

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY  
Department of Anthropology

THE ETHNOGRAPHER'S CRAFT

This course provides an introduction to “doing” anthropology through the study and practice of fieldwork; as such, it complements other Anthropology Department courses and independent work projects. In seminar-style discussions and workshop exercises, students become familiar with anthropological research practices (like participant-observation and interviewing) and types of writing (like fieldnotes and ethnography); and develop their understanding of key ideas (like intersubjectivity, reflexivity, and interpretation).

READINGS



At Labyrinth:

- R. Sanjek, ed. *Fieldnotes: The Making of Anthropology*
- B. Sunstein and E. Chiseri-Strater. *FieldWorking: Reading and Writing Research* (syllabus refers to the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (2006 and following), not earlier editions)

On Blackboard (Bb):

All other readings are on the ANT 301 Bb site, where you'll also find copies of the syllabus and the course handouts. As you have no doubt noticed, the syllabus and handouts are long and detailed: *please treat them as assigned readings*. The syllabus **headnotes** (paragraphs that introduce each set of readings) provide you with tips for focusing your reading. The syllabus **workshop instructions** need to be followed carefully. The **handouts** will answer many of your questions about the written assignments and field projects. **Study them carefully:** if after reading them you still have questions, please don't hesitate to ask for clarification (in class, by email, or on Bb).

FORMAT AND GRADING

1. Informed, cooperative participation (30% of grade: participation means attendance; it also means active, substantive contributions to discussion).<sup>1</sup>

a. **“Class”** meetings are organized as discussions of the readings. To prepare, do all the assigned readings, identify each authors' main points, how those points are supported, and how they relate to the other readings. Bring to class your questions, criticisms, and enthusiasms. **Attendance is required. If you are forced to miss a class**—due, say, to a debilitating, infectious condition or a life-transforming career opportunity—then you are required to post a reading response on the 301 Bb “discussion board”.

b. **“Workshop”** meetings aim to integrate the issues raised in readings with research exercises you undertake outside of class. **Attendance is required.** Because they are interactive, workshops are hard to make up. **If you are forced to miss a workshop**, you are still required to do the out-of-class assignment and to submit the write-up due for that meeting, and you are also required to post a comment on Bb about your experience, and to respond to any postings other students may have made concerning that workshop.

<sup>1</sup> Full credit for “attendance” means coming to 21 meetings (although I expect you to come to all 23 scheduled class meetings unless you are seriously contagious or have another compelling rationale). You get two free passes; please save them for emergencies because after that, each missed class will negatively impact your final grade. Evaluation of your contributions to discussion will be based on quality (including having the guts to ask so-called “stupid questions”), not sheer quantity.

c. **Regular Bb contributions** are not required, but they are encouraged. Because we have a large class this year, no one will be able to participate as actively as any of us would like. Please use the Bb “discussion board” to begin a new discussion thread concerning past or up-coming readings and workshop exercises, or to contribute to an existing thread. Both Jamie Sherman (the ANT301 AI) and I will read and contribute to Bb discussions regularly.

2. Papers and other writing assignments (70% of grade), submitted as hard copies — *I never EVER accept email attachments* — in class and in my department mailbox and on time<sup>2</sup>:

a. **Field Journal** (26%): you will get two grades – 12% first half and 12% last half – evaluating your developing skill and understanding. You will also receive substantive comments on your entries during the semester and are encouraged to discuss your journal work on Bb, in class, and during office hours. See below and the **Assignments** handout for advice; also consult the **Research Advice** handout. Journal entries are due during every Tuesday class meeting beginning 9/22. They should all be kept sequentially in a Field Journal file on your computer, that you will add to each week.

b. **Workshop “write-ups”** (14%: full credit for on-time submission)<sup>3</sup> are due during seven of our workshop meetings. Not all of them involve actual writing (e.g, #1). All of them (except perhaps #2) should be kept chronologically in your journal file (marked Write-up ##). Journal entries may elaborate or develop write-ups, but they are separate assignments. If you have any questions about how to distinguish the two, raise them in class, in an email to Professor Lederman, or on Blackboard.

c. **Mock IRB application** (5% graded evaluation) due as indicated on the syllabus.

d. **Ethnographic vignette** (5% graded evaluation) due as indicated on the syllabus.

e. **Final Paper** (20% graded evaluation) due on “Dean's Date”, Tuesday January 11 by 4 p.m. Be sure to consult the **Assignments** handout for detailed advice concerning format and content.

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<sup>2</sup> “On time” means in class on the day specified in the syllabus instructions. Late or missing written work will negatively impact your final grade.

<sup>3</sup> That is, while you will get comments from time to time, workshop write-ups will not be graded. As above, you will lose points if they are not submitted on time.

