



GOUCHER COLLEGE

Welch Center for Graduate and Professional Studies

SYLLABUS – Ethnographic Writing (CSP 670C)

Course Number 670C
Credits.....3
Semester Fall 2017
Instructor: Barry Dornfeld
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Welcome to our Course!

Welcome to Ethnographic Writing! In this course, students will learn about both the concept and craft of ethnographic writing. They will expand their understanding of the textual tools available to do the work of representing and sustaining culture in a variety of contexts. We will examine the many ways to describe culture and experience, from basic field notes through publically shared reports, as well as explore different models and devices that can assist us in creating vital ethnographic writing. As part of our exploration, we will read and respond to writings by anthropologists, folklorists and others from a variety of contexts and settings.

Students will be encouraged to develop their own approach to ethnographic writing to reflect both their individual ethnographic explorations and the settings in which they intend to work, and to thoughtfully represent the experiences of those communities and individuals who are the subject of their ethnographic work.

Main Course Topics

1. The field as text
2. Ethnographic field notes
3. Examinations of story and theory, place, person, voice, and self
4. Developing an ethnographic writing voice
5. Self-representations of marginalized cultures -- when the observed becomes observer
6. Writing for various settings

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, you will be able to do the following:

1. Understand approaches to documenting and representing culture through writing.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the relationship between theoretical frames and practical applications of ethnographic writing.
3. Evaluate the ethical issues inherent in representing culture through writing.
4. Implement a personal ethnographic writing style.

Departmental Learning Outcomes

This course is aligned with two departmental learning outcomes, listed below. Students will meet departmental learning outcomes through successful completion of assignments and activities in core

and elective courses. A list of all departmental learning outcomes can be found at:

<http://www.goucher.edu/graduate-programs/ma-in-cultural-sustainability/curriculum>

Outcome 3: Design, undertake and critique cultural documentation field projects applying diverse research methods such as observation, writing, photography, video, and/or sound recording to identify and nurture traditions of knowledge and practice that are meaningful and valued by communities.

Outcome 4: Devise, implement and evaluate actions that support cultural sustainability such as educational programs, exhibitions, performances, workshops, projects, media productions, websites, festivals and other initiatives that align with community practices.

Course Format

This is a fully online course. We will hold four Zoom meetings during the course, and communicate asynchronously for the rest of our work, including weekly online discussions. Students will be required to post written work to a blog each of you will be creating and adding to during the course, and comment on each other's work. And we will be reading and discussing ethnographic texts and reflections on ethnographic writing.

Assignment Instructions:

Students will be graded on the clarity and strength of the writing and how well they accomplished the goals of the assignment.

Participation in the discussions (Zoom and online) is mandatory.

Readings

Required:

- Stone Sunstein, Bonnie and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater. 2012. *Fieldworking*. Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Other texts listed in the syllabus and available via GoucherLearn.

Course Schedule

Module 1: Description Thick and Thin: Defining Ethnography and Ethnographic Writing

Weeks 1 and 2

Parameters and definitions. Thin and thick description. Situating ourselves on a changing landscape. Foundational ideas and core practices in ethnography and ethnographic writing.

Themes include:

- Foundational definitions of ethnography and ethnographic writing
- The changing nature of ethnography
- What does this practice mean for you?

Module 2: (Back) Into the Field**Weeks 3 and 4**

Writing starts with fieldwork. And fieldwork starts with the writing explicitly or implicitly in mind. Entering this iterative space . . .

Themes include:

- Finding your way into the field
- The reflexive turn
- Perspective and voice

Module 3 -- Field Notes and Notes**Weeks 5 and 6**

Good written documentation of ethnographic work is critical to both writing and the fieldwork process. There is both discipline and creativity to the process.

Themes include:

- Documenting your work in ways that capture texture and interpretation
- Multiple strategies and formats for note taking and interpreting.

Module 4 -- Deepening Focus, Listening and Translating**Weeks 7 and 8**

Ethnographies are sited in both simple and complex ways. Cultural action takes “place” in locations that shape their dynamics and give meaning to social life. Representing place in its complexity becomes critical in ethnographic writing.

Themes:

- Representing place through observation and writing.
- Using other modalities to supplement writing.

Module 5 -- Ethnography everywhere – multiple contexts and settings**Weeks 9 and 10**

Ethnographic writing shows up outside of traditional academic contexts – in museum exhibits, festival brochures, online, in popular publications, etc. We consider how writing may need to shift to adapt to this new context.

Themes:

- Text in context – where ethnography shows up.
- Considering the contexts in which you will want write.

Module 6 –Synthesizing and Sharing**Weeks 11 and 12**

Completing a course writing project on your field site allows you to bring together these themes in a sharable form.

Themes:

- When is done?
- Structure and point of view
- Writing and re-writing

Module 7 – Writing and writing
Weeks 13 and 14
Final writing assignment

Grading

Course Elements	Points
Discussion and participation	30
Online writing assignments	30
Online discussion	20
Final online written exercise	20
TOTAL	100

Grade Scale

A	93 or more points
A-	90 - 92 points
B+	87 - 89 points
B	83 - 86 points
B-	80 - 82 points
C+	77 - 79 points
C	73 - 76 points
C-	70 - 72 points
D	60 - 69 points
F	59 points and below

Course Policies

Communication:

- Faculty will be available at their Goucher email address and will respond to queries within 24-48 hours.
- Course participants are responsible for maintaining continuous involvement with faculty and fellow students. In particular, participation in all online discussions is required. Ongoing communication allows you to gain deeper insights into the content, activities and assignments in the course. Please give notice of any obstacle that prevents this.
- You are encouraged to ask questions whenever information needs clarifying.
- For questions pertaining to your assignments: send an email directly to the instructor (please do not post personal questions on the discussion board).
- For questions about assignments that may be interesting and helpful to other class members: please use the discussion board.
- For problems with technical aspects of the website: contact helpdesk@goucher.edu (you may copy the instructor).

Missed Work:

You are responsible for material covered in the course. It is your sole responsibility to obtain any materials missed.

Late Policy:

For proper graduate student learning to occur, pacing of content mastery is critical. Therefore, assignments are to be completed on time. If extreme circumstances prevent an assignment to be completed in a timely fashion, please notify me before the assignment is due so a new date can be negotiated. Only follow-ups completed by the due date can be redone. Late assignments without such notification will be docked.

Academic Integrity:

All final work products are to be the independent work of each student and stored in the electronic portfolio. Suspected violations of the Honor Code will be referred to the Academic Honor Board. For a full description of the code and what constitutes a violation of the code, refer to the Goucher Handbook or online at www.goucher.edu/x1292.xml.

Goucher Technology Help Desk

<http://www.goucher.edu/information-technology>