

Department of Sociology & Anthropology, BGU

Course: Field Methods in Anthropology

2008-09

Prof. Fran Markowitz

Course description: This methods core course in the M.A. anthropology program delves into the theory and practice of ethnographic fieldwork through readings, discussions and exercises. The course's primary goals are to equip students with the theoretical background, practical skills and vocabulary needed to (1) formulate research questions; (2) enable them to select the appropriate research strategies for answering those questions, and (3) prepare them to carry out independent, original ethnographic field projects. The course's secondary goals are to challenge students to consider, reflect upon and critique (1) the connections between ethnographic fieldwork and written ethnographies; (2) the promises and dangers of ethnographic fieldwork as a route toward knowledge and/or understanding of self and other, and (3) the ethics of ethnography for the researcher and the researched.

Course requirements and evaluation:

1. Attendance is mandatory.
2. Reading the required material for each class is mandatory.
3. Participation in the seminar, which is not the same as attendance: 25%
4. Each exercise = 20% x 2 = 40%
5. Final research proposal and reflexive field report and in-class oral presentation, with emphasis on methods: 35%. Due date for final assignment will be one month after the last class of second semester.

Course Plan:

First Semester—Epistemology, Learning to Ask Questions, and Research Strategies.

- 1) Introductions: Why ethnography? Why anthropology? What is research?
Can anthropology be life?
- 2) **Guest lecturer: Dr. Nir Avieli:** Introductions, continued
What's the difference between ethnographic fieldwork and other kinds of qualitative and quantitative research? Why do you want to do ethnography?
What do you want to know?
Read: Markowitz (1988) "Can Anthropology Be Life?"
- 3) How do we know what we know?
Read: Bernard, Chapter 1: Anthropology & the Social Sciences
Recommended: Geertz, Clifford (1988) "Being There" in *Works and Lives*—available in Hebrew

In place of class:

CONDUCT Exercise #1: Find a site. It can be a shop, a crosswalk, a park, a bus, an event, a friend's kitchen...visit the site once for an hour, maybe two. Then write two descriptions of the site: one as a scientific, objective, positivistic report, the other as a personal, reflexive and interpretive essay. Each description should be NO MORE than 2 pages = 4 pages, total

- 4) Learning to ask research questions: What and Why.
Read: Bernard, Chapter 3; **Submit:** Exercise #1
- 5) Why is your question important? How does it relate to and/or fill a gap in prior research? The literature review.; annotated bibliography
Read: Bernard, Chapter 4
- 6) The research design: How to and with whom to do it
Read: Bernard 187-200; 130-142

WRITE an annotated bibliography of 5 sources to accompany a one paragraph statement of your research question.

- 7) Conversations and Interviews: Information, Empathy, Exchange, What does and does not work.
Read: Bernard, Chapter 9 and Weil, Shalva, "It Is Futile to Trust in Man": Methodological Difficulties..." Human Organization (1995) 54 (1): 1-9.
SUBMIT Preview to Exercise #2: One paragraph statement of your research question and annotated bibliography.
- 8) Life History Interviews: What they mean and how to do them
Read: "Life History Research in Anthropology", Chapter 1 of Watson, Lawrence and Maria-Barbara Watson-Franke, *Interpreting Life Histories: An Anthropological Inquiry*. Rutgers University Press, 1985.
- 9) Direct and Indirect Observation: Exercise #1 and Beyond
Read: Bernard, Chapter 15
- 10) Participant-Observation: Minds, Emotions, Bodies, Experiences.
Read: Bernard, Chapter 13 and/or Davies, Charlotte Aull (1999) Chapter 4 in *Reflexive Ethnography*. London: Routledge.
- 11) Participant-Observation: Writing the "work" of fieldwork
Read: Bernard, Chapter 14 and/or Sanjek, Roger (1990) on **fieldnotes**

Exercise #2: Due first day of second semester

Prepare the first five pages of YOUR research proposal.

