COURSE SYLLABUS
GLS 102.S13: Ethnography

Basic Information
Stony Brook University; College of Arts and Sciences; Department of Cultural Analysis & Theory
Spring 2016

Meeting Times: Tuesdays, 4:00-5:20pm
Campus: Stony Brook
Classroom: Frey Hall 226

Instructor: Professor Gregory Ruf
Department of Cultural Analysis & Theory
(joint appointments in Asian & Asian American Studies and in Anthropology)

OFFICE HOURS:
Tuesdays 2:00-3:00; Wednesdays 10:00-12:00
and other times (M-W) by appointment

CONTACT INFORMATION:
Email: Gregory.Ruf@stonybrook.edu
● The most effective way to reach me is via my official university email address, and email is the designated ‘official’ mode of contact for all communication with the instructor concerning this course. I monitor email daily, and I usually reply within one working day (weekends excluded); if you do not receive a response within 24-hours on a weekday, please re-send your message.
Phone: 631-632-7652
● You may also reach me via my office telephone, usually Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays, when I am on-campus. Although voicemail options may be available, I do not monitor voicemail messages remotely; I will check them upon return to campus after each weekend. If you need to reach me for any reason, email is the preferred method and likely the most effective means.
Office: 2068 Humanities
● My office is located on the second floor of the Humanities Building, south-wing (near the southwest stairwell at the building corner closest to the Javits Lecture Center). I strongly encourage every student to visit my office during the first weeks of the semester.
Office Hours: Appointments Encouraged; Appointments Required Outside of Scheduled Office Hours
● With rare exceptions, I am always available during regularly scheduled office hours. Students with scheduled appointments (via email confirmation) will receive priority. Drop-in visits – without appointment – during Office Hours are always welcomed and managed on a first-come first-serve basis (as time permits around scheduled appointments). If you need to see me in person, it always best to schedule an appointment – both for Office Hours as well as other times. I am not available during the 30-minutes prior to any of my classes. My teaching schedule is posted outside my office door.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
How can one interpret and understand a culture? What is it like to do long-term field research in another culture? This course offers an introduction to the techniques and challenges of participant-observation used by cultural anthropologists to conduct ethnographic research.

Course Goals & Learning Objectives
Upon successful completion of the course, students will meet the following learning outcomes:
● Acquire a basic understanding of ethnography and why it is important to cultural analysis.
● Improve critical thinking by developing evaluative, problem-solving, and expressive skills.
● Enhance group communication skills through discussions, small-group work, presentations or debates.
● Develop intellectual curiosity and better understand the role of a student in an academic community.
Course Structure & Materials Needed
The class is based on group discussion and will be run in the style of a modified seminar structured around active student participation and peer-based conversation, moderated by the instructor. There are no required readings. Rather, each weekly session focuses on a particular methodological approach to ethnographic fieldwork, which students will conduct through practical application.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Please take particular note of the following course requirements:
1. Regular attendance and active participation are required. Any unexcused absence will result in a ten-point deduction from your Attendance grade. If you do not participate in class discussions, your grade will suffer.
2. You must silence all electronic devices (especially mobile phones) for the duration of class time.
3. Required reading for each session must be completed prior to class-time; come to class prepared to discuss the material.
4. Students are required to complete all assignments on time, and to contribute regularly and on-time to the weekly Discussion Forum maintained on the course Blackboard site.
5. You are welcome to bring a laptop or tablet computer to class, but you are required to set it to silent operation, and to confine its use during class sessions to activities and functions relevant and pertinent to class discussions (for example, you may search the web for class-related material; you should NOT use the device during class time to monitor or update social networking sites, watch videos, play games, shop, or otherwise distract the attention of yourself or those around you from class discussions; improper use of electronic media during class time will result in loss of points for that session’s Participation grade).
6. Recording (audio or visual) of class sessions is NOT allowed.

REQUIRED READINGS
There are no assigned readings for this course. However, students are strongly encouraged to read the following text, which offers an informative and engaging introduction to field research in cultural anthropology: Douglas Raybeck, 1996, Mad Dogs, Englishmen, and the Errant Anthropologist: Fieldwork in Malaysia (Waveland).

“BLACKBOARD”
A restricted-access website for this course will be maintained through the University’s Blackboard platform. You should visit the course’s Blackboard site regularly. Posted there you will find various Announcements, Course-related Materials, Guidelines for Assignments, Discussion Forums (in which you are expected to participate regularly), and all Grades.

Assignments & Grading
Course grades will be based on diverse assessment criteria including: attendance, in-class discussions, after-class reaction posts to a Blackboard discussion forum, pre-class preparation of questions and comments on the readings, in-class quizzes, and an end-of-term reflection essay. Final grades in the course will be calculated on the following basis:

- ATTENDANCE: 10%
- IN-CLASS DISCUSSION: 10%
- WEEKLY ETHNOGRAPHIC ASSIGNMENTS: 30%
- PEER CRITIQUE OF ETHNOGRAPHIC ASSIGNMENTS: 10%
- BLACKBOARD POST-CLASS REACTION POSTS: 10%
- BOOK REVIEW: 10%
- END-TERM REFLECTION ESSAY: 20%

ATTENDANCE: 10%
Regular attendance is required. Any unexcused absence will result in a 10-pt deduction from your Attendance grade.

