

ANTY/SOCI 389 Ethnographic Field Methods  
Dr. Zachary T. Androus  
prof.androus@florencefieldschool.com  
Summer 2017

## 1. Overview

This course teaches ethnographic research methods for undergraduate students onsite in Florence, Italy, after two pre-departure online class meetings. Students will learn how methodological approaches reflect the principles of humanistic social scientific inquiry, through engaging seminal ethnographic texts and current methodological resources, as well as conducting their own original research in a multiethnic urban fieldsite. The course takes a ‘field school’ approach, covering both practical and methodological aspects of ethnographic fieldwork, with a special focus on urban environments. Students will learn how to use the core ethnographic techniques of sampling, participant-observation, field notes, interviewing, and how to develop lines of inquiry that build on existing scholarship. Throughout, the course features a particular focus on the urban context, drawing on both the Chicago school of urban ethnography and the interdisciplinary field of contemporary Italian urban studies.

## 2. Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of the course students will be able to:

- Draw ethnographic samples in ways that serve the needs of different research goals, while articulating the relationship between methods and outcomes.
- Identify potential ethical issues (including but not limited to informed consent, anonymity, testability, obligations to participants, conflicts of interest, and uses of research findings) and specific methodological strategies to either avoid or resolve them.
- Conduct systematic and effective participant-observation, including writing, transcribing, memoing, and further analyzing field notes.
- Conduct formal and informal, un-, semi, and structured ethnographic interviews, transcribe them, and work analytically with their content.
- Understand the difference between qualitative and quantitative data, which is appropriate for a given research problem, and the methods appropriate to collecting each.

## 3. Course Schedule

DAY	TOPIC	READ
1. Tues June 27	ONLINE MEETING: Pre-Departure: Culture Shock and Communication	Bernard, Anthropology and the Social Sciences, pp. 1-23

<p>3-5:30</p>	<p>Thinking (social) scientifically about Italy Situating Ethnography in the Social Scientific Endeavor: Anthropological Innovators and Their Legacies</p>	<p>Malinowski, Argonauts of the Western Pacific, pp. 1-25</p>
<p>2. Thurs July 29 3-5:30</p>	<p>ONLINE MEETING: Pre-Departure: Introducing Italy, Preparing for Florence</p>	<p>Dickie, Imagined Italies Coluzzi, Regional and Minority Languages Young, The Italian Postcolonial, pp. 31-34</p>
<p>3. Mon July 3 3-5:30</p>	<p>Two different classics on fieldwork: To what extent is Geertz doing what Bernard describes?  Experimenting with ‘Thick Description’ together in Florence</p>	<p>Geertz, Thick Description, pp. 3-30  Bernard, Participant Observation, pp. 256-290</p>
<p>4. Tues July 4 3-5:30</p>	<p>Developing a proposal for Florence: Choosing topics: what do you want to know? Choosing methods: what’s the best way to learn what you want to know?  How to build on existing scholarship to create discrete, completable proposals  Fieldnotes: what they are, how to write them, how to use them</p>	<p>Bernard: Preparing for Research, pp. 54-81 In-class database activity: reviewing the literature  Bernard, Fieldnotes and Database Management, pp. 291-305</p>
<p>5. Wed July 5 3-5:30</p>	<p>Roundtable discussion: Sharing our sources  Micro to Macro: How Counihan connects individual experiences to broad trends</p>	<p>Selected articles relevant to your project  Counihan, Around the Tuscan Table: Food as Voice in Twentieth Century Florence, pp. 1-15 Conclusion: Molto, Ma Buono?, pp. 176-191</p>
<p>6. Thurs</p>	<p>Sampling for Ethnography: Identifying informants</p>	<p>Bernard, Nonprobability Samples and Choosing Informants, pp. 143-155</p>