Using the one paragraph abstract as your guide, this proposal includes:

Articulation of your research project and its goals: What, why, how and with whom, 1 page

Why is it important? Situate it in prior research, 2 pages

How do you intend to carry it out? Methods, 2 pages

Include a preliminary bibliography of **references cited** in your text.

Course Plan

Second Semester—Fieldwork Through the Critical Lenses of Experience and Time

- 1) Guest lecture: Participant-observation fieldwork far from home.
The Racialization of Ethiopian Israelis, Gabriella Djerrahian, Doctoral Candidate, McGill University, and Ecology among Israeli Arabs and Jews, Emily McGee, Doctoral Candidate, University of Michigan. AND discussion of Exercise #2.
- 2) A lifetime as an anthropologist under changing fieldwork circumstances:
Shokeid, Moshe, "From the Tikopia to polymorphous engagements". *Social Anthropology* (2007) 15:305-319.
- 3) Where is the Field?
Marcus, George, "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography" *Annual Rev. Anthropology* (1995) 24:95-117;

- Hage, Ghassan, "A Not so multi-sited ethnography of a not so imaginary community". *Anthropological Theory* (2005) 5(4): 463-475.
- 4) Fieldwork at Home: El-Or Chapter 1; Powdermaker, Part IV: Intro, Chs 20, 21.
 - 5) Native Anthropologists? Narayan, Kirin, "How Native is a Native Anthropologist?" *American Anthropologist* (1993) 95(3):671-686; Jackson, John (2005), *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity*, University of Chicago Press, pp. 151-159 and 260-263.
 - 6) What is/is not a field? How is the fieldworker perceived?
D'Amico-Samuels, Deborah (1997) "Undoing Fieldwork" in *Decolonizing Anthropology*, F. Harrison, ed., and Markowitz, Fran, "Blood, Race, Soul and Suffering: Full-Bodied Ethnography and Expressions of Jewish Belonging" *Anthropology & Humanism* (2006) 31(1):41-56.
 - 7) Sex, Sexuality and the Anthropologist: Risky Business or Field Strategy?
Askenazi and Markowitz (1999) "Sexuality and Prevarication in the Praxis of Anthropology" and Wim Lunsing (1999) "Life on Mars: Love and Sex in Fieldwork on Sexuality and Gender in Urban Japan" both in *Sex, Sexuality and the Anthropologist*, Markowitz and Ashkenazi, eds. University of Illinois Press.
 - 8) Failed fieldwork? What's Race Got to Do With It? Schramm, Katharina, "'You have your own history. Keep your hands off ours!' On Being Rejected in the Field" *Social Anthropology* (2005) 13(2):171-183. (compare with Markowitz 2002, "Creating Coalitions and Causing Conflicts" *Ethnos* 67(2):201-222)
 - 9) Resisting fieldwork. Ortner, Sherry, "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (1995) 37(1):173-193 and/or Marcus, George E., "The End(s) of Ethnography: Social/Cultural Anthropology's Signature Form of Producing Knowledge in Transition." *Cultural Anthropology* 23:1-14.
 - 10) Embracing fieldwork, taking a stand: Advocacy and Militancy.
Bourgois, Philippe (1997), "Confronting the Ethics of Ethnography" in *Decolonizing Anthropology*, and Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. "The Primacy of the Ethical" *Current Anthropology* (1995) 36(3):409-420 and 436-440.
Student reports from the field: Ethnography as theory, experience, analysis, interpretation and reflexivity.
 - 11) Dangerous Fields: Ethnography on mean streets and in war zones. Kovats-Bernat, J. C., "Negotiating Dangerous Fields" *American Anthropologist* (2002) 104(1):208-222 **and** Parizot, Cédric (n.d.) "Moving Fieldwork: Ethnographic Experiences in the Israeli-Palestinian Space." Take a look too at Nordstrom & Robben, eds (1995) *Fieldwork Under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival*.
 - 12) Course summary

Final project:

Research proposal including bibliography (see guidelines for first semester, exercise #2, 8 pages, and
Report of preliminary findings: what had been expected, what you found, what are your next steps, 2-5 pages

Due date: One month after the last day of class.

