

**TOPICS IN COMMUNICATION AND ETHNOGRAPHY:
SURF, COMMUNICATION, & CULTURE (WI)
COM 451 3 Credits**

University of Hawaii, Hilo

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Office Hours: Monday: 1-4:30 pm; Friday 3:00-4:00pm; consultation daily is available by email

Class Meets: Monday-Friday K 110

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Readings and assignments are designed to teach students ethnographic methods with a focus on the implications of positioning research within a specific context. Ethnographic research methods are learned while interacting with the environment, people, and cultures of the island of Hawaii. Students are provided the opportunity to collect data in the field by participating and observing (writing field notes, videotaping, and/or audiotaping) interviewing (videotaping or audiotaping), and investigating texts (documents, diaries, photographs, films, etc.). A variety of new ethnographic forms such as autoethnography, co-constructed narrative, interactive interviewing, creative non-fiction, poetry, fiction, and performance are introduced.

OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

- use ethnographic methods, describe their philosophical assumptions, discuss theoretical and ethical issues
- experiment with a variety of ethnographic approaches
- apply criteria for judging ethnographic work and evaluate current exemplars
- try a variety of ethnographic techniques and writing strategies and
- produce an ethnographic project based on their interactions with the environment, people, cultures on the island of Hawaii.

TEXTS:

Required:

- 1). Goodall, H. L. (2000). *Writing the New Ethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press.
- 2). Additional readings as selected by the student. You must read a minimum of two ethnographies.

Recommended:

Dancing the Wave: Audacity, Equilibrium, and Other Mysteries of Surfing by Jean-Etienne Ponier. (2003). Shambala Press.

Clair, R. P. (Ed.). (2003). *Expressions of Ethnography*. New York: SUNY

OTHER SUPPLIES:

Cassette or mini cassette recorder and 2 tapes
Composition Note Book
Binder with Pockets
Sunscreen

GRADES:

10%	-	Attendance/Participation
10%	-	Journal
50%		Written Assignments (10% Each):
		#1 Positioning (3-5 pages)
		#2 Surfing the Literature (3-5 pages)
		#3 Testing the Water (3-5 pages)
		#4 Who's In the Line Up (3-5pages)
		#5 Sets (3-5) pages
10%		Final Presentation
20%		Final Project

Attendance and Participation (10%)

Attendance is a central part of your responsibility in this class (not to mention, an important part of your grade in the class). Missing class, arriving late, or leaving early detracts from the class. Since we are utilizing class as a vehicle for discussion and feedback, it is essential that you keep up with the readings and listen effectively so that you can provide your classmates with informed critiques of their work. We all play a part in building and maintaining a class culture that is challenging and supportive.

Written Assignments

My policy is **NO LATE PAPERS**. Please hand in two copies of all assignments; be sure to keep a copy of all work that is turned in.

Written Assignments (10% each)

One of the best ways to make steady progress in developing your capabilities as an ethnographer is to complete small individual assignments that move you closer and closer to your goal for the final project. Ethnographic research requires:

- ◆ Developing proficiency at the key methods of data collection—interviewing, observing, taking field notes, and continual curiosity.
- ◆ Daily contact with the people you are studying and the context within which they communicate.
- ◆ Daily reading, writing and rewriting (synthesizing, taping, editing, analyzing).
- ◆ Reflections about yourself as a researcher and including these reflections into your texts.

Journal

Ethnographers begin their research by writing field notes. Therefore, you are required to keep a bound journal of your field notes that includes a minimum of two entries a week. Journals will be submitted at the end of the fourth week of class, and must be a minimum of ten pages. Entries could include observations, conversations, media clippings, and/or reflections about your feelings or impressions about surf culture. Include the date of the entry and number the pages. Here are some questions to get you started: Why do you surf? Who do you go with? What do you talk about? What do you do? When do you go? Where? What do you read, see, or hear about surfing in the media? If you don't surf (or surf enough), what is preventing you? What do you hear others say about surfing?

#1: Finding your position

Write 3-5, typed double-spaced, pages answering the following questions. Where do you come from? What do you know about surfing and surf culture? How do you know it? Define surfing; use a metaphor to describe it. What do you know about surf culture here on the Big Island? How do you know it? What would you like to learn about during this session? Write out one question you would like answered and one issue, idea, or problem you would like to contemplate. Submit two copies.

#2: Surfing the Literature

What can research, other ethnographers and surfers teach us about surfing and culture? How might the literature shed new light on your topic and/or help you develop your question?

