



EDUC 503A: Ethnography and Education

Course:	EDUC 503A: Ethnography and Education
Section:	002
Semester/Term:	Winter One, 2014
Day/Time:	Mondays 4:30 – 7:30pm
Place:	Scarfe 210
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COURSE OUTLINE

This course is designed to introduce students to the complex world of ethnographic research.

Ethnography is essentially the interpretive and descriptive study of culture and social organization through interviews and participant observation (and sometimes documents and artifact collection). Sometimes ethnography is taken up as a singular research tradition with a fixed disciplinary origin and set of methods to be conducted in a neutral fashion, analyzed and presented in a traditional format. This course eschews this approach and instead represents ethnography as a complex activity which needs to be considered in the context of research paradigms (ontology, epistemology, axiology), its own variety (in terms of sub-genres), its relation to complex socio-cultural and political human activity and a variety of possible presentation formats (from essays to skits and short stories).

In ethnography the principal data collection instrument is the researcher and in this course, students will consider themselves researchers and will consider and undertake fieldwork—the essence of ethnographic research, involving data collection in the form of interviews and participant observation in the field. Although they are not often included as pivotal, documents and artifact collection can also be important aspects of ethnographic data. We will also cover data management and analysis. And finally, we will cover making meaning of data (producing findings) and the writing up of ethnographic research.

However, it is important to understand that ethnographic research is not simply practice nor the neutral application of a set of methods to neutrally identified issues. Rather

ethnographic research is engaged in this course as theoretically informed praxis (inextricably imbricated theory and practice) and inherently political in both its own history and approaches and in its practices of inclusion and exclusion of sociocultural difference. Students are strongly encouraged to take the notion of research as praxis as well as the politics of research into account in their conception, design, conducting, analysis, write up and evaluation of ethnographic research.