IN-CLASS DISCUSSIONS: 10%
The course seeks to foster a lively and robust conversation among all participants. Regular participation during class time is a fundamental part of the course. You should come to class having completed the practical assignments and prepared to discuss your findings and experiences.

**WEEKLY ETHNOGRAPHIC ASSIGNMENTS: 30%**
Students will complete – as directed and on time – a series of ethnographic assignments designed around experiential learning of particular ethnographic research skills and techniques. These assignments are intended to complement the broader theoretical and methodological issues discussed during the course with hands-on experience at the ethnographer’s craft. By practicing ethnography, and experimenting with its different modes and methods, students will be more attuned to – or more sensitive of – subtle aspects of perspective, style, voice, and representation in the production of ethnographic texts. Assignments are to be completed and posted to Blackboard no later than each Sunday at 11:59 pm. It is essential these assignments be completed in a timely manner; late submissions will be penalized ten points per day late. A brief description of these projects is provided below. Further details will be made available at the appropriate juncture of the course.

**PEER CRITIQUE OF ETHNOGRAPHIC ASSIGNMENTS: 10%**
No later than 12:00 noon each Monday, students must post to Blackboard comments, observations, or constructive critiques of at least two (2) assignments uploaded to Blackboard the preceding Friday by peers. You must do at least one peer critique of each student before you write a second peer critique of any student’s work. At each Monday’s class, students must be prepared to discuss their own ethnographic reports and their critiques of others, as well as any questions, concerns, and reflections regarding that previous week’s assignment. Peer review is an important component of scholarship, and these critiques also will be peer-based evaluations.

**BLACKBOARD POST-CLASS REACTION POSTS: 10%**
After each class, students are required to post to the course Blackboard site a short personal reaction that offers their own reflections on the material discussed in that session. Posts must be uploaded by 11:59 pm on each class day. Late posts will receive NO CREDIT.

**BOOK REVIEW: 10%**
While the course has no assigned readings, students will select for critical review one anthropological ethnography of their own choice, written from any theoretical perspective – that offers an ethnographic description and interpretation of some cultural phenomenon. Selected titles must be submitted for approval of the instructor no later than March 1. A short (500 word) summary and critical assessment of the title – modeled after book reviews published in professional journals – must be submitted by the end of the semester. Late submissions will be penalized unless an extension is granted due to extraordinary circumstances. Those unfamiliar with scholarly book reviews should consult several academic journals for examples (see, e.g., book reviews published in such journals as American Ethnologist).

**END-TERM REFLECTION ESSAY: 20%**
● At the conclusion of the course, each student must submit a 500-750 word personal essay that reflects on the course and any knowledge or insight on ethnography acquired during the semester. This assignment is due no later than Tuesday, April 12. Late submissions will be penalized ten (10) points for each day after the original deadline.

**COURSE GRADING SCALE**
Letter grades for individual assessments – and for the course overall – will be based on the following scale:

- **90s = A range:** A 94 & above  
- **80s = B range:** B+ 87-89  
- **70s = C range:** B 84-86  
- **60s = D or F range:** C+ 77-79  
- **<70s = D or F range:** C 74-76  
- **D+ 68-69**  
- **D 65-67**  
- **F 64 and below**

**Course Policies and Expectations**
The course maintains high standards of expectation regarding the work of both student and instructor. Regular attendance, robust participation in class discussions, and timely completion of all assignments are required. All assignments are due at class-time on the designated date; failure to complete and submit assignments on time will incur penalties. There are no ‘extra credit’ opportunities in this course. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. If you are concerned about your grade(s) or
your standing in the course, you should consult with the instructor during office hours as soon as possible. The time to address any concerns about your academic standing is early in the semester – not at the end of the semester. Grade appeals will be considered only if there is empirical evidence of computational error. I will not consider grade appeals on the grounds that you tried really hard, you need a certain minimum grade to graduate, you have a relative who is ill in the hospital, your visa is expiring, your pet died, or any other personal reason.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**
Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instance of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the [academic judiciary website](http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/dss/). Please take a moment to review the [University Conduct Code](http://www.stonybrook.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities).

**EMAIL**
All email sent to you via Blackboard will be sent to your @stonybrook.edu email address. Be sure to check your Stony Brook University email account frequently and regularly. The following is a notice from the Interim CIO and Assistant Provost for Teaching, Learning + Technology, Stony Brook University:

**Electronic Communication**
Email and especially email sent via Blackboard ([http://blackboard.stonybrook.edu](http://blackboard.stonybrook.edu)) is one of the ways we will officially communicate with you for this course. It is your responsibility to make sure that you read your email in your official University email account. For most students that is Google Apps for Education ([http://www.stonybrook.edu/mycloud](http://www.stonybrook.edu/mycloud)) but you may verify your official Electronic Post Office (EPO) address at: [http://it.stonybrook.edu/help/kb/checking-or-changing-your-mail-forwarding-address-in-the-epo](http://it.stonybrook.edu/help/kb/checking-or-changing-your-mail-forwarding-address-in-the-epo)

If you choose to forward your official University email to another off campus account, I am not responsible for any undeliverable messages to your alternative personal accounts. You can set up email forwarding using these DoIT-provided instructions found at: [http://it.stonybrook.edu/help/kb/setting-up-mail-forwarding-in-google-mail](http://it.stonybrook.edu/help/kb/setting-up-mail-forwarding-in-google-mail)

If you need help accessing your @stonybrook.edu email account, or for other technical assistance, please contact [Client Support](631-632-9800) or [SupportTeam@stonybrook.edu](mailto:SupportTeam@stonybrook.edu).

**DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES (DSS)**
If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services at (631) 632-6748 or at [http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/dss/](http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/dss/). They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information: [http://www.stonybrook.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities](http://www.stonybrook.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities)

**CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT:**
Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, and/or inhibits students' ability to learn.

**Course Calendar**

**Week 1:** Tues., Jan 26

*Introduction*

Fri., Jan 29 = Last Day to Submit Major/Minor Changes Effective Spring/Summer 2016 Semesters

**Week 2:** Tues., Feb 2

*Ethnographic Assignment #1: Domestic Places*

Produce a sketch layout of a domestic living place, such as a room, apartment, or house. What do you include, and how detailed should you be? Write a brief narrative description of this selected private domicile. What, if anything, can you learn about the person/people who live there? Explain. Include a brief written narrative description to accompany the sketch.

Fri., Feb 5 = Last Day to Add, Swap, Drop, or Submit LOA/Term Withdraw from the University Without a “W” (Deadline 4:00pm)
Week 3: Tues., Feb 9
Ethnographic Assignment #2: Mapping Public Spaces
Select a particular place and draw a map of it. Think about how you will represent this place and what you would include (or exclude). What is relevant, from your perspective? Include some indication of the flow of movement in and around the public space you selected. In what ways, if any, do physical features help to channel physical movement of those whom use this space? Describe the activities that you observe. What do you include, and how detailed should you be? Write a brief narrative description of how this public space – whatever its design or location – is actually used by people.

Week 4: Tues., Feb 16
Ethnographic Assignment #3 Family Genealogy
Interview someone to solicit their family history. Whom is included or excluded, and why? What kinds of questions do you ask, and why? How much should you ask and how much should they volunteer a self-narrative? What seem to have been the important “milestones,” crises, or turning-points that shaped the family’s history and the lives and life-choices of family members? Write a narrative of the family’s history and draw a chart or diagram of their genealogy.

Week 5: Tues., Feb 23
Ethnographic Assignment #4: Discourse & Semantics
Observe (but do not participate in) a conversation or discursive exchange involving two or more people, and produce a written verbatim transcription – without the use of audio-recording technology. Focus on a complete and accurate transcription of the language and words involved, but also be sensitive to non-linguistic cues or codes of relevance to the conversation. What, exactly, do you write down in your notes, and why? From this transcription, write a narrative description of the conversation, in the form similar to standard prose dialogue. Give some thought to how you represent, depict, or describe those involved and their words and actions.

Week 6: Tues., Mar 1
Ethnographic Assignment #5: Time Allocation
Design and conduct a time-allocation study to quantify the amount of time devoted to specific activities. What activity-categories do you include, and why? Tabulate and analyze the data generated, and write a brief narrative to discuss your results.

Week 7: Tues., Mar 8
Ethnographic Assignment #6: Surveys & Questionnaires
Draft and carry out a short survey questionnaire of your own design. What topics and questions do you include, and in what order? How do you accommodate possible responses? What sample size do you plan for, and how will you construct such a sample? Tabulate and analyze the data generated, and write a brief narrative to discuss your results.

* Tues., Mar 15 – NO CLASS – Spring Recess *

Week 8: Tues., Mar 22
Ethnographic Assignment #7: Work & Labor
Observe the activities and interpersonal dynamics of a workplace, and write a brief narrative description of your observations. Why did you select this particular venue? What sort of social actors were present and what was their involvement? On the basis of your observations, what can you conclude about the tenor of labor relations, power dynamics, and the inter-personal relationships in this workplace? (Feel free to include a diagram or sketch-map of the workplace.)

Mon., Mar 28 = Major/Minor Changes Begin for Summer/Fall 2016 Semester

Week 9: Tues., Mar 29
Ethnographic Assignment #8: Focus Groups
Convene and conduct a focus-group discussion on an issue of your choosing, and write a brief narrative description of your results. What sort of setting did you choose? What influenced the characteristics of your sample of participants? How was discussion structured or moderated? What were the inter-personal dynamics amongst participants?

Fri., Apr 1 = Last Day to Submit Section/Credit Changes; to Select Grade/Pass/NoCredit (GPNC) option, to Withdraw from a Course (W recorded) – 4pm deadline
Week 10: Tues., Apr 5 – Book Review Due
Debrief and Concluding Discussion

Tues., Apr 12 = END-TERM REFLECTION ESSAY DUE (electronic submission)

Fri., May 6 = Last Day to Take LOA or to Withdraw from the University