Course Description and Objectives

Catalog: The interactional basis of communication in normal everyday living. Students analyze face-to-face and mediated communication using ethnographic methods. Pre: 201 and junior standing, or consent.

Detailed: This course is designed as an introduction to ethnography as it is used in the field of communications research. We will focus on the principal methods in ethnography, including participant observation, field studies, interviews, focus groups, and archival research. In addition, students will build an understanding of the relevant ethical and practical considerations in designing ethnographic research. Finally, the readings and activities are designed to help students with future research endeavors, such as those required by senior thesis/project (Com490).

At the end of the semester students are expected to:
- understand the predominant ethnographic designs and methods used by communication scholars;
- read the social science literature and popular press, and make critical judgments about the value of the research;
- better understand the link between communication theories and ethnographic research; and
- have the ability to conduct research that applies the methodological practices, principles, and methods learned in the course.
Required Reading:


Optional/recommended readings (these or similar titles):

- Perecman, E & S. Curran (2006). *A handbook for social science field research: essays & bibliographic sources on research design and methods*

Each student is responsible for finding additional resources as necessary for their particular research project, based on their location & needs. However, independent of physical location, online resources are widely available through The Voyager system of Hamilton Library as well as Google Scholar: [http://scholar.google.com/](http://scholar.google.com/)

**Assessment and Grades**

You will be evaluated based on your participation and contribution to classes, practical application assignments, exams, continuous self-assessment and final project. See below for details on the grading criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Criteria</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Points (100 Total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation &amp; Contributions online (6wkX5pt)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical application assignments (2X15 pts each)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams (mid-term &amp; final)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final project: synthesis of assignments 1&amp;2++</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous assessment self-reports (5X1pt. each)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor assessment for the semester</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Contributions - Regular online attendance is mandatory for this course, particularly because this is a participation-intensive course in which everyone is expected to contribute to the class discussions and exercises. During each week's online sessions, you may be asked to engage in short assignments. The thoughtful completion of these assignments counts toward the "Participation and Contribution" portion of your grade. Participation and contribution are based on your (a) familiarity with readings; (b) ability to understand what others say; (c) ability to express yourself clearly; (d) ability to synthesize the thoughts of others to form new insights or questions; (e) ability to disagree constructively; and (f) ability and willingness to cooperate in building a consistent stimulating and supportive intellectual atmosphere in the class, in person or online.

Practical Application Assignments - Practical application assignments are designed to give you experience in applying and further developing the content learned from our readings and course discussions. These assignments will require written documentation (4-5 pages each) regarding your experience or learnings from the activity. The following is a brief description of sample assignments; further information will be provided for each activity. Each paper will be reviewed with feedback on writing and content and may be resubmitted early as many times as necessary as long as final due dates are observed - with no exceptions. Each assignment will focus on a different ethnographic method, and one data analysis segment will be required by mutual agreement.

- Developing a qualitative research question for ethnographic studies
- Observing group interactions or field interviewing
- Analyzing data

Final Project - Actual project experience and reflection on that experience are critical to the learning process. As a part of one or both earlier paper
assignments, you will conduct a small-scale study which will ultimately include the entire research process (from its inception to reporting the results) using appropriate research methods to address a question or problem in the field of communications. You may collaborate with another student, but if you plan to do so, you must begin seeking a partner with similar interests immediately and make your intents known no later than the end of second week of class. A more detailed project requirements description will be distributed separately.

**Continuous Self-Assessment** - Five times [max. once per week after the first week] during the course of this semester you will assess the progress and outcome of your own work for this class and submit the results, regardless of how little or how much you have to report. There is no grade assigned to the contents but each time you must meet the deadline requirement and report your own progress, hold-ups or self-discoveries. Each report (two-paragraphs to one-page max write-up) will receive a 1 point credit if submitted on time; the last one to be reserved for end-of-semester self-evaluation.

**Policies**

There will be two types of written assignments: Formal paper submissions and online discussions via threaded discussions or email. All interactions in this course will be computer-mediated as I will not be holding face to face or telephone conversations during the course of this semester.

Formal paper assignments should be word processed (MS Word or text format), double-spaced, with one-inch margins using 10 or 12 point type. All papers should be carefully proofread to reflect your high level of care and diligence in the preparation process. Assignments which contain too many errors based on carelessness will be returned to you, un-graded. There is an expectation that you have the ability to write formally and coherently. I will provide feedback for each assignment [except the final paper] and offer the opportunity for you to revise and resubmit early or on-time assignments as many time as you wish until full credit; however, any submission received after June 27 will be considered “final” and is not subject to revision. If you
are not confident of your writing skills, you need to seek additional, outside help so that you may succeed in meeting the course requirements.

Informal online interactions will not be scrutinized as carefully for grammar and spelling; however, I will assume that as a matter of courtesy and self-preservation you will each use a grammar-checker and spell-checker prior to posting your contributions online. [guidelines & justifications are noted elsewhere]

**Self-Motivation and Self-Regulation** - self-motivation is a prerequisite to successfully completing this course. It is critical that you are able to regulate your own behavior in keeping up with the expectations of the course. This is not so much an "anytime, anywhere" course as it is an "all-the-time, everywhere" effort: You need to be an active observer of your environment and recognize within the confines of this course that we are a part of a cohort that will be moving through every step of the course in a consistently active manner.

There will be constant & consistent reading & writing & sharing & otherwise active participation & contribution. The course is only as effective as we choose to make it! I will have no way of knowing you are "with" us unless I see active & consistent presence online.

**WI statement [UHM policy]**: Students must adequately complete all writing assignments to pass the course with a grade of D or better. Students who do not complete all writing assignments will get a D- or an F and will not earn WI Focus credit.

**Code of Conduct [UHM policy]**: any work submitted by a student registered for this class is construed to be the work of that student alone - unless otherwise identified as collaborative work with a classmate or as belonging to someone else [with full academic references]. Plagiarism is a most serious case of misconduct that may results in expulsion from the University; but at the very least will earn a grade of F for the work submitted and potentially for the course itself. Please acquaint yourself with the UHM student code of conduct. Be especially cognizant of Section H, Academic Dishonesty: [http://www.hawaii.edu/student/conduct](http://www.hawaii.edu/student/conduct)
**Consent** - Continued enrollment in this class beyond the first meeting will be taken as an indication that you fully understand and agree to the terms defined in this course description and syllabus. If you discover something that will become a problem for your particular situation as a student, please discuss it with me immediately.

**Unless otherwise noted:**

*ALL weekly or bi-weekly assignments are due by 9:00AM HST each Tuesday*

[Avoid disappointments! Post a day or two ahead of deadlines as no late credit is possible regardless of technical glitches in the “final moments”! There is no reason for late postings as deadlines are set well ahead of each assignment’s due date! No make-ups or incomplete grades are given without a documented medical excuse but Goodwill Credits are routinely considered for late postings to your own blog area! No extra credit work will replace the full value of required assignment.]