The mission of The College of Education at Northern Arizona University is to prepare education professionals to create the schools of tomorrow.

Northern Arizona University
College of Education

EDR 612: Ethnographic Research in Education

Frances Julia Riemer, Ph.D. 928/523-0352
Office: COE 162 Frances.Riemer@nau.edu
Fax: 928/523-1929

Course Prerequisites: EDR 610 or instructor’s permission

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on the use of ethnographic research in the study of learning and teaching. Ethnography has been utilized to investigate “formalized systems of education and the enculturation of the child” (Eddy 1985) since at least 1925, and educational anthropology itself has been a formalized field of inquiry since the Stanford Conference on Education and Anthropology of 1954. Over the past 40 years, educational ethnographers have studied cultural transmission, communicative competence, and the discrepancy between home and school cultures, and have examined relationships between education and culture, cognition and culture, school and the labor market, and school and the larger society.

During the semester, students will focus on the ways in which ethnographic research has been utilized to examine the social organization and culture of educational settings. Using clearly articulated criteria, they will both read reports of ethnographic research and be introduced to and practice methods of data collection and analysis. Students will also develop an ethnographic research proposal based upon their specific research interests.

The course is intended both for those who plan to do educational research from an ethnographic perspective and for those who hope to gain a general familiarity with the theoretical assumptions, procedures, and standards of rigor and quality involved in ethnographic research. It provides a foundation for more advanced study of interpretive methods in the study of education. It introduces essential concepts and methods but will not provide for mastery of ethnographic knowledge and skill. For that, further study and experience is necessary. Students who plan to conduct ethnographic research are encouraged to follow this course with Anthropology 569: Ethnographic Research Methods, which provides more specific training in ethnographic methodology and methods.
COURSE OBJECTIVES

In this course we will:

• explore social organization and culture as objects of study in research on learning and teaching;
• examine ethnographic research methodology as it has been and is applied in educational settings;
• discuss issues around ethical concerns and reflect upon the role of educational ethnographer in the field;
• practice a range of data collection and analytic methods for ethnographic research in educational settings;
• develop individual ethnographic research proposals
• explore contemporary uses of ethnography in teacher and practitioner research, educational evaluation, collaborative research, and by critical theorists in the study of learning and teaching.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The class will be a combination of lectures, discussions, and exercises, with expectations of increasing student participation and performance.

REQUIRED TEXTS


An important journal for articles on educational anthropology is *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, published by Council on Anthropology and Education. Once you have selected a field site or research topic, check through the table of contents of AEQ for related articles.

COURSE POLICIES

Regular attendance is expected. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to obtain handouts and class notes from a colleague.

Participation in a learning community involves regular, thoughtful contributions to class discussions and activities, respect for colleagues, and willingness to encourage and support others in their efforts. These behaviors reflect appropriate conduct for a professional educator and cannot be accomplished if you are absent or silent in class. Active class participation is essential.

In order to be an active participant in the learning community, you must complete text selections as indicated for each topic in advance of each class and be prepared to discuss what you have learned in class. For a class of this kind there should be no shortage of opinions. Reading assignments will not be duplicated by class lectures.
All class papers should be completed on a word processor. Inadequately edited work inhibits your ability to communicate ideas to a reader, and will consequently result in a lowered grade. Use APA style for all written papers.

Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, or fraud, cannot be knowingly permitted in a university course. If an individual engages in any one of these activity, the instructor has the right to apply the policy on academic dishonesty as outlined in the NAU Student Handbook, possibly resulting in a penalty ranging from extra course work to a failing grade in the course.

**TOPICS**

**Course overview**
**Social Organization, Culture, and Research on Learning and Teaching**

**A Review of Ethnographic Research in Education**
EQD Chapter 1
Review two ethnographic articles from any recent issue of Anthropology and Education Quarterly. Type and bring a one page paper that addresses the following:

- What are the questions that guide the research projects?
- How was data collected?
- What are the authors’ findings?

**Studying Child Rearing in Traditional Societies**
Margaret Mead *Coming Of Age In Samoa*

**Designing and evaluating an Ethnography of Education**
EQD Chapters 2 and 9
Come to class ready to discuss a possible research topic and to generate research questions.