<p>July 6</p> <p>3-5:30</p>	<p>The primacy of ethics in social research</p> <p>Spend Friday and the weekend trying to incorporate participation into your observation!</p> <p>Bring fieldnotes to class on Monday</p>	<p>American Anthropological Association Statement on Ethics</p> <p>American Sociological Association Code of Ethics</p> <p><b>Research Proposal Due</b></p>
<p>7. Mon July 10</p> <p>3-5:30</p>	<p>Introducing critical perspectives on our topics</p> <p>Fieldnotes Review</p>	<p>Thomas, Doing Critical Ethnography, pp. 1-31</p> <p>Bring fieldnotes to class to review together</p>
<p>8. Tues July 11</p> <p>3-5:30</p>	<p>The city as ethnographic object</p> <p>Park's grand agenda for urban research</p>	<p>Savage et al, pp. 1-35</p> <p>Park, The City, pp. 577-612</p> <p><b>Part.-Obs. and Fieldnotes Graded</b></p>
<p>9. Wed July 12</p> <p>3-5:30</p>	<p>Interviewing in theory and practice</p> <p>Interviewing activity</p>	<p>Bernard, Interviewing I: Unstructured and Semi-Structured, pp. 156-186</p>
<p>10. Thurs July 13</p> <p>3-5:30</p>	<p>Ethnographic Revolutions of the Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Textuality and the Feminist Response</p> <p>Work on interviewing over the weekend, bring interviews to class on Monday</p>	<p>Clifford, Partial Truths, pp. 1-26</p> <p>Behar, Out of Exile, pp. 1-29</p>
<p>11. Mon July 17</p>	<p>Reading the Methods in Contemporary (Urban?) Ethnographies: Has Counihan applied the critiques of Textuality and the Feminist Response, or is hers the kind of ethnography that is the object of those critiques?</p>	<p>Counihan, Around the Tuscan Table: Food as Voice in Twentieth Century Florence, pp. 1-15</p> <p>Food Production, Reproduction, and Gender, pp. 79-95</p>

3-5:30	Evaluating our interviews, working on our transcriptions.	Bernard, Text Analysis I, pp. 407-428
12. Tues July 18 3-5:30	Working with our interviews and transcriptions in more depth: extracting and analyzing the data  Data analysis activity: coding one another's transcripts	Bernard, Text Analysis II, pp. 429-457  Bring transcripts to class  <b>Data Collection Graded</b>
13. Wed July 20 3-5:30	Framing our data for write-up: in which of the 'many Florence's' does your data occur?  Activity: analysis in practice, or writing up your data.	Low, Theorizing the City, pp. 1-33  Bring all your fieldnotes, transcriptions, coding, memoing, etc.
14. Mon July 24 3-5:30	What does Law tell you about your project? How are you accounting for the 'messiness' of your data and your analysis?  Activity: Bring your draft write-up and we'll experiment together with alternative ways to represent your findings.	Law, After Method: Introduction and Interlude, pp. 1-17 Virtual Singularity, pp. 57-58 Partial Connections, pp. 62-65 Elusive Objects and Interlude, pp. 86-103  <b>Data Analysis Graded</b>
15. Tues July 25 3-5:30	Krause's critique (and its implication for our writing up): it takes more than quotes from people to make a work ethnographic.  Contemporary Italian ethnography: critical readings with an eye towards methods.	Krause, Towards an Ethnographic Research Agenda for Italy, pp. 393-403  Belmonte, The Broken Fountain: Chapter One, Paeon to the City, pp. 1-8 Chapter Two, Fieldwork in Naples, pp. 9-26
16. Wed July 26 3-5:30	Recent ethnographic attempts to account for mess (in Law's sense, if not with Law's methods)  Final considerations for your data collection, analysis, and write-up	Pine, Art of Making Do in Naples: Introduction, The Contact Zone, pp. 1-18 Making Do With Art, pp.61-130 Epilogue, Making Do with Indeterminacy, pp. 295-304

FINAL WRITE-UPS MUST BE RECEIVED BY FRIDAY AUG 4		

#### 4. Forms of Assessment

The course is organized around the completion of an ethnographic project during the students' time onsite in Florence. The components of the project are divided into specific, objective criteria of progress against which the students' accomplishments will be measured. The forms of assessment are as follows:

**Participant-Observation and Fieldnotes:** 15% of final grade

At the beginning of the class students learn to take fieldnotes through a combination of theory provided by the assigned readings, and practice carried out during their time onsite. Fieldnotes will be assessed twice during the course on the basis of quantity and frequency (they must be recorded on a daily basis), and the extent to which they conform to the theory covered in the Bernard and Geertz readings.

**Research Proposal:** 15% of final grade

The research proposal of five to seven pages must include an explanation of the data sought, how it builds on existing scholarship (with references cited), the specific choice of methods based on the type of data sought, and how any potential ethical concerns will be addressed. The criteria for assessment include the extent to which the proposed research is situated in the existing scholarship, the appropriateness of the methods chosen based on the Bernard readings, and the extent to which the ethical standards of the AAA and the ASA are reflected in the research plan.

**Data Collection:** 20% of final grade

This requires extracting data from fieldnotes and conducting at least four formal, semi-structured interviews, and their transcription and memoing. The criteria for assessment include the content of the interview as developed by the interviewer, and the extent to which their transcription and memoing reflects the procedures outlined in the Bernard reading and reflected in the Counihan and Low readings.