TOPICS, READINGS, AND WORKSHOP ASSIGNMENTS  
 CAPITALIZED readings are in the texts; everything else is on Blackboard.

**1. Orientation (Sept 16, 21).** Review of course requirements. We begin discussion of some basic questions: what is anthropology? What skills does anthropological fieldwork involve? Read the syllabus and handouts carefully, and come to the first (9/16) class with your questions. For Tuesday (9/22), the Geertz reading will help clarify distinctions raised on Thursday between different ways of studying human experience and it will also provide a challenging model for your ethnographic writing this semester. **You begin your field journal this week: your first entries are due on Tuesday.**

**READINGS (due Thu, Sept 16):**

1. R Lederman (2010) "ANT 301 syllabus" and various handouts

**READINGS (due Tue, Sept 21):**

1. C. Geertz (1973) "Thick description." In C. Geertz *Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 3-30 [Study this carefully.]

**FIELD JOURNAL**

***(Be sure to consult the "Assignments" and "Research advice" handouts for details.)***

Get yourself a **pocket-sized notebook** to carry around all day. Use it to take "**scratch notes**": that is, memory aides for field journal writing. Use your scratch notes selectively (especially at first, most of them won't be useful!) as bases for entries in a **field journal**, which should be kept as one expanding document file on your computer. (If you find yourself with a laptop when you're in the midst of a 301 field exercise or some other "notable" moment, it may be more convenient to record your sketchy memory-aide notes in a "Scratch Note" file. Please keep these notes separate from your "Field Journal" file: the point is to enable you to become aware of the process involved in transforming experience and memory into a usable research record. (Please also hold on to your scratch notes: they will be useful in a number of ways this term.)

*Entries (and revisions) in your "Field Journal" file should always be dated.* Aim to "develop" your scratch notes (*see next paragraph*) into two dated journal entries per week (that is, **approximately 2 double-spaced pages per week**).<sup>4</sup> You may choose to work on your journal in several sittings each week; and during some weeks you may find that it makes more sense to develop several shorter entries rather than two longer ones. Any one journal entry can range over several topics. While your entries are unlikely to be coherent (or essay-like) at first, they may become more coherent, focused, and goal-driven as the semester progresses.

**Developing your "scratch notes" into journal entries means:**

- 1) **choosing** from experience one or more events, situations, interactions, and conversations (on or off campus; in or outside of your classes; in face-to-face, electronic, and otherwise mediated social contexts, present and past – including workshop exercises),
- 2) **describing** them in full sentences and in as much detail as you can, and
- 3) **relating** them to themes (small and large) from our readings, class discussions, and workshops. Daily life experience may be used to shed light on class work (readings, workshops); class work may shed light on daily life. Allow readings and class work to shape your choice of experiences to write about each week;

<sup>4</sup> Some of you will have trouble producing that much; others will have trouble limiting themselves to that. We'll talk about scale, elaboration, and selectivity in class!

conversely, experiences will shape your attention when you're reading (whether you're aware of it or not -- and journal writing will help you to become aware!).

**The point is to record your progress in cultivating an "ethnographic" perspective** on otherwise ephemeral personal experiences. This perspective enables critical reflection by drawing your academic and non-academic worlds together in a disciplined way. **For example, this week**, see if you can draw on everyday experiences to make sense of the opening day lecture, the Geertz article, and/or the opportunities and problems posed by the Field Journal assignment itself. **Print out a copy of your current week's journal entries to turn in every Tuesday; they will be returned regularly with comments (which you ought to use to improve subsequent entries).**

**2. Historical background (Sept 23).** Anthropological methods have a history. Over the past century, anthropologists have reflecting critically on the relationship between disciplinary means and ends in the context of perceived alternatives. Today we pay attention to the emergence of modern 20th century ethnographic "fieldwork", which has roots in and affinities with the field sciences (like ecology), the social sciences (like sociology), and the humanities (like philology). Although anthropologists have always worked in their own cultures (as you'll be doing), the paradigmatic situation involved research in non-Western cultures. Malinowski's is the foundational statement of fieldwork as a method. Anthropologist Murray Wax puts the controversial elements of Malinowski's influential work in context (pointing ahead to Topic #3 below). Rosalie Wax widens the historical focus to include the relationship between sociological and anthropological fieldworking traditions, which will also help us begin thinking about what it might take to apply the approach "at home".

**READINGS (due Thu, Sept 23—journal entries #1, 2 also due today):**

1. B. Malinowski (1922) "Introduction: The subject, method, and scope of this enquiry." In B. Malinowski, *The Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, pp. 1-25 [Study this carefully]
2. M. Wax (1972) "Tenting with Malinowski." *Am Sociological Rev* 37(1): 1-13.

OPTIONAL: R. Wax (1971) "A historical sketch of fieldwork." In R. Wax, *Doing Fieldwork: Warnings and Advice*, pp. 21-41.

