

COM 7365 (Fall 2017)
Ethnographic Methods for Communication Research
AKA
“A Collaborative Ethnography of Water Access in Metro Detroit”

Instructor: Dr. Rahul Mitra

Course Time/Days: Tuesdays, 6-8:30 p.m.

Course Location: 262 Manoogian Hall

Instructor's Office Location: 541 Manoogian Hall

Instructor's Email Address: rahul.mitra@wayne.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-6 pm, and by appointment

Course Description:

Ethnography involves the in-depth study of social phenomena in a particular context, and is used by scholars of anthropology, communication, sociology, psychology, public policy, management, and other fields. This course will focus on how ongoing communication practices shape intersubjective, situated ways of knowing and knowledge. We will cover some key methods of data collection (field research), data analysis, and writing/re-presenting ethnography. Course assignments include: field exercises throughout the semester to help you build research skills, online response papers for the assigned readings, and a final end-of-term paper.

During this semester, we will undertake a collaborative ethnography—as a class—that examines public sense-making of water in Metro Detroit. Several of the empirical readings for this course thus address ecological, water and urban-related themes. Your field exercises and final paper will also be in this vein, and should end up contributing raw data for this project. (After the semester closes, I will set up a research team drawing from the class members, and we will further fine-tune and extend this project.)

This graduate seminar will be discussion- rather than lecture-based. Thus, for it to be a meaningful experience, you will NEED to attend class every day, complete ALL assigned readings, submit assignments on time, and participate actively in class discussions.

Learning Outcomes:

Specific learning outcomes for this class include for you to be able to:

1. Learn how communication research contributes to ethnography, and vice versa.
2. Engaging with different epistemological perspectives on ethnography given the method's diverse roots.
3. Acquire the unique skills in conducting ethnographic research (e.g., participant observation, in-depth observation, mapping, performance ethnography).
4. Use ethnographic research to address pressing social problems.
5. Produce deliverables (e.g., final paper) to enhance your scholarly development, for submission to academic conferences and journals.

PLEASE NOTE UNIVERSITY POLICY: IF YOU ARE NOT ENROLLED AND HAVEN'T ATTENDED MY CLASS BY SEP. 13, THE REGISTRAR WILL ADMINISTRATIVELY WITHDRAW YOU FROM THE CLASS AND YOUR FINANCIAL AID WILL BE ADJUSTED ACCORDINGLY.

REQUIRED Texts:

Pink, S. (2015). *Doing sensory ethnography* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

In addition, we will be using various academic articles and book chapters (see schedule), which will be available through Blackboard.

RECOMMENDED Resources:

Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

American Psychological Association (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Website: <http://www.apastyle.org/manual/index.aspx>

For a quick guide, you can look up: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/1/>

Wayne State University Library has a Communication Guide at:

<http://guides.lib.wayne.edu/content.php?pid=72657&sid=538050>

In addition, you can contact the Wayne State University Writing Center at:

<http://clasweb.clas.wayne.edu/writing>

Prerequisites: Graduate standing.

Assignments:

Your grade in this class will depend on the following assignments.

1. In-class Participation & Online Responses: 60 pts. (10) + (5X10=50)

I expect you to attend EACH AND EVERY class, barring major emergencies and/or illness, in which case you should notify me via email before class. I expect engaged discussions during class, so that you must participate actively, both asking and answering questions. Please also make sure that you are ON TIME for each class. 10 points are allotted on the basis of the professor's impression of your general engagement and participation in class.

A further 50 points will be allotted on the basis of ANY FIVE weekly online responses, via Blackboard (5X10=50 pts.). Your response should be 700-800 words, and analyze the readings assigned for that week. You may *critique, extend, or apply the readings; you should connect the readings to the central theme of the week* (e.g., "ethnography of communication," "interviewing," "participation ↔ observation"). Your online response for the week should be posted by 5.30 pm on the day of class; late entries will NOT be accepted for ANY REASON.

This assignment satisfies learning outcomes 1 and 2.