**Data Analysis:** 20% of final grade

This requires processing the extracted data using the methods outlined in the Bernard and Law readings. Criteria for assessment include the extent and the accuracy of the coding, and the extent to which the procedures specified by Bernard and Law are followed (the specifics will vary based on the topic; the suitability of the chosen methods is assessed as part of the Research Proposal).

### **Final Project Write-Up:** 30% of final grade

The final project write-up should be modelled on the ethnographic texts about Italy that we have read over the course: Coluzzi, Counihan, Belmonte, and Pine are all examples, as are sources specifically relevant to your topic, insofar as these sources are *ethnographic* as discussed by Krauss. Similarly, your writing must itself be ethnographic in the sense discussed by Geertz, Clifford, and Behar and it must engage the urban dimension of Florence as discussed by Savage and Park. This is due as a Word document of minimum 15 pages in length, due the week following the conclusion of the course meetings onsite.

## **5. GRADING**

The final course grade is calculated as a cumulative percentage based on the proportional weights indicated above for each form of assessment. Traditional letter grades are assigned based on the following percentages:

<b>A</b>	100-94%	<b>Excellent:</b> student work demonstrates a thorough understanding of the course content and makes independent connections to other relevant material, based on student research into other sources as well as original insights developed from close engagement with assigned course material, with all assigned work completed on time.
<b>A-</b>	93-90%	
<b>B+</b>	89-87%	<b>Good:</b> student work demonstrates a thorough understanding of course content based on material covered in the syllabus, with original insights derived from close engagement with assigned course material, with all assigned work completed on time.
<b>B</b>	86-83%	
<b>B-</b>	82-80%	
<b>C+</b>	79-77%	<b>Satisfactory:</b> student work demonstrates a reasonable understanding of course content based on material covered in the syllabus, with all assigned work completed.
<b>C</b>	76-73%	
<b>C-</b>	72-70%	
<b>D</b>	69-65%	<b>Poor:</b> student work demonstrates a basic, but incomplete, understanding of course content based on material covered in the syllabus. Assigned work incomplete and/or unsatisfactory.
<b>F</b>	< 64%	<b>Failure:</b> student work shows an unsatisfactorily incomplete understanding of course content. Assigned work incomplete and/or unsatisfactory.

## **6. LIST OF COURSE MATERIALS/READINGS**

American Anthropological Association  
2012 Statement on Ethics. Available from  
<http://ethics.americananthro.org/category/statement/>

American Sociological Association

1999 Code of Ethics and Policies and Procedures of the ASA Committee on Professional Ethics. Available from

<http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/images/asa/docs/pdf/CodeofEthics.pdf>

Behar, Ruth

1995 Introduction: Out of exile. In Ruth Behar and Deborah A. Gordon, eds., *Women Writing Culture*, pp. 1-29. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Belmonte, Thomas

2005[1979] *The Broken Fountain Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bernard, H. Russell

2011 *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Fifth edition. Lanham: Alta Mira Press.

Clifford, James

1986 Introduction: Partial truths. In James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, pp. 1-26. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Coluzzi, Paolo

2009 Endangered minority and regional languages ('dialects') in Italy. *Modern Italy* 14(1):39-54

Counihan, Carole M.

2004 *Around the Tuscan Table: Food, Family, and Gender in Twentieth-Century Florence*. New York and London: Routledge.

Dickie, John

1996 *Imagined Italies*. In David Forgacs and Robert Lumley, eds., *Italian Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, pp. 19-33. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Geertz, Clifford

1973 *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books.

Krause, Elizabeth L.

2006 'You have to start with something': Towards an ethnographic research agenda for modern Italy. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 11(3):393-403.

Law, John

2004 *After Method: Mess in Social Science Research*. London: Routledge.

Low, Setha M.

1999 Introduction: Theorizing the city. In Setha M. Low. ed., *Theorizing the City: The New Urban Anthropology Reader*, pp. 1-33. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Malinowski, Bronislaw

1922 *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagos of Melanesian New Guinea*. London: George Routledge and Sons. Available from <https://archive.org/details/argonautsofthewe032976mbp>

Park, Robert E.

1915 The city: Suggestions for the investigation of human behavior in the city environment. *The American Journal of Sociology* 20(5):577-612.

Pine, Jason

2012 *The Art of Making Do in Naples*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Savage, Mike, Alan Warde and Kevin Ward

2003 *Urban Sociology, Capitalism and Modernity*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Thomas, Jim

1993 *Doing Critical Ethnography*. London: Sage.

Young, Robert C.J.

2012 *The Italian Postcolonial*. In Lombardi-Diop, Cristina and Caterina Romeo, eds., *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, pp. 31-34. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.