*In addition to the required reading, be sure to check out this 8 minute video illustrating contemporary fieldwork from the varied perspectives of three projects: studies of marine biologists, artisan cheesemakers, and Haitian refugees – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BhCruPBvSiQ> Consider how they relate to Malinowski's idea of fieldwork. (On the sidebar of that YouTube page, you'll find BBC videos profiling Malinowski at length, as well as other anthropological notables (e.g., Geertz) and topics. Feel free to explore and let me know what you think.)*

**3. Ethical presuppositions (Sept 28, 30).** Conventional expectations concerning research ethics in neighboring disciplines are not identical. "Scandals" and controversies over ethical standards—such as the one Murray Wax discussed last week concerning the publication of Malinowski's diary—can reveal distinctive disciplinary assumptions about research methods and results. And what counts as proper work in one discipline may be considered unconvincing—or downright unethical—in another. The formal ethics codes of academic professional associations (like the American Anthropological Association) are efforts to articulate these distinctive disciplinary values. Study the AAA code and then read my short article comparing anthropology's ethical position to that of sociology and psychology. Let's talk about the issue of "deception" in particular. Then, readings #3 and #4 below will help prepare you for this week's workshop. Like other researchers who work with living human beings, anthropologists need to get approval for research plans from multi-disciplinary ethics committees called "Institutional Review Boards". But both Wax (1977) and Lederman (aka your professor) thirty years later argue that IRB regulations have had the unintended consequence of substituting ethical "compliance"

for ethical “competence”. Let’s explore this distinction in discussion. Finally, the *FieldWorking* text pays very little direct attention to the category “ethics”: any ideas about why that might be?

**READINGS (due Tue, Sept 28):**

1. American Anthropological Association Code of Ethics: go to the AAA Ethics page: <http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethics.htm> and click on the “AAA Code of Ethics” link (you are also welcome to explore this site!)
2. R. Lederman (2009) “Comparing Ethics Codes and Conventions.” *Anthropology News* 51:
3. M. Wax (1977) “On fieldworkers and those exposed to fieldwork: federal regulations and moral issues.” *Human Organization* 36: 321-328
4. R. Lederman (2007) “Educate your IRB.” *Anthropology News* 48: 33-34.
5. SUNSTEIN/CHISERI-STRATER (2006) *FIELDWORKING*, Chapter 3: pp. 140-143

**WORKSHOP: Ethical Compliance and Ethical Competence (Thu, Sept 30—journal entries #3, 4 due today).** Take the free training course required by Princeton University’s Institutional Review Board for all folks doing in “human subjects research”:

<http://cme.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials/learning/humanparticipant-protections.asp>

The course will take you about 2 hours to complete (it can be done in several sessions if necessary). Even though each section ends with a quiz, please don’t stress: the course is designed to be easy to pass. You will earn a “Certificate” when you’re done: **PRINT OUT TWO COPIES, SAVE ONE FOR YOUR FILES; TURN IN THE OTHER (WRITE-UP #1) during this workshop. Use the experience as a basis for Journal writing.** Notice for whom the training course is designed. Think about which aspects may or may not be useful for fieldworkers and why, bearing in mind the distinction between ethical *compliance* and ethical *competence* (see Lederman 2007 above).

**4. What goes without saying: culture in everyday life (Oct 5, 7).** By emphasizing the method of “participant observation,” anthropological fieldwork directs attention to the local cultural (that is, socially meaningful) shape of human experience: to the cultural “insider’s” understandings of his/her experience. Malinowski’s comments on “the imponderabilia of everyday life” captured the important point that much of this experience is tacit (taken-for-granted, unstated). That is, cultural insiders may be unaware whereas cultural outsiders may notice right away. These readings concern the interpretation of socially meaningful (“cultural”) practice. By considering what is entailed in the study of “tacit conventions”, we can develop our discussion of alternative ways of thinking about the relationship between the researcher and researched (ie, objectivity, subjectivity, and intersubjectivity) – a discussion opened with Geertz’s help two weeks ago.

**READINGS (due Tue, Oct 5):**

1. M. Douglas, ed. (1973) *Rules and Meanings*, “Tacit conventions” selections, pp. 15-25
2. SUNSTEIN/CHISERI-STRATER (2006) *FIELDWORKING* Chapter 1: pp. 1-16; Chapter 2: pp. 65-108
3. R. Rosaldo (1989) “After objectivism.” In R. Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth*: **read 46-49** for today; review this and read the rest as indicated below (October 21).
4. H. S. Becker (1998) “Things are just people acting together” and “Nothing’s happening”. In *Tricks of the Trade*, pp. 46-51, 95-98. (If you’re interested, there are lots of suggestions for follow up study in these reading’s citations.)