2. Field Assignments: 10X9=90 pts.

You will complete 9 field assignments during the course of the seminar. Each assignment will ask you to complete a particular task, and write a 3-4 pg. (double spaced) response

paper describing why and what you did. PLEASE BE AS REFLECTIVE AS POSSIBLE IN YOUR PAPERS, since a crucial goal of these field assignments is to examine our own research practices vis-à-vis the contexts studied. More details will be forthcoming later.

- 1). CITI Training: <http://irb.wayne.edu/mandatory-training.php>
- 2) Interviewing
- 3) Participant observation
- 4) Computer-mediated communication (CMC)
- 5) Survey
- 6) Mapping
- 7) Coding
- 8) Photo re-presentation
- 9) Narrative

This assignment satisfies learning outcomes 2, 3, and 4.

3. Final Paper: 25+25=50 pts.

Your final paper has TWO interrelated components.

- 1) Drawing on the readings and discussions engaged in over the course of the semester, you will conduct 3-4 interviews with residents of Metro Detroit, each lasting 20-40 minutes each. (See Blackboard for the interview protocol, with demographic questions.) Your interviewees should be a mix of people familiar to you and strangers, suburban AND urban. (Note: “Resident of Metro Detroit” means that they live within the counties of Wayne, Oakland, or Macomb, in Michigan.) You may use “snowball sampling” to recruit interviewees; they should NOT be students enrolled at WSU, however. You should ALSO “interview” yourself, using the protocol. You should audio-record all these interviews and make them available to me via OneDrive on WSU Connect, along with demographic details or interviewees and any transcriptions (please use pseudonyms for interviewees you contact.). (25 pts.)
- 2) Write a personal narrative (8-10 pages, Times New Roman, 12 size font) stemming from your experiences and thoughts, reflecting on your own sense-making of water access in the Metro Detroit context. Your narrative should be informed by the interviews of Phase 1. *You should especially pay attention to how everyday stories, interactions, and discourse frames communicatively constitute your (and the public’s) sense-making of water.* You are encouraged (but not required) to compile “field notes” based on your own life and reflections, from early on in the semester, related to this project. You may use these field notes in your personal narrative.

This is NOT a traditional research paper, so you should not cite references; rather you should think and write creatively for this paper. (Theory and research play more of a background role in shaping your narrative here, rather than being featured up-front and central in the narrative.) Consider different narrative elements that make your work a compelling read. For instance, you might use a combination of prose and poem, or set this up as an autobiography, or shift among

timelines (to suggest some options). We will both discuss and practice personal narrative writing in-class on 11/28 and 12/5. (25 pts.)

This assignment satisfies learning outcomes 3, 4 and 5.

Grading:

To review, your course grade will be determined by:

1. In-class Participation & Online Responses: 60 pts.
 2. Field Assignments: 90 pts.
 3. Final Paper: 50 pts.
- TOTAL: 200 pts.

For all assignments, you will be graded on the following parameters:

- Engaged and active participation in class and online
- Clarity of meaning and presentation (including spelling, grammar, and punctuation)
- Effective and ethical data gathering
- Effective and ethical organizing of material
- Persuasiveness of your arguments/analysis
- Adherence to set guidelines (e.g., APA style for final paper)

Final grades will be assigned according to a standard scale:

186 – 200	A	93%+
180 – 185	A-	90%+
174 – 179	B+	87%+
166 – 173	B	83%+
160 – 165	B-	80%+
154 – 159	C+	77%+
140 – 153	C	70%+
134 – 139	D+	67%+
126 – 133	D	63%+
120 – 125	D-	60%+
119 and below	F	below 60%

Incompletes: Incompletes are reserved for extraordinary circumstances such as personal emergencies that can be documented. An incomplete is granted when in the judgment of the instructor a student can successfully complete the work of the course without attending regular class sessions. Incompletes, which are not converted to a letter grade within one year, will automatically revert to an F (failing grade).

