

Ethnography of Communication
English 770.03
The Ohio State University

Dr. Galey Modan
519 Denney Hall

modan.1@osu.edu
614-292-0338

Course Description

This course serves as an introduction to the philosophical underpinnings and methods of data collection and analysis used in the Ethnography of Communication, a school of discourse analysis located at the nexus of linguistics, anthropology, and folklore. Using texts from a range of disciplines, we will discuss perspectives on the various steps involved in conducting E of C research, from choosing a fieldsite to writing ethnographies. Each student will choose a fieldsite at the beginning of the quarter, and a key component of the class will be discussions of your own experiences conducting discourse-based fieldwork at various stages of your project. The last section of the class will be devoted to presenting and critiquing your work, with an eye towards preparing a conference paper.

Required Texts

- Agar, Michael. 1996. *The professional stranger: An informal introduction to ethnography*. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Cameron, Deborah, Ben Rampton, Penelope Harvey, and Elizabeth Frazer. 1992. *Researching language: Issues of power and method*. London: Routledge.
- Cushman, Ellen. 1998. *The struggle and the tools: Oral and literate strategies in an inner city community*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hymes, Dell. 1974. *Foundations in sociolinguistics: An ethnographic approach*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Reading Packet:

- Briggs, Charles. 1986. Ch. 3, *Learning how to ask : A sociolinguistic appraisal of the role of the interview in social science research*. London: Cambridge.
- Heath, Shirley Brice. 1982. What no bedtime story means: Narrative skills at home and school. *Language in Society* 11(1):49-76.
- Hernandez, Graciela. 1995. Multiple subjectivities and strategic positionality: Zora Neale Hurston's experimental ethnographies. In Behar, Ruth, and Deborah Gordon (eds.). *Women writing culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 148-165.
- Labov, William. 1984. Field methods of the project on linguistic change and variation. In Baugh, John, and Joel Sherzer (eds.). *Language in use: Readings in sociolinguistics*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. 28-53.
- Kleinman, Sherryl, and Martha A. Copp. 1993. ch.4, *Feelings about participants*. In *Emotions and fieldwork*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage. 27-47.
- Michaels, Sarah. 1981. Sharing time: Children's learning styles and differential access to literacy. *Language in Society* 10(3):423-442.
- Narayan, Kirin. 1997. How native is a "native" anthropologist? In Lamphere, Louise, Helene Ragoné, and Patricia Zavella (eds.) *Situated Lives: Gender and Culture in Everyday Life*. New York: Routledge. 23-41.

Plagiarism Policy:

Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

Disability Needs:

Please inform the instructor of any accommodations that will afford you greater participation in the class. Also, the Office for Disability Services, located in 150 Pomerene Hall, offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODS at 2-3307.

Week 1: The Basics

Agar

- ch 1: Ethnography Reconstructed
- ch 2: The Concept of Fieldwork
- ch 10: Ethnography in Context

Hymes

- ch 1: Toward Ethnographies of Communication
- ch 2: Studying the Interaction of Language and Social Life
- ch 3: Why Linguistics Needs the Sociologist
- ch 4: Social Anthropology, Sociolinguistics, and the Ethnography of Speaking

RP

- Heath, What No Bedtime Story Means
- Michaels, Sharing Time

Week 2: Communicative Ethics

Cameron et al.

- ch 1: Introduction
- ch 2: Scope for Empowerment in Sociolinguistics?
- ch 3: Bilingualism in the Peruvian Andes
- ch 4: About Gender, Race and Class
- ch 5: 'Respect, Please!': Investigating Race, Power and Language

Cushing

- ch.1: Activist methodology

Week 3: The SPEAKING Grid I: *Setting and Scene*

Essay 1: IRB/Human subjects policy comparison

Agar

ch 3: Getting Started

Emerson et al.

ch 1: Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research

ch 2: In the field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes

Cushing

ch 3: African Americans and Quayville

Week 4: The SPEAKING Grid II: *Participants*

Essay 2: Site Observation

Agar

ch 4: Who Are You To Do This?

ch 5: Ethnography

RP

Hernandez, Multiple Subjectivities and Strategic Positionality

Narayan, How Native is a "Native" Anthropologist?

Kleinman & Copp, Feelings about Participants

Week 5: SPEAKING Grid III: Identifying and Representing *Norms of Interaction*

Agar

ch 6: Beginning Fieldwork

ch 7: Narrowing the Focus

RP

Briggs, Learning How to Ask

Labov, Field Methods on the Project on Linguistic Variation and Change

Emerson et al.

ch 3: Writing Up Fieldnotes I: From Field to Desk

ch 4: Writing Up Fieldnotes II: Creating Scenes on the Page

Week 6: SPEAKING Grid IV: *Speech Act Sequences*

Essay 3: Ethnographic Interview Report, with Appendix of Two Interview Modules

Emerson et al.

ch 5: Pursuing Members' Meanings

ch 6: Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing

Cushing

ch 4: The Language of Eviction

ch 5: Institutional Language in an Inner City

ch 6: "Racism Always on the Front of My Mind"

ch 7: "An Everyday Fight for Us to Get Simple Respect"

Week 7: Examining the Tools of Examination

Emerson et al.

ch. 7 Writing an Ethnography

Agar

ch 8: Informal to Formal: Some Examples

Cushing

ch 8: The Transfer of Language in Gatekeeping Interactions

ch 9: Evaluating the Tools

ch 10: "Your Honor, I Just Can't Control Him Anymore"

ch 11: Language and Power in the Everyday

Weeks 8 and 9: Data Analysis

Class time during these two weeks will be devoted to workshopping data and developing next steps. Come to class with 1) transcription and audio/videotape of 2 interviews; 2) transcription and audio/videotape of two non-interview speech events in which you were a participant-observer; and 3) 1-2 written texts from your field site. We will use this data as a jumping-off point to work through problems or issues that have arisen during your research, and to narrow and specify your research questions for your final project.

Week 10: Final presentations

Final Paper: Due two weeks after the last day of class. Be sure to include the following:

- 1) 8-page conference paper
- 2) 3-4-page reflection on the process of conducting your research
- 3) 1-page discussion of future directions to take the project
- 4) Appendix including:
 - revised site observation
 - 5 interview modules
 - 1 analysis of a speech event loosely following Hymes' SPEAKING grid categories