**Review:** Malinowski (1922) “Introduction” and C. Geertz (1973) “Thick description.”

**WORKSHOP: Participant observation (I): making sense of everyday life (Thu, Oct 7—journal entries #5, 6 due today).** After you've done the Sunstein reading, observe and, if appropriate, take part in a *relatively unfamiliar* social situation or event, on or off campus. (It's very helpful to select a situation with which someone you know—even a 301 classmate—is familiar, who can invite or accompany you.) During or, if that's impossible, soon afterwards, record scratch notes (see Sunstein, pp. 90-92 and 103 for ideas). **BRING A COPY OF YOUR SCRATCH NOTES TO THE WORKSHOP (WRITE-UP #2), and find ways of developing them in your Journal this week.**

You may find Sunstein's three questions (p.106) useful in focusing your attention. No matter what you observe, there will be both explicit and tacit elements giving the situation or event its *socially meaningful* character: that is, giving participants the sense that it's a (good or bad) instance of *something*. During your observation, see what you can learn about both the explicit, formal social conventions (i.e., the readily articulated do's and don'ts, the rules, norms, and expectations about proper behavior) and the tacit, informal "rules of thumb" (the usual ways in which social rules are actually applied). **Please note that** some situations may seem relatively *formal* to you in the sense of being relatively structured, with more explicit rules or conventions, like a sports event or a religious ritual. In contrast, other situations may appear relatively *informal* in the sense of having fewer apparent constraints: for example, dinner with friends, gym locker rooms, or classrooms before the professor arrives. As a relative outsider, your perceptions about formality and informality may differ from those of the insiders: **how will you get at the "native's point of view"?**

Come to class prepared to discuss examples of explicit and implicit (tacit, unstated) "rules" you have gleaned. Connecting with the readings, think about the strengths and limits of this contrast between tacit and explicit, and of our emphasis on "rules". (This workshop will also give us an opportunity to initiate discussion of memory, note-taking, and a range of related issues to be taken up in more detail over the next weeks. They include the movement from observing and inscribing events, the selectivity of observation, the interpretive character of description, and the way note-taking itself "positions" you in social situations.) **We will make match-ups for workshops #3 and #5 at the end of this one.**

**5. Interviews and conversations (Oct 12, 14, 19, 21).** Participant observation includes both passive observation and active social interaction (talking and doing things with people). But the bottom line in participant observation—its distinctive quality as a research tool—is that *ones informants control the social situation*. In Michael Agar's terms (1996: 119), the researcher is "one-down": interaction is on the consultants' terms, rather than the researcher's, and the latter's job is to figure out what those terms are. That is, anthropological fieldwork is about adopting an exploratory stance and 'getting out of your own head' (so to speak) so as to listen actively to the people you're consulting. However, there are times when fieldworkers need to take control so that they can pursue a topic systematically. In fact, when Americans think "social research", they most commonly think of procedures whereby the researcher takes control: formal interviews, questionnaire surveys, experiments. While anthropologists use these methods too, other social scientists (e.g., sociologists, demographers, pollsters) rely on them overwhelmingly. Anthropological linguist Charles Briggs asks what kind of social interaction an "interview" is. He analyzes the form of communication it entails and the kinds of knowledge it produces, paying special attention to its limitations. The interview stands in stark opposition to everyday conversation. In his famous lectures on conversation analysis, Harvey Sacks provides us with provocative examples of what 'asking questions' looks in real-life talk. Our class discussion will work to

clarify the crucial differences between “conversations” and even the most informal “interviews”. Our workshops will enable us to compare the two concretely.

**READINGS (Missed Tue 10/12: held Thu 10/14—journal entries #7, 8 also due today)**

1. BRIGGS (1986) *LEARNING HOW TO ASK*: please read Chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-60; you are welcome to read more). [Study this carefully.]
2. M. Agar (1996) *The Professional Stranger*, Chapter 5 (especially pp 113-123, a comparison between exploratory participant observation and hypothesis-testing survey research); you are welcome to read more.
3. H. Sacks (1992) “Asking questions, heckling.” In H. Sacks *Lectures on Conversation*, pp. 282-288
4. SUNSTEIN/CHISERI-STRATER (2006) *FIELDWORKING* Chapter 5: just skim pp. 237-282 and use as reference

You will find a link to Professor Lederman’s lecture on Briggs, interviews and conversations on the Bb “Readings” webpage

**Optional:** R. Brymer “Hanging out with the good ‘ole boys, gangsters, and other disreputable characters...” In S. Grills, ed. *Doing Ethnographic Research*, pp. 143-161 (a sociologist’s argument and example about why fieldwork is a necessary prerequisite for valid survey research)

