

## Course Syllabus

Contemporary Ethnography  
Anthropology 520, Autumn 2016  
Meeting time: W 11:00-1:50pm  
Meeting location: SS 252

Instructor: Gilbert Quintero, Ph.D.  
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Office: SS 225  
Office hours: TWR 2:00-3:00  
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### Description

This course provides a review and discussion of select current ethnographic research. The general goal is to examine ethnographic texts in order to explore and understand theoretical and methodological issues and developments in sociocultural anthropology. This will include consideration of key interpretative frameworks and concepts as well as attention to the epistemological underpinnings underlying anthropology.

### Goals

There are three main goals for this course:

1. To increase students' ability to identify, describe, and evaluate current practices, theories and issues in ethnography;
2. To increase students' knowledge regarding the major contemporary issues, questions, and theories in sociocultural anthropology; and
3. To extend students' skills in academic reading, writing, and discussion.

### Requirements

In general, successful performance in this course will require that the student:

1. Synthesize, discuss, and elaborate upon a variety of issues and frameworks;
2. Effectively express her/himself in verbal and written academic formats; and
3. Be an effective reader.

Grades for the course will be based on performance in the following areas:

Discussion	40%
Take home exams (2)	60%

Plus/minus grades may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Discussion: Each student is required to read the materials assigned for each particular class period and to attend class prepared to engage in critical discussion. Your ability to articulate and analyze the reading materials and the ideas of your classmates in an in-depth fashion will be crucial to your success in this course. This element of the class grade will be based on several factors. First, a portion of this grade will be determined by the instructor's subjective assessment of the student's performance of discussion guidelines. Second, the student will be evaluated on his/her discussion leadership performance. At least one student will be asked to assume the role of presenter for each class. This student will have a command of the assigned readings and

organize and facilitate the class discussion. This will include providing productive, academic discussion questions to the class, presenting key concepts, and co-leading discussion with the instructor and any other student presenters. Finally, attendance will count towards a portion of this component of the final class grade. Students who miss more than one class meeting will have points deducted.

Discussion should be organized around these basic points:

- What question(s) do the authors examine?
- What theoretical approach or framework do the authors utilize?
- What methods do the authors use?
- What evidence do the authors provide to support their arguments? Did you find this argument and support convincing? Why or why not?
- What themes or issues do these readings address that have been covered in other class materials (e.g., readings, discussions)? How are these texts similar or different?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the reading?
- What do these readings say about contemporary ethnography?

In addition, relevant issues, frameworks and concepts from earlier readings should be used to analyze and evaluate the specific ethnographies we will be reading and discussing during the second half of the semester.

Take home exams: There will be two take home essay exams based on assigned course readings. These assignments will be handed out in class a week before they are due. These exams are to be developed and completed by each student individually.

## **Policies**

Hard copies: Unless explicitly noted, all written assignments must be turned in as hard copies. Electronic submissions will not be accepted.

Students with Disabilities: University policy states that it is the responsibility of students with documented disabilities to contact instructors during the first week of the semester to discuss appropriate accommodations to ensure equity in grading, classroom experiences, and outside assignments. The instructor will meet with the student and the staff of the Disability Services for Students (DSS) to make accommodations. Please contact DSS (243.2373) for more information.

Email: Please conduct all class related email communications with me through your UM account.

## **Course Supplement**

A web-based supplement for this class is available on Moodle: <http://umonline.umt.edu/>. Technical support is provided at: <http://umonline.umt.edu/techsupport/helpdesk.aspