

**ANTH 2300 – Summer II, 2018**  
**Reading Culture through Ethnography**

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:30-5:00pm  
140 Richards Hall

Instructor: Dr. Ethel Mickey  
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943 Renaissance Park

Office Hours: Tuesdays 12-1:30pm, or by appointment

**Course Description**

This course is an introduction to ethnography— a key method of cultural anthropology and sociology. Described as both “art” and “science,” ethnographic monographs seek to describe, explain, and interpret cultural difference around the world. However, ethnography has come under increasing scrutiny as critics raise questions about ethnographic authority, cultural representation, and ethical responsibility. This course examines these issues through close readings of both classic and contemporary ethnographies. We will consider a number of central questions. What is the relationship between ethnographic methods and theoretical understandings of culture? How do power differentials—including a researcher’s age, gender, class, and race—affect fieldwork? What are the repercussions of various representations of culture? What responsibilities do anthropologists and sociologists have to the people they study? We will learn to read ethnographies with a critical eye toward their design, effects, and scholarly contributions. Some of the course assignments are designed to give you experience in ethnographic design and data analysis, and students are expected to complete a mini ethnography of a Boston neighborhood in the tradition of classic Chicago school ethnography.

**Assigned Texts:**

1. Robert M. Emerson, ed. 2001. *Contemporary Field Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.
2. Shamus Khan. 2010. *Privilege: The Making of an Adolescent Elite at St. Paul’s School*.
3. CJ Pascoe. 2007. *Dude, You’re a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*.
4. Additional course materials posted on Blackboard. I will frequently use Blackboard to post announcements, assignments, and grades. Please make sure you have access to our course site, and that your email address linked to Blackboard is current.

All books are on reserve at Snell. Pascoe is also available as an E-book through the library. In-class films are available via Snell unless otherwise noted.

**Course Requirements:**

4 Papers

- Paper 1: Response paper to Bourdieu’s *Distinction* (3-pages double-spaced)
- Paper 2: Ethnographic field notes of Boston neighborhood (3-pages double-spaced)
- Paper 3: Mini ethnography of Boston neighborhood (4-6 pages double-spaced)
- Paper 4: Response paper to either Khan or Pascoe (4-6 pages double-spaced). Paper 4

serves as your final exam.

Additional weekly assignments: You will periodically be asked to post short paragraph responses to discussion questions on blackboard. All discussion question responses are due by **noon on the day of the class.**

You are expected to attend class, to have completed required readings ahead of time, and to participate in class discussions. **This is not a lecture course!** At times, I will provide key course concepts and information during short lectures, but you are expected to be actively engaged in discussion. As this is a small class, it will be evident when students have not done the reading. Failure to participate and contribute to the class discussion will impact your overall grade assessment negatively. Please come and see me right away if you anticipate any concerns with participation.

**Grades:**

Class participation and discussion questions	20%
Paper 1	10%
Paper 2	25%
Paper 3	25%
Paper 4	20%

I will not be grading your attendance but keep in mind that more than 1 unexcused absence will negatively impact your participation grade. The summer session is short, and class time is valuable. Powerpoint slides and handouts will be posted on Blackboard, but I will not review course materials outside of class.

In accordance with university and departmental policies, make up assignments or incomplete grades will be given at my discretion only in cases of documented acute serious illness, injury, incapacity, or if official university business prevents a student from being present in class the day of the test. Evidence of such concern is required (e.g. doctor's note). In this case, you must contact me before the assignment due date. If an assignment is late, one letter grade per day will be deducted until it is turned in.

**Grading Scale:** A = 93-100, A- = 90-92, B+ = 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82, C+ = 76-79, C = 73-75, C- = 70-72, D+ = 67-69, D = 63-66, D- = 60-62, F below 59

**Ground Rules**

- **Courtesy and respect:** I expect all of us to treat each other with courtesy and respect at all times. The classroom should be a comfortable learning environment for all of us. This necessitates that we each take responsibility for keeping the classroom free of discrimination, harassment, and intimidation. Debate and disagreements can (and should) occur during the collective learning process, as we will tackle some controversial issues. However, please be advised that all students are expected to respect each other's differing points of views. Students who are disruptive or disrespectful may be

asked to leave the class meeting. In addition, arriving late, leaving early, and walking in and out of class are distracting to those around you.

- **Laptops and electronics.** No laptops or electronics are allowed in this course. Please turn your cell phones off or on silent prior to the beginning of class. No audio or video recordings of class or photographs are permitted without the instructor's permission.
- **Food.** I recognize our class period is long, and I will try to take a mid-way break during each session for us to stretch, use the bathroom, or have a snack. Please try to avoid eating in class except during this break time, as it can be distracting to others.
- **Students with disabilities.** All of us learn in different ways and with varying degrees of success. If you know of any factors that may hinder your ability to complete this course successfully, please let me know as soon as possible. If these factors are recognized disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please provide me with appropriate notification ASAP. If you have not already done so, you may ask for assistance from the Student Disability Resource Center, 20 Dodge Hall, Phone: (617) 373-2675.
- **Academic honesty and integrity.** In accordance with university rules and the "Academic Honesty & Integrity Policy," any form of plagiarism, lying, cheating, or other academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and can result in a failing grade for the assignment or tests. As dishonesty in any form harms the individual, other students, and the university, I strictly enforce policies on academic integrity. I expect that you will familiarize yourself with Northeastern University's Standards of Student Conduct, <http://www.northeastern.edu/osccr/academic-integrity-policy/>. Students who violate university standards of integrity are subject to disciplinary sanctions, including failure in the course and suspension from the university.

### Weekly Course Schedule:

#### **Week 1: What is culture? What is ethnography? How do we "do" ethnography?**

7/3 – Introduction to the course and key concepts

7/5 - Clifford Geertz. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture." (Chp. 1 in CFR reader)

MaryCarol Hopkins. "Is Anonymity Possible? Writing About Refugees in the United States." Pp. 121-129 in *When They Read What We Write* (PDF on Blackboard).

Due: Discussion questions

#### **Week 2: Culture with a Capital C: Bourdieu on taste, class, social space**

7/10 - *Distinction*: A social critique of the judgment of taste, Introduction and excerpt from Chp. 1, "The Aristocracy of Culture," pp.63-69; 74-92. Bourdieu's concept of habitus: pg. 101; 170-172 mid page. (PDF on blackboard)

Due: Discussion questions

7/12 Read *Distinction*, pg. 137 (mid page) – to top of pg. 152. In PDF on blackboard (The Social Space and its Transformations)

**Paper 1 due:** Write a list of questions that you would use to conduct a structured interview, or in a survey on the correlations between class and culture. Write at least 5 questions. Write a 2-page explanation of your research design, i.e. why you have asked these questions, and what answers do you expect your questions to reveal? How do your questions reflect the scope of your study/research?

### **Week 3: Khan on Privilege**

7/17 Read Khan's *Privilege*, select chapters TBA

Due: Selection of Boston neighborhood for mini-ethnography. 1 page, double-spaced description of why you selected this neighborhood, questions you intend to explore, ethnographic methods to be employed, and feasibility. (This will not be graded, but serves as a check-in to keep you on track for Papers 2 and 3).

7/19 *Privilege*, select chapters TBA

Due: Discussion questions

### **Week 4: Urban ethnography and the Chicago tradition**

7/24 Paul Cressey's *The Taxi-Dance Hall*, excerpts (PDF on Blackboard)  
Excerpt from Mitchell Duneier's "Sidewalk" (PDF on Blackboard)  
Mitchell Duneier's "On the Evolution of Sidewalk" (Chp. 7 in CFR reader)

7/26 No readings.

**Paper 2 due:** 3 pages of field notes of a Boston neighborhood. More information to be provided in class.

### **Week 5: Crisis of Representation: Objects, Subjects, Writers, and Readers**

7/31 Please read the texts in this order:

Hurston, Zora Neale. 1992. *Mules and Men*. San Bernadino: Borgo. Pp. 1-37.

Hernández, Graciela. 1995. "Multiple Subjectivities and Strategic Positionality: Zora Neale Hurston's Experimental Ethnographies." Pp.148-165 in *Women Writing Culture*, edited by Ruth Behar and Deborah A. Gordon. Berkeley: University of California Press

Judith Stacey's "Can there be a feminist ethnography?" 1988. *Women's Studies International Forum* 11:21-27. (PDF on Blackboard)

8/2 Davis, Dona L. 1993. "Unintended Consequences: The Myth of 'The Return' In Anthropological Fieldwork." Pp. 27-35 in *When They Read What We Write*, edited by Caroline B. Brettell. Westport, Connecticut: Bergin and Garvey.

D. Lawrence Wieder's "Telling the Convict Code" (Chp. 2 in CFR reader)

### **Week 6: Reflexivity and the Fieldwork Experience: CJ Pascoe**

8/7 Pascoe's *Dude You're a Fag*, select chapters TBA

8/9 NO CLASS – Prof. Mickey in Philadelphia  
**Paper 3 Due:** Mini-ethnography of Boston neighborhood. More information to be provided in class. **Submit paper by 5pm via Blackboard.**

### **Week 7: Advocacy and Future Directions**

8/14 Pascoe's *Dude You're a Fag*, select chapters TBA

8/16 Boellstorff, Tom. 2008. Pp. 3-31, 60-86 in *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*. Princeton University Press. (E-book and PDF on Blackboard)

**Paper 4 due Sunday, 8/19 by midnight via Blackboard:** A Review of Ethnography and Ethnographic Method: Write a 4 - 6 pg. paper on the ethnographic lens of the sociologist. Use either Khan OR Pascoe as your main text for this final paper. How is the ethnography you elected to write about structured, i.e. how is it designed, assembled, made coherent? What are the philosophical and intellectual master plans that inform the contributions of this ethnography? What are the authors' interventions in the discipline of sociology, the literatures they engage with, or even in the ethnographic methods of sociology as a whole? In your analysis, what do these scholarly interventions achieve?