**WORKSHOP: The interview inside out (Tue 10/19).** Prior to class, interview your partner about something with which they are familiar but you aren't (you will also be interviewed). Come to class ready to discuss the interview experience from both vantages (be specific: preparations, settings, blunders, and successes). **NO WRITE-UP TO TURN IN TODAY; however, do find a way to take notes during or after the interviews and, in some way, work them and/or a reflection on the interview experience into your Journal writing for this week.**

**OPTIONAL (IF YOU ARE CURIOUS, CHECK THIS OUT):** While recording interviews -- which have relatively clear beginnings and ends -- isn't too difficult, transcribing interviews is hard: it generally takes at least four times longer to transcribe an interview than it took to record it! For most research purposes, it's not necessary to transcribe whole interviews but only those bits that one needs exactly word-for-word. Because of their characteristic features, conversations are very difficult both to record and to transcribe. The following link sends you to a "Transcription module" being developed by the sociolinguist Gail Schegloff to help students learn how to transcribe conversational speech. It includes lots of examples to illustrate the use of a specialized notation system for indicating common conversational behavior and contexts, like pauses and overlapping speech:

<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/schegloff/TranscriptionProject/>

**WORKSHOP: Anatomy of a conversation (Thu 10/21: journal entries #9, 10 due today).** For this workshop, you will need to ask for help from several of your friends so that you can record 10 minutes of everyday conversation. The idea here is to capture a sample of conversation that you can study, to better understand the differences between “interviews” and “how people talk with each other in real life”. (Some of you may choose to work in 301 “teams” for this one.)

Your conversational group may feel a bit awkward at first, but will loosen up after a few minutes. The situation can be one in which: people are working on something together or solving a problem (cooking or assembling or fixing something? Working on an assignment? Trying to find something?); someone is ‘telling a story’ about something or catching the others up on something that s/he experienced or heard about—in a class, at home, on TV, at a party—about which the others don’t already know; etc.



Even if the conversation goes on for hours, you only need to **record about 10 minutes**.<sup>5</sup> Then **listen** to your recording once or twice and **select and transcribe a brief segment** (about 60 seconds will be plenty) that interests you. Bear in mind that, for this exercise, you aren't focusing on conversational *content* because our concern is with *form*: you are exploring the question "what sort of social activity is conversation?" It's useful to break the question down in terms of structure and function. Thus—how is your conversational selection "structured" (socially, temporally, etc.): what are its parts or dimensions? How do they fit together? How did the segment fit within the larger conversation? What made your conversation "work" (and how do you know)?—or—how and why did it *not* work? **WRITE-UP #3** should outline your key discoveries, providing specific illustrations. The write-up can take the form of a list. However, as usual I encourage you to develop a description and analysis in your journal, where you will write elegantly in full sentences...

**6. Positioned points of view and the challenges of interpretation (Oct 21, 26, 28).** The readings develop the point that thinking anthropologically means thinking across culturally-defined contexts: comparison and the work of translation brings contextual backgrounds into focus. They also help us think about the researcher's social position in the field. That position is partially shaped by his/r observing, recording, interpreting activities; it also reflects class, race, and gender perspectives. Think about these readings in relation to your field experiences: what are their implications for field research "at home" rather than in a distant place? The Sunstein reading continues Week 4's introduction to field note-taking (or "fieldwriting"). The Gloria Naylor selection suggests one way that the concept of "translation" (and of being an "outsider") applies even at home. Together with Rosaldo, it will enable us to think about the validity of ethnographic depictions (recall Geertz again).

**READINGS (Tue 10/26):**

1. R. Rosaldo (1989) "After objectivism" in *Culture and Truth*, pp. 46-67 (finish this)
2. SUNSTEIN/CHISERI-STRATER (2006) *FIELDWORKING* Chapter 2: review essays by Didion (78-83) and Scudder (86-90); **focus on Gloria Naylor's "Mama Day" and the editors' discussion in Chapter 3: 117-128**; Chapter 6: browse around these examples of "cultural translation".

**WORKSHOP: Participant observation (2) – shifting positions (Thu 10/28: journal entries #11, 12 and ALL commented-on entries due for midterm assessment).** Observe another social situation.

Follow up your previous participant observation experience, either substantively or methodologically. That is, develop some aspect of your previous **topic** or improve/experiment with some aspect of your previous **approach (methodological focus)**. As before, note taking (scratch notes during or, if that's not possible, then soon after the event) needs to be part of this experience. **BRIEFLY DESCRIBE HOW/WHY YOU SELECTED THIS SOCIAL SITUATION: IN WHAT WAYS DID YOU HOPE IT WOULD DIFFER FROM OR DEVELOP YOUR PREVIOUS PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION EXPERIENCE: BRING THAT TO WORKSHOP AS (WRITE-UP #4 is cancelled), and use your scratch notes as a basis for part of your Journal writing this week.**

Whatever else you do, this time pay special attention to the difference it makes that you are taking notes or otherwise "doing research": that is, pay attention to your own distinctive position in the

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<sup>5</sup> If you are using non-301 friends as your conversation group, then please assure them that you won't play the recording in class, that you'll erase the tape after you complete this exercise, and that you'll transcribe only about one minute's worth to analyze. Please let them know that the analysis will focus on form rather than content.



scene of research. During this workshop we will discuss the ways in which note taking and other research-motivated activities “positions” you in social situations.