Identify, read, copy, cite, annotate, and analyze two articles. The first will be a piece of ethnographic research from an academic journal or volume. The second article will be about surfing, it may or may not be an ethnography. The second article can be any relevant piece of research, a magazine article, or book chapter. Summarize each article separately (one page) and include a page or two of analysis (for each). The total number of pages for this assignment should be no more than five, typed, double-spaced pages.

Our class will attend a session in the library that will help you locate sources for this assignment. Present one of your articles and your analysis to the class. Be sure to make two copies your paper and each article, correctly cite them using APA format, and photocopy bibliography pages.

#3: Testing the Water

Immerse yourself in observing and practicing the writing of field notes. Utilize all of your senses—sight, sound, smell, touch, taste, and emotion. Bring in a typed, double-spaced, 3-5 page story developed from your field notes. We will use class time to compare stories. You may write your story in any form you wish: as a first-person narrative where you and/or the group are central or minor characters, or in the third person from the point of view of a distant observer outside of the scene; you may write it as a short story, play, poem, theory, or as a realist, impressionist, or confessional tale (see Goodall, p. 66). Your story may include: dialogue, character development, scene descriptions, reflexivity, and interpretations. You may use the style that is most comfortable for you, or be daring and try something you have never tried before. Submit two copies.

#4: Who's in the Line Up?

If appropriate, and permission has been granted, experiment with interviewing individuals connected in some way to your research topic whom you believe could tell a story that would provide insight about your research. Explain the general focus of your research and arrange a time for the interview. Write a 3-5, page, typed, double-spaced, story that introduces the interviewee and/or who you are in the scene. This does not include your transcription pages, which will be attached as an appendix.

- ◆ Be sure to tape-record or a video tape your interviews. (Be sure that your recorder works and is functioning properly during the interview.)
- ◆ Devise an interview schedule with an opening, approximately three to five questions that elicit stories about the focus of your research, and a closing. Make sure that a few of the questions ask participants to recall and tell a story about a particular time, incident, moment. Ask them to describe, in a much detail as possible, what happened, who was there, what was said. In this way they describe specific interactions and not just what they believe is generally true.
- ◆ Listen to the interview and select a compelling section of the interview for transcription.

- ◆ Type up a verbatim transcription five minutes (minimum) of the interview. Append the transcription to your paper. Include in your paper a discussion of the reasons you selected to transcribe that particular part of the interview. Weave into the transcript, field notes that describe your experience of conducting the interview and interacting with the interviewee (setting, sensory data, and reflexivity—before, during and after the interview). After typing up the transcript/fieldnotes, read it over several times and consider the following to help you analyze the interview: What discoveries might be made from the interview (i.e., tell us what you learned that isn't already obviously there). Consider you're the ways your identity and perspective could be influencing the interview. Change positions and see if you can generate a different interpretation of the interview.
- ◆ Finally, close with a description of ideas for representing what you discovered. For example, you could provide an insight about how you could weave this interview with other data: observation data, archival, photographs, other interview data, or other forms of data. Or you could tell us how this interview has inspired you to consider a particular structure for the overall results of your final project.

#5: Sets

After completing your final presentation, submit a typed, double-spaced, 3-5 page paper, discussing your interpretations of the communication occurring at the research site or in regard to your topic. Address the way this course and your fieldwork and writing have address the question you posed at the beginning of the semester. How would you answer it? What insights have you gained regarding your topic for contemplation? How has your question changed? What new questions do you have? Your interpretations may also speculate about what is **not** revealed, "patterned holes" observed regarding topics that haven't been talked about. Relate your research to works of other scholars who are exploring relevant questions and themes. Include relevant citations in APA format.

Final Project: Proposal and Ethnography (20%)

Proposal: In a few paragraphs describe the context, issue, and communication phenomenon you are interested in studying more for the remainder of this semester. What is the mystery? Attempt to write ONE or TWO research questions that you see as the central focus of your research or the central mystery you plan to explore. If appropriate, accompany your proposal with a photograph, song lyric, or quotation that expresses the theme you are interested in investigating. (To prepare for your final project proposal, read writing experiment #2 and #3 on pages 80-81 in Goodall). Describe how you might proceed to create an ethnography based on your area of interest.

Project: Your final project represents a synthesis of your semester-long investigation. It will include relevant revisions of your earlier writing. The form of the final project is open; you may choose to use video, performance, poetry, or write a final paper. In any case, your final project must have a written component that will include a well-organized portfolio that contains revisions of all your earlier writing, your journal, and writing assignment #5.

SPECIAL NEEDS:

If you have a documented learning disability and would like to request accommodation please contact the University Disability Services at 933-0816 (V), 933-3334 (TTY), Campus Center Room 311, as early in the semester as possible. If there is anything else I can do to help you succeed in this course, please come and talk with me.