**How Educational Ethnographers Select And Sample**
EQD Chapter 3
Site selection discussion and exercise

**Enculturation and Socialization in Industrialized and Industrializing Societies**
Alan Peshkin *God's choice: The total world of a Fundamentalist Christian school*

**The Role and Experience of the Educational Ethnographer**
EQD Chapter 4
Review information on IRB guidelines and application kit [http://www2.nau.edu/ovprg/igp.htm](http://www2.nau.edu/ovprg/igp.htm)
Observation discussed and practiced.

**Data Collection Strategies in Educational Ethnographies**
EQD Chapter 6
Interviewing discussed and practiced.

**The Researcher and the Researched**
Harry Wolcott, *Sneaky Kid and its aftermath*
Artifacts and Archives
EQD Chapter 6
Bring to class a list of 10 potential and actual archival sources on your research topic (including web based sources, primary source documents, reports, records).

Analysis of Ethnographic Data
EQD Chapters 7 and 8
Bring three sets of notes from your observation and interview exercises. The notes should include field notes and the typed write-up of your notes.

The Role of Theory in Ethnographic Writing
Review EQD Chapter 5 and Chapter 7, pages 267-278
Bring completed theme/coding chart and emerging patterns diagram

Critical Analysis of School and Society
Michelle Fine Framing dropouts: Notes on the politics of an urban public high school
New ethnography: Critical, Post modern, Feminist, Post-structural influences
On line: Marcus, What Comes (Just) After “Post”? The Case of Ethnography
Lincoln and Denzin, “The Fifth Moment”
Kaomea, “Dilemmas of an Indigenous Academic: A Native Hawaiian story”
Bring draft of your completed IRB applications

Discuss and Submit Ethnographic Research Proposals
ASSIGNMENTS

Ethnography Text Review

Prepare for classes in which the four ethnographic texts will be discussed by addressing the following:
• What is the author’s thesis?
• What questions does the text address?
• What does the analysis tell us about learning and teaching?
• What role does social organization and culture play?
• What questions do the text and readings engender?

Each student will submit a short (1-2 pages) review of each ethnographic text that addresses the above questions. Each student will also act as co-facilitator for one of the sessions (i.e. September 20, October 1, November 1, November 29) devoted to a discussion of an ethnographic text.

When you read, also attend to:
Texture of description as the pattern of variation in narrative detail throughout the texts. Ask yourself, What aspects of the setting and of everyday life are portrayed in specific detail through narrative vignettes and direct quotation from informants, and what aspects are described more generally (synoptically)?

The roles and activities of the researcher involve the access of the researcher to information available in the setting. Where was the ethnographer in terms of time and space? How did she or he relate to those studied in order to obtain the information reported in the text? Where might the researcher have gone to observe that he or she did not, and what might have been asked that wasn’t?

Adequacy of evidence reported refers to the range and amounts of evidence that supported the main assertions about culture and social organization in each setting. What are the substantive points made and what kinds of evidence provide support across different data sources (observation and field notes, interviews, review of site documents, demographic information, videotapes of everyday life etc.)?

Texture of authorial voice in the report involves the diversity (in number and instance) of narrator and commentator voices that appear in the text. Is the author the only narrator? If so, is narrative description done in present or past tense? Does the narrator write in first person? Does the narrator comment on his or her judgments and conclusions and on the uses of evidence to support them? Were competing interpretive conclusions entertained? Are there narrators in addition to the author? Do their voices appear in interview quotes? Did they write commentary that appears in the text? Do they agree or disagree with the main narrator? How does the author handle issues of authority and authorial voice in the text?
Ethnographic Research in Education Proposal

This proposal assignment has been developed to help you examine the ways in which a research topic can be examined using ethnographic methods. This final assignment involves seven main steps:

1. An introduction of the topic and its significance
2. A sketch of the literature review
3. The research questions
4. A description of the research methods
5. The anticipated data analysis
6. A reference list
7. A completed IRB application

Specific instructions (overall length, 15 to 20 pages, double spaced, typed)

1. The topic and its significance (one to two pages)
   What do you plan to study and why?

2. A sketch of the literature review (two pages, four citations)
   Identify at least one controversy in your field to which this study will speak.

3. Research questions (a page)
   “Ethnography all begins with the same general problem: What are the cultural meanings people are using to organize their behavior and interpret their experience?” (Spradley, 1979). Narrow your questions to reflect your research interests and develop two major, initial questions, with one or two subsidiary questions nested within each major question.