MID-SEMESTER BREAK (no class November 2, 4)



**7. The field (Nov 9, 11).** Where is “the field” and how do anthropologists get there? What sorts of relationships do they establish with the people they aim to study? We will revisit “positionality”: the politics of identity, and ethical and political dilemmas in the “space of research”. We will develop questions raised in previous readings about objectivity, situatedness, relativism, engagement, and the rest. We will also discuss the changing “place” of fieldwork (both geographical and methodologically) in anthropology. And, finally, we’ll be prompted to be more aware of “place” in its most literal sense.

**READING (due Tue, Nov 9):**

1. E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1940) *The Nuer*: “Introductory” pp. 1-15
2. D. Jones (1970) “Towards a native anthropology.” *Human Organization* 29(4): 251-259
3. J. Passaro (1997) “You Can’t Take the Subway to the Field!” In A. Gupta and J. Ferguson, eds. *Anthropological Locations*, pp. 146-162
4. SUNSTEIN/CHISERI-STRATER (2006) *FIELDWORKING* pp. 175-203 (the first part of Chapter 4: “Researching Place: the Spatial Gaze”)

Complementing the assigned readings, please make time to watch “An anthropological introduction to YouTube”, a lecture by Mike Welsh, who initiated a collaborative ethnography of YouTube with his grad students:  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPAO-lZ4\\_hU&NR=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPAO-lZ4_hU&NR=1) *Where and what is “the field” in this project?*

**WORKSHOP: Thick description is ethnographic interpretation (Thu, Nov 11—journal entries #13, 14 due today).** Develop (revise and elaborate) a journal entry that you based on scratch notes from a previous workshop assignment. You may also choose to revise and “thicken up” an earlier journal entry that was not directly related to our workshops. In either case, when revising an earlier entry, please leave the original as it was, under its original date. That way you will leave yourself a clear paper trail: you (and your instructors!) will be able to compare your own early and later journal writing and that comparison may be useful for your final paper.

You are developing your journal entry this week to enable someone other than yourself to read and understand it (as Sunstein/Chiseri-Strater, above, suggest). That is, while scratch notes are strictly memory prompts, ideally anthropological field notes (in this case, your journal) are well developed accounts containing “everything” that the writer currently believes to be relevant. Conventionally, field notes are written for the writer’s own post-fieldwork use (e.g., writing papers, giving talks, etc.). They need to be comprehensible and useful for years after the fieldwork is over, when even vivid experiences will have faded from memory, and when the writer’s interests may have shifted. **Later in the term** (see our next-to-last Workshop), we will explore ethnographic writing: writing meant to be read not just by the author but wider audiences. **Today, in contrast, the point of exchanging notes with a partner** is to “simulate” the problem of adequately developing field notes for ones own later use.

Type up your notes (or otherwise make them legible), adding remembered details, filling in context, “and so on” (what?) as you go. **Give your partner your write-up no later than Tuesday**

**evening, Nov 9). MAKE ANOTHER COPY TO BRING TO CLASS TO TURN IN (WRITE-UP #5).** During this workshop we will discuss the movement from observing to inscribing events, the selectivity of observation, and the interpretive nature of description. **Everyone is both a writer and a reader, so:**

1. **As writer:** prepare to discuss your rationale for developing your scratch notes, or an earlier less-developed journal entry. How did the experience affect your understanding of the distinction between description and interpretation? Did developing your notes prompt memories of details you hadn't written about before? Did writing up your notes provoke you to think about follow-up research? If so, then how did you keep track of your new ideas?
2. **As reader:** prepare to comment on what was/wasn't clear, and what additional information or alterations in format, voice, etc., might have improved the notes.