Withdrawing from Class: Students who withdraw from a course after the end of the 4th week of class will receive a grade of WP, WF, or WN.

- WP will be awarded if the student is passing the course (based on work due to date) at the time the withdrawal is requested
- WF will be awarded if the student is failing the course (based on work due to date) at the time the withdrawal is requested

- WN will be awarded if no materials have been submitted, and so there is no basis for a grade

Please be advised that withdrawing from a class has severe consequences; for this reason, please treat it as a matter of last resort and consult me before you withdraw.

For more information, please refer to:

<http://finaid.wayne.edu/receiving/withdrawing.php>

Students must submit their withdrawal request on-line through Pipeline. The instructor must approve the withdrawal request before it becomes final, and students should continue to attend class until they receive notification via email that the withdrawal has been approved. Students who stop attending but do not request a withdrawal, will receive an automatic F (failing grade).

Make-up Work and Extra Credit: There is no extra credit for this class. All work must be submitted on time by the set deadline. There is no provision for “make-up work” unless there are very strong extenuating circumstances.

Grade Appeals: The college policy for appealing a final grade can be found at:

<http://www.cfpc.wayne.edu/files/FinalGradeAppeal.pdf>

Policy Statements

Attendance: You are expected to attend and participate actively in class. No cell phone use in class, unless approved by the instructor beforehand. If you are using tablets and/or laptops, I expect you to be ONLY using them for class-work, otherwise a distracting environment often results.

Blackboard: Readings for this class will be posted on Blackboard, so please look up the course page regularly. Call C&IT at (313) 577-4778 if you have problems accessing Blackboard.

Disabilities: If you have a documented disability that requires accommodations, you will need to register with Student Disability Services (SDS) for coordination of your academic accommodations. The Student Disability Services (SDS) office is located at 1600 David Adamany Undergraduate Library in the Student Academic Success Services department. SDS telephone number is 313-577-1851 or 313-577-3365 (TDD only). Once you have your accommodations in place, I will be glad to meet with you privately during my office hours to discuss your special needs. Student Disability Services’ mission is to assist the university in creating an accessible community where students with disabilities have an equal opportunity to fully participate in their educational experience at Wayne State University.

Please be aware that a delay in getting SDS accommodation letters for the current semester may hinder the availability or facilitation of those accommodations in a timely manner. Therefore, it is in your best interest to get your accommodation letters as early in the semester as possible.

Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty: Materials that are clearly not the student's own work or which are not appropriately documented will be subjected to close scrutiny. All acts of academic dishonesty including cheating and plagiarism will be treated as violations of appropriate student conduct and will be subject to disciplinary action. The University Due Process Policy can be

found at: <http://www.doso.wayne.edu/judicial/index.htm>. Students should not use work that was substantively done for other classes unless otherwise approved by the instructor.

Religious Observances: It is Wayne State's policy to respect the faith and religious obligations of students, faculty and staff. Students with exams or classes that conflict with their religious observances should notify me well in advance so that we can work out a mutually agreeable alternative.

Other Policies: Since this is a graduate seminar, I encourage and expect the active participation of all class members. Please keep in mind the need to respect the diversity of opinions and values that may be expressed in class, and the ensuing need for civil and respectful discussions.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Sep 5: Review of Syllabus

Sep 12: Ethnography & the Communication Discipline

Goffman, E. (1989). On fieldwork. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 18, 123-132.

Conquergood, D. (1991). Rethinking ethnography: Toward a critical cultural politics. *Communication Monographs*, 58, 179-194.

Jackson, J.L., Jr. (2008). Toward an ethnographic lingua franca: Communication and anthropology. *Journal of Communication*, 58, 664-678

Sep 19: Sensory Ethnography

Pink (2015): Chapters 1-3

FA1 DUE: CITI TRAINING

Sep 26: Interviewing

Pink (2015): Chapter 4

Garavan, M. (2013). Local lives and conflict: Towards a methodology of dialogic research. In F. Fahy, & H. Rau (Eds.), *Methods of sustainability research in the social sciences* (pp. 72-87). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Clark-Ibanez, M. (2004). Framing the social world with photo-elicitation interviews. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 47, 1507-1527

Oct 3: Participation ↔ Observation

Pink (2015): Chapter 5

Anand, N. (2012). Municipal disconnect: On abject water and its urban infrastructures. *Ethnography*, 13, 487-509.

