

Spring 2016
AMST 401T: Ethnography
Class time: MW 1:00-2:15pm
Class location: UH-240

Professor Carrie Lane
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Office Hours: MW 9-10; M 2:30-3:30 & by appointment

AMST 401T: American Culture through Ethnography Course Syllabus

Course Description:

In this interdisciplinary seminar students will conduct independent research on aspects of contemporary American culture using ethnographic research methods including interviews and participant-observation. The course offers a rare chance to not just read others' research but to create your own.

Ethnographic research is conducted by actually going out into the field and talking to and observing the people or places you want to know more about. The goal of ethnography is to come to understand and appreciate the variety and complexity of human lives and the fascinating ways culture shapes how we see and act in the world. Students will learn to: conduct open-ended interviews; engage in participant-observation; analyze the complex primary and secondary source materials they collect; and represent the culture they studied through written and oral presentations. Assigned readings will offer pragmatic and intellectual guidance as well as models of exemplary ethnographic scholarship on American culture from a variety of disciplines. In addition to completing all course readings, students are expected to commit significant time outside of class to assignments, fieldwork, and project preparation.

Prerequisites:

AMST 201 and AMST 301

Learning Goals:

This course has multiple learning goals, all of which aim to prepare you to design, conduct, analyze, and present original research. Specifically, this course will help you:

- Probe the concept of culture and the interdisciplinary study thereof;
- Understand the core methods of ethnographic fieldwork, including open-ended interviewing and participant-observation;

- Develop a sophisticated understanding of the ethical dimensions of ethnographic research and the meaning of informed consent;
- Design and undertake original ethnographic research on an aspect of contemporary American culture;
- Sharpen your oral and written communication skills, particularly the ability to represent lived experience through written text;
- Learn to use many of a variety of technologies involved in recording, transcribing, and analyzing ethnographic materials;
- Think more deeply about American culture and the distinct and complex ways individuals and groups make sense of the world around them and their place in it.

Required Texts:

- Mitch Duneier, *Sidewalk* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000)
- Miliann Kang, *The Managed Hand: Race, Gender, and the Body in Beauty Service Work* (UC Press, 2010)
- John VanMaanen, *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography* (U of Chicago Press, 1988)
- Additional required readings are located on our Titanium course website

All books are available at Little Professor Book Center (725 N. Placentia) and the University Bookstore. I don't require specific editions, so feel free to purchase used copies (try www.half.com). Let me know **immediately** if you have any trouble getting the books and I'll do what I can to help out.

Assignment Schedule and Details:

There are no exams for this course, but over the semester you will complete multiple written assignments (listed below) and undertake an independent ethnographic research project on a topic of your choosing. **All research projects must have my approval and each student is required to meet with me to discuss their topic and research plan.** Assignments related to the research project will be due over the course of the semester, culminating in a **final paper of roughly 10-15 pages (15-20 pages for graduate students).**

In evaluating your research papers, I will consider whether you have designed and conducted thoughtful, original research and provided a well-articulated and critical analysis of your findings. Your research paper should also be clearly conceptualized, well organized, and carefully edited.

Graduate Students: Requirements for graduate students differ from those of undergraduate students. Graduate students will write longer final research papers (15-20 pages) and will be required to read and incorporate more secondary sources than undergraduates. Graduate students are expected to demonstrate a higher level of written and oral communication in this class, and I expect that their research papers will include more extensive research and greater analytical depth than that expected of undergraduates. I will meet with graduate students over the semester to determine any additional requirements.

Calendar of Assignments: All assignments are to be submitted by the beginning of class on the due date unless otherwise specified.

2/3	Homework: "Subcultures I Belong To" and "Making the Familiar Strange"
2/17	Homework: Complete Ethics Tutorial
2/29	Project Proposal Draft
3/2	Revised Project Proposal
3/23	Interview Analysis
4/23-5/9	Draft of Final Paper (exact draft deadlines will be determined individually)
5/19	Final Research Paper

Grading Standards and Criteria:

Class Participation	200 points
Project Proposal	150 points
Interview Analysis	150 points
Peer Review	100 points
Final Research Paper (and Draft)	400 points

TOTAL **1000 points**

A+	Over 100%	B	82-87%	C-	70-71%	F	Under 59%
A	92-100%	B-	80-81%	D+	68-69%		
A-	90-91%	C+	78-79%	D	62-67%		
B+	88-89%	C	72-77%	D-	60-61%		

There is no final exam for this course; your final research paper will represent the culmination of the semester's work. No extra credit assignments are currently scheduled. If any are added later in the semester they will be equally available to all students. All grades will be posted in Titanium's Gradebook as soon as they are available. I will use the +/-

grading system in this course. Extensions should be requested well in advance of the assignment deadline. There is no make-up work in this class without a documented excuse.

Academic dishonesty of any type will result in disciplinary action being taken against the student immediately. This includes cheating, helping others cheat, plagiarism, or other dishonest practices. Please refer to University Policy Statement below.

Attendance Policy:

- You are expected to attend each and every class. Attendance will be taken daily.
- You may miss three (3) class meetings without major penalty, although there is of course a natural correlation between your attendance and your in-class participation grade.
- Excessive absences will result in lowering your course grade by one letter grade (4 absences reduces your final grade by 10%, 5 absences by 20%, etc.).
- If you must miss a class because of a documented emergency or university-sponsored event, you will not be penalized. You must notify me of the reason for your absence as soon as possible; in some cases supporting documentation may be required.