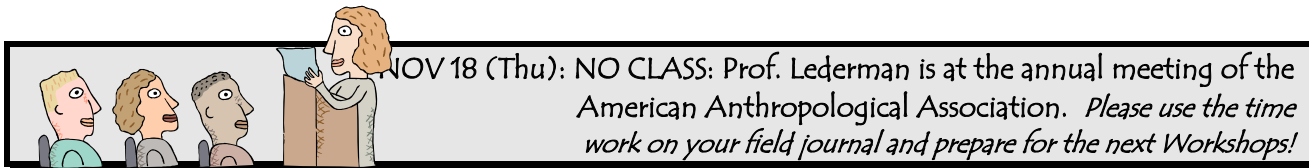
**8. Taking Note(s) (Nov 16, 18, 23, 25, 30).** Building on your practical experience with note taking, consider how anthropologists keep track of what they are learning. We will revisit the distinction between "description" and "interpretation", this time also considering visual media as well as writing. Consider how "what goes without saying" is embedded in our multi-sensory experience of material things. How can one cultivate one's awareness of this kind of understanding and write about it? This is also an excellently Proustian context for reconsidering questions about memory (your own and that of your interlocutors).

**READING (due Tue, Nov 16):**

1. SANJEK, ed. (1990) *FIELDNOTES*, particularly the chapters by Jackson, Lederman, Ottenberg, Plath, and Wolf, which relate to our "Ethnographic records" workshop below. (You are welcome to read the whole book.)
2. SUNSTEIN/CHISERI-STRATER (2006) *FIELDWORKING* Chapter 3: pp. 143-155 including Alice Walker's "Everyday Use", which relates especially to our "Noteworthy things" workshop below.

**PLEASE NOTE:** from here on, while your **journal** should still draw explicitly on readings and workshop themes, it should also be the place to keep track of your developing fieldwork "theme". Review the Assignments handout pp. 2-3 for guidance on fieldwork, pp. 3-5 for guidance on fieldnotes, and pp. 5-7 for guidance on the final paper.

You will see that it's a good idea **to go beyond** just recording workshop-related exercises in your journal: **follow up workshop exercises with your own exploratory fieldwork with your final paper in mind.**



**WORKSHOP: Ethnographic records (Tue, Nov 23).** Many anthropologists engaged in long-term fieldwork take a mid-term break to review their notes and rethink their research strategies. Take this opportunity to look over your field journal after reviewing the **Assignments** and **Research advice** handouts; and start making plans for your final paper. Come prepared (with examples) to discuss your efforts to focus your fieldwork explorations and improve your note taking; reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of different media (e.g., photography, mapping, sound recording) vis-à-vis specific research goals. **TURN IN YOUR REVIEW IN THE FORM OF A LIST OF POINTS AND ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES DRAWN FROM YOUR FIELD JOURNAL (WRITE UP #6).**

No class Nov 25 (Thu): HAPPY THANKSGIVING!



**WORKSHOP: Noteworthy things (Tue, Nov 30).** Bring to class (1) some “thing” that you consider noteworthy—ethnographically informative—about your life at Princeton: e.g., an object, photo, *whatever* (be creative) and/or (2) an “item” relevant to your ethnographic focus (ditto). We’ll spend our class time “unpacking” our objects: what background information (context, history—the unseen) is necessary to make ones familiar things intelligible to others? **WRITE-UP #7 WILL BE A BRIEF REFLECTION ON WHAT YOU SELECTED AND WHY: NO NEED TO BRING THE WRITE-UP TO CLASS BUT DO INCLUDE IT IN YOUR JOURNAL ALONG WITH COMMENTS ABOUT WHAT, IF ANYTHING, SURPRISED/INTERESTED YOU ABOUT THE WORKSHOP.**

**9. Ethno-graphy (Dec 2, 7).** We’ve been exploring the role of writing in anthropology all semester, during which time you have written quite a lot. These readings extend the exploration using several media: one exemplary ethnographic account and a quilting of usefully relevant and general-purpose writing advice. The workshop this week puts the advice into practice.

**READING (due Thu, Dec 2—you should have journal entries #15-20 by today: if you would like comments, then please turn them in):**

1. C. Geertz (1972) “Deep play: notes on the Balinese cockfight” in R. Rabinow and W. Sullivan, eds. *Interpretive Social Science*, pp. 181-223 [**Study this carefully.**]
2. SUNSTEIN/CHISERI-STRATER (2006) *FIELDWORKING* Chapter 8 “Fieldwriting” : 419-470—excellent writing advice, and not just for ethnography!

**WORKSHOP: Ethnographic vignette (Tue, Dec 7).** Using “Deep play” as an ambitious model (consult Bb discussion board for student models) and using your Journal as a primary source, develop a 1- to 2-page, double spaced ethnographic vignette. Your vignette ought to go beyond even a very well developed journal entry (like your Write-up #5). **Note especially that, unlike field notes, ethnographic writing is not just for the writer:** it’s for a wider audience of people who (1) may not have first-hand experience with what you are describing and/or (2) may not find the details inherently interesting.