Johnson, J.C., Avenarius, C., & Weatherford, J. (2006). The active participant-observer: Applying social role analysis to participant observation. *Field Methods*, 18, 111-134.

FA2 DUE: INTERVIEWING

Oct 10: Ethnography of Communication

Carbaugh, D., & Boromisza-Habashi, D. (2015). Ethnography of communication. *The international encyclopedia of language and social interaction* (pp. 1-16).

Philipsen, G. (1975). Speaking like a man in Teamsterville: Culture patterns of role enactment in an urban neighborhood. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 61, 13-22.

Sprain, L., & Boromisza-Habashi, D. (2013). The ethnographer of communication at the table: Building cultural competence, designing strategic action. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 41, 181-187.

Witteborn, S., Milburn, T., & Ho, E.Y. (2013). The ethnography of communication as applied methodology: Insights from three case studies. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 41, 188-194.

FA3 DUE: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Oct 17: Mediated Fieldwork

Pink (2015): Chapter 6

- Walley, C.J. (2015). Transmedia as experimental ethnography: The Exit Zero Project, deindustrialization, and the politics of nostalgia. *American Ethnologist*, 42, 624-639.
- Marciano, A. (2014). Living the VirtuReal: Negotiating transgender identity in cyberspace. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 19, 824-838.

Oct 24: Collaborative (Public) Ethnography

- May, R.A.B., & Patillo-McCoy, M. (2000). Do you see what I see? Examining a collaborative ethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 6, 65-87.
- Lassiter, L.E. (2005). Collaborative ethnography and public anthropology. *Current Anthropology*, 46, 83-106.
- Mosher, H. (2013). A question of quality: The art/science of doing collaborative public ethnography. *Qualitative Research*, 13, 428-441.
- FA4 DUE: CMC FIELDWORK**

Oct 31: Empiricism and Mixed Methods

- Short, J.F., Jr., & Hughes, L.A. (2009). Urban ethnography and research integrity: Empirical and theoretical dimensions. *Ethnography*, 10, 397-415.
- Schmitt, T.M., & Schmitt, R.L. (1990). Constructing AIDS policy in the public schools: A multimethod case study. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 19, 295-321
- Paerregaard, K., Stensrud, A.B., & Andersen, A.O. (2016). Water citizenship: Negotiating water rights and contesting water culture in the Peruvian Andes. *Latin American Research Review*, 51, 198-217.

Nov 7: Mapping

- Kornberg, D. (2016). The structural origins of territorial stigma: Water and racial politics in Metropolitan Detroit, 1950s-2010s. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 40, 263-283.
- White, D., & Stephenson, R. (2014). Using community mapping to understand family planning behavior. *Field Methods*, 26, 406-420.
- Murphy, E., & King, E.A. (2013). Mapping for sustainability: Environmental noise and the city. In F. Fahy, & H. Rau (Eds.), *Methods of sustainability research in the social sciences* (pp. 133-151). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- FA5 DUE: SURVEY**

Nov 14: Interpreting & Coding

We will meet at 456 Manoogian (one of the Dept. Labs), where we will learn how to use Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software

- Pink (2015): Chapter 7
- Ryan, G., & Bernard, R. (2003). Techniques to identify themes. *Field Methods*, 15, 85-109.
- Dany, V., Bajracharya, B., Lebel, L., Regan, M., & Taplin, R. (2016). Narrowing gaps between research and policy development in climate change adaptation work in the water resources and agriculture sectors of Cambodia. *Climate Policy*, 16, 237-252.
- FA6 DUE: MAPPING**

National Communication Association Conference: 11/16-11/19 (Dallas, TX)

Nov 21: Writing & Re-presenting

- Pink (2015): Chapter 8

Ellis, C. (2007). Telling secrets, revealing lives: Relational ethics in research with intimate others. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13, 3-29.

