing Narrative Data")

**Week Nine - Quantitative Data Analysis and Ethical Dimensions of Research**

**Tue Oct 30** Bernard, Chapter 19, pages 549-593 ("Univariate Analysis")  
skim Bernard Chapter 20, pages 614-648 ("Bivariate Analysis")  
Methods Section of proposal due

**Thu Nov 01** Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association  
P. Bourgois, "Confronting the Ethics of Ethnography" (reserve)

**Week Ten - Presentations of Final Proposals**

**Tue Nov 06** Adam Przeworski and Frank Salomon, "The Art of Writing Proposals" (www)  
student presentations

**Thu Nov 08** student presentations

**Week Eleven**

**Tue Nov 13** **Final proposal due**  
Review for final exam  
FINAL EXAM date TBA  
**REMINDER:** do not schedule your travel home until you know the date of the final exam.