3. Methods (five to six pages)
   Describe the proposed setting. Discuss ethical issues involved in beginning the study and how you will deal with such issues as informed consent. Show how you will collect evidence to answer your questions. Identify the range of kinds of evidence you will use and show how the different kinds of evidence bear on your questions. Plan to use observation, interviews, and at least one other method for data collection.

   Discuss data collection in terms of a time line. Be most specific about data collection in the first third of your study. What will you do first, next, and why. Discuss alternative first steps and why you have chosen not to use those steps. Then discuss the middle third of your study. Show how your initial questions may change, and how you would change your data collection strategies. You can be least specific about data collection strategies in the last third of your study, since those will depend upon the changes that resulted from any mid-course correction(s).

   Conclude the data collection section with a time line chart for the data collection phase of your study. Show the relative amounts of different kinds of data you plan to collect, in the order you plan to collect them, and in the amounts of time you plan to spend.

4. Anticipated data analysis (two pages)
   Briefly discuss (and illustrate by examples) how you will analyze the kinds of data you collected. Show how you will use analytic induction and triangulation to consider the range and relative frequency of evidence, and how you will choose typical and discrepant (atypical) instances to report in rich detail.

5. Reference list
   Include full bibliographic information for all references cited.

6. Completed IRB application
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EVALUATION PROCEDURES

Attendance/Participation (2 point per class) 30 points
AEQ article review 10 points

Ethnography Text Review
  Four written papers (10 points each) 40 points
  Facilitation of book talk 6 points

Class exercises (2 points each) 14 points
  research topic and questions
  site selection
  observation
  interviews
  archival research
  analysis
  themes

These are not graded but must be completed and submitted on time to receive full credit. Class exercises can only be made up if the student has a legitimate reason for missing class.

Ethnographic Research Proposal 30 points
Oral report to class on ethnographic term proposal 5 points

Points will be assigned to papers based upon the Evaluation Criteria on page 8. The course grade will be based upon the following points:

A = 121 - 135 points
B = 108 – 120 points
C = 94 – 107 points
D = 81 – 93 points
F = below 81
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Evaluation Criteria for Student Work

Critical discussion, reflection, and exploration of ideas, theories, actions and practices are necessary and integral parts of one’s learning and educational development, both on an individual basis and as part of a group effort. From a professional viewpoint, the concern arises as to the correlation between the nature of the evaluation and the quality of performance. Thus the question, "How am I going to be graded on this?" is a natural one to ask. The following list is an attempt to explain some of the criteria for student work.

Focal Point/Clarity

- Insightful; develops clear, concise, accurate points in addressing issues
- Clear; presents clear, concise and accurate points in addressing issues
- General observation evident; addresses one or more points with too many or too few words
- Vague, or difficult to grasp; includes unclear, inaccurate, or inappropriately overextended points

Specificity/Evidence from Original Source

- Effectively substantiates point; develops and uses details that demonstrate an understanding of the material in addressing main issue under concern
- Defines or illustrates point; presents details that demonstrate a good understanding of the material by supporting the majority of points and conclusions
- Generally relates to point; relies on generalizations to support the majority of the points and conclusions
- Relationship to point uncertain; includes unclear, inaccurate, or inappropriately overextended comments that do not support the issue under study

Text Integration/Evidence from other Sources

- Illuminates point effectively; includes specific and accurate references to illustrate and explicate findings, points, connections and conclusions
- Substantiates point; includes specific and accurate text references to illustrate findings, points, connections, and conclusions
- Supports point in a general way; refers to some general findings, points, connections and conclusions in the text to illustrate the narrative
- Contributes little, or detracts from point; uses text references inappropriately
RECOMMENDED SOURCES FOR FOLLOW-UP READING

Texts on Ethnographic Research in Education

General Methodological Texts

**Ethnographies on Learning and Teaching**

**Child Rearing in Traditional Societies**

**Culture and Cognition**

**The Culture of Home and School**

**Education in Subcultural and Ethnic Enclaves**

**Enculturation and Socialization in Industrialized and Industrializing Societies**

**Ethnographic Evaluation**

**Patterns of Language Use**

**Practitioner Research and Collaborative Research on Schooling**

**School and the Labor Market**


**School as Social Organization**


**Schooling outside the US**


Course policies
http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~dgs2/Policy%20Statements.htm
Safe Environment, Students with Disabilities, Institutional Review Board, Academic Integrity

Course evaluation system (accessible via your Dana account)
http://www.nau.edu/course_evals/