Harper, D. (2003). Framing photographic ethnography: A case study. *Ethnography*, 4, 241-266.

FA7 DUE: CODING

Thanksgiving Break: 11/22-11/25: NO CLASS

Nov 28: Performance & Personal Narrative

We will watch Professor Kelly Donnellan's film (45 min.) "I is another" in class.

Soyini Madison, D. (2007). Performing ethnography: The political economy of water.

Performance Research, 12, 16-27.

Helmreich, S. (2007). An anthropologist underwater: Immersive soundscapes, submarine cyborgs, and transductive ethnography. *American Ethnologist*, 34, 621-641.

Zito, A. (2014). Writing in water, or, Evanescence, enchantment and ethnography in a Chinese urban park. *Visual Anthropology Review*, 30, 11-22.

FA8 & FA9 DUE: PHOTO & NARRATIVE

Dec 5: WORKSHOP (NB: not eligible for online response set)

Scarduzio, J. A., Giannini, G. A., & Geist-Martin, P. (2011). Crafting an architectural blueprint: Seven principles of design for ethnographic research. *Symbolic Interaction*, 34, 447-470.

Dec 12: FINAL PAPERS DUE: Interview files via OneDrive, narrative via SafeAssign

HAVE A GREAT WINTER BREAK!

Suggested Monographs on Ethnography

Methods

- Alvesson, M. (2011). *Interpreting interviews*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bernard, R. (2001). *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Briggs, C.L. (1986). *Learning how to ask: A sociolinguistic appraisal of the role of the interview in social science research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Clair, R.P. (Ed.) (2003). *Expressions of ethnography: Novel approaches to qualitative methods*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Denzin, N. (2003). *Performance ethnography: Critical pedagogy and the politics of culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ellingson, L.L. (2008). *Engaging crystallization in qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ellis, C. (2004). *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira.
- Emerson, R., Fretz, R., & Shaw, L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Goodall, H.L., Jr. (2000). *Writing the new ethnography*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira.
- Lindlof, T., & Taylor, B. (Eds.). (2011). *Qualitative communication research methods (3rd edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pelto, P.J. (2013). *Applied ethnography: Guidelines for field research*. New York: Routledge.
- Saldaña, J. (2013). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Los Angeles, Sage
- Soyini Madison, D. (2012). *Critical ethnography: Method, ethics, and performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Spradley, J.P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Spradley, J.P. (1980). *Participant observation*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell.

Examples of Great Stories

Adams, T. (2011). *Narrating the closet: An autoethnography of same-sex attraction*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Berry, K. (2016). *Bullied: Tales of torment, identity, and youth*. New York: Routledge.

Chawla, D. (2014). *Home, uprooted: Oral histories of India's partition*. Fordham University Press.

De la Garza, S.A. (2004). *Maria speaks: Journeys into the mysteries of the mother in my life as a Chicana*. New York: Peter Lang.

Dougherty, D.S. (2011). *The reluctant farmer: An exploration of work, social class, and the production of food*. Leics, UK: Troubador.

Faulkner, S.L. (2014). *Family stories, poetry, and women's work: Knit four, frog one (poems)*. Boston: Sense Publishers.

Goffman, A. (2014). *On the Run: Fugitive life in an American city*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Goodall, H.L., Jr. (2008). *Writing qualitative inquiry: Self, stories, and academic life*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Paterson, C., & Domingo, D. (Eds.). (2008). *Making online news: The ethnography of new media production*. New York: Peter Lang.

Pensoneau-Conway, Adams, T.E., & Bolens, D.M. (2017). *Doing autoethnography*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Somerville, M. (2016). *Water in a dry land: Place-learning through art and story*. New York: Routledge.