To prepare for writing, review your journal to identify an ethnographic focus or theme that you have found particularly intriguing in your fieldwork. As you begin writing, **decide who your imagined audience will be**. Are you writing for fellow anthropology majors? Non-anthro Princetonians? Old high school friends? Your grandmother? Little brother? Conceptualizing your readers is important for deciding how best to get them into your topic and show them the benefits of an anthropological perspective. This may require that you situate your fieldwork in relation to a variety of other relevant sources (e.g., readings, discussions and lectures from 301, other classes within and outside of this department, even non-academic resources). **POST YOUR VIGNETTE ON BLACKBOARD (no other write-up today)** before the workshop meeting and come prepared to discuss your decisions concerning topic, detail, sources, and style vis-à-vis some imagined audience. **Peer commentators will be assigned for the next workshop during this meeting.**

**10. Research proposals and IRB applications (Dec 9, 14).** As you move toward the spring term, you are no doubt thinking about elaborating and completing your JP or thesis research. You may be exploring the possibility of incorporating fieldwork into your project. This week we discuss how to make that possible. This will also be an opportunity to raise questions about the 301 final paper (which can take the form of a research proposal). This week's workshop exercise is a mini research proposal in the form of a "mock up" application to Princeton's Institutional Review Board: it must be based on your semester's exploratory fieldwork.

**READING (due Thu, Dec 9—you may turn in journal entries #21, 22 if you would like comments):** First, review the ethics unit from late September, paying particular attention to the distinction we made between ethical "compliance" and ethical "competence". Then reread the following handouts:

1. Lederman (2010) "IRB application advice and form"
2. Lederman (2010) "Research advice"
2. Lederman (2010) "Assignments": review the section called "Final Paper".

**WORKSHOP: Mock IRB application (Tue, Dec 14).**

First of all, based on your exploratory fieldwork this semester and our readings and discussions, define a topic and come up with a plan for how you'd investigate it if you had a whole semester or summer (that is, as if it was fieldwork for a JP or thesis): you can mull this over in your journal if you like. Then work up a proposal for that research in the form of a mock IRB application: you can mull over your difficulties doing the assignment in your journal as well!<sup>6</sup> Please **pay special attention to items #5 and #6**: provide a bit more detail than would be necessary in an actual IRB application (that is, be less "succinct" than the 301 handout advises). **Your mock IRB application needs to reflect your anthropological training: one key challenge is to explain your approach and your ethics to readers who have other training (e.g., psychology, demography) and experience (a local pediatrician, a retired corporate office manager) but who all took the same NIH training course you did earlier in the term and are familiar with the guidance available on the IRB webpage.** Hold on to your anthropological soul while also showing that you understand IRB concerns. Insofar as IRBs oversee "human subject" research ethics, they are not interested in the library and other non-"human subject" components of your overall project idea.

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<sup>6</sup> For 301 purposes, the IRB application format is useful because, unlike a conventional research proposal, it doesn't require that you justify your research in relation to the relevant published literature, but it does require that you think through basic methodological and ethical questions (as we've been doing all semester). **Please don't worry about whether your proposed project is "original"**: this is just a workshop exercise!

**POST YOUR MOCK IRB APPLICATION ON BLACKBOARD (no other write-up today).** Please post your application as a new discussion thread (e.g., “Pat Urback’s IRB application”) **no later than Sunday 6 pm**. Assigned readers should post their comments as responses to the proposal thread **no later than Monday 6 pm** so that proposal writers can read the comments before class on Tuesday. The workshop meeting is another opportunity for constructive criticism.

In discussion, please focus your attention on developing **comparisons** among these hypothetical research projects (see “Assignments” handout paragraph 4.2 on the importance of comparisons like these). Different kinds of field projects engender different sorts of methodological and ethical challenges: think about how to situate your own project in relation to other 301 members’ projects. **You will receive instructor comments on this assignment and you may use or adapt parts of it in your final paper.**

**11. Concluding discussion (Thu, Dec 16).** We will return to our opening themes and Professor Lederman will, with your expert assistance, magically draw course threads together. This will be a final group opportunity to discuss the special challenges of writing a methodologically focused final paper. Towards that end, think about a favorite ethnographic reading you did in any of your anthro courses: to what extent was the “how” of fieldwork explicitly described and, insofar as it was more indirectly implied, what could be inferred about field process between the lines? We will discuss the forms of anthropological writing in which methodological explicitness is conventional (like IRB applications and many of our readings). With respect to forms of writing in which methodological explicitness is not the norm, we will discuss some reasons and implications.

**[PLEASE TURN IN all twelve weeks of journal entries today. You may, of course, continue to take fieldnotes if you continue to develop your fieldwork themes after this last class. You are encouraged to include a sample of fieldnotes as an appendix to your final paper if they are relevant to some aspect of your paper’s argument.]**

Your final paper is due on “Dean’s Date” (Tuesday, Jan 11) at 4 pm AS A HARD COPY placed in the ANT 301 mailbox in the Anthropology Department office (116 Aaron Burr).