Classroom Policies:

For this class to work as it should, all students must be prepared, engaged, and supportive of one another's contributions. Most class hours will be committed to discussing readings and preparing and planning your individual research projects. **For every week during which reading is assigned, students are expected to come to class with at least three questions or comments concerning that week's reading.** Whenever I or your fellow students are talking, I expect you will pay full and engaged attention. This is a matter of courtesy and respect, as well as a crucial way to build and maintain a supportive classroom community.

Your **class participation grade** will depend not only on attendance and frequency of participation, but also on the substance of your participation, and how your contributions contributed to the creation of an engaging and intellectually rigorous seminar. If you cannot or choose not to participate verbally, it is your responsibility to meet with me to determine an alternative method of participation.

Additional tips and warnings:

- Get to class on time. I make most important announcements in the first 5 minutes.
- If you need to arrive late or leave early, please notify me in advance.
- Cellphones must be off (not on vibrate) and stowed away (not on your desk).

- Students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner. Talking when someone else is speaking, sleeping, reading non-class related materials, texting, emailing, etc., are unacceptable behaviors and will result in my asking you to leave the classroom. In short, anything which distracts me or your fellow students is unacceptable. When someone has the floor, whether a fellow student, a guest, or myself, they deserve your undivided attention.
- You may not take notes on computers or audio record lectures unless I give permission that day or if you are specifically authorized to do so by Disabled Student Services.
- Don't be shy with questions—I'm always happy answer your questions, big or small. That said, always check the syllabus, website, and/or assignment sheet before contacting me, in case the answer to your question is already there (e.g., What do we have to read this week?).

Office Hours:

I encourage you to attend office hours or schedule an individual appointment if those hours are not compatible with your schedule. I am always happy to talk with you about the course readings, assignments, and broader questions about American Studies. It is a pleasure to get to know you and your intellectual interests, so never hesitate to drop by with questions or to mull over something you've been thinking about. If you're struggling in this class, come see me sooner, rather than later, so we have time to work together to improve your performance.

Computer Requirements:

To complete this course you must have regular access to a computer with a reasonably fast, reliable Internet connection. You should be comfortable navigating the Internet, downloading files, and sending emails with attachments. Make sure the email address Titanium has for you is one you check regularly, or you'll miss critical communications and updates. If you are not familiar with Titanium, you will need to review CSUF's Titanium support page for students: <http://oasis.fullerton.edu/resources.aspx>. This is also a good first place to check if you have technical questions or problems when accessing or submitting course material. If you are still unable to fix the problem, please contact the University's IT Help Desk via phone at 657-278-7777. If they are unable to help you, or if the technical error continues and interferes with your ability to complete course assignments, email me at ciane@fullerton.edu.

Additional Resources:

The following links provide important information to you, as a student, concerning your rights and responsibilities, as well as emergency preparedness. Please review these carefully.

[**University Policy on Academic Dishonesty**](#)

[**Disabled Student Services**](#)

[**Emergency Policies**](#)

Reading Assignments and Class Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>
January 25 & 27	Introduction: What is ethnography and how do I do it? Reading: None
February 1 & 3	Ethnography of U.S. Culture Reading: De Genova, "The Stakes of an Anthropology of the U.S." Caughey, "The Ethnography of Everyday Life" Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein, "Stepping In & Stepping Out" Due 2/3: "Subcultures I Belong To" and "Making the Familiar Strange"
February 8 & 10	Selecting & Designing a Project Reading: Sample student papers Downing, "Strike a Pose" Zollo, "Friday Night at Iowa 80" Taylor, "Introduction" (from Counter Culture)
February 17 (no class 2/15)	Ethics and Fieldwork Relationships Reading: Duneier, <i>Sidewalk</i> , Intro., pp. 43-80, 173-216, 319-357 Due 2/17: Complete CSUF Human Research Tutorial
February 22 & 24	No Class: Individual Meetings with Professor Reading: None
Feb. 29 & March 2	Interviewing Reading: Wolcott, "Fieldwork: The Basic Arts" Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein, "Researching People" Warren & Karner, "Interview" Due 2/29: Project Proposal Draft Due 3/2: Revised Project Proposal

March 7 & 9	Learning to Observe
	Reading: Warren & Karner, "Setting" Herrmann, "His and Hers" Pascoe, "Becoming Mr. Cougar" Lane, "Rituals of Unemployment"
March 14 & 16	Using Secondary Sources
	Reading: Kang, <i>The Managed Hand</i> , Introduction, Ch. 1-3, Conclusion
March 21 & 23	Analysis
	Readings: Warren & Karner, "Analysis" Ralph, <i>Renegade Dreams</i> , Preface and Introduction
	Due 3/23: Interview Analysis
	* * * Spring Break * * *
April 4 & 6	Ethnographic Writing
	Reading: VanMaanen, <i>Tales of the Field</i>
April 11 & 13	Incorporating Images
	Reading: Bourgois, <i>Righteous Dopefiend</i> , Intro., Ch. 1, 5-7, & Conclusion
April 18 & 20	Editing and Revising
	Reading: Chisera-Strater and Sunstein, "Fieldwriting" (activity boxes optional)
April 25 & 27	Research Paper Workshops
May 2 & 4	Research Paper Workshops
May 9 & 11	Research Paper Workshops
May 19	Final Research Paper (class will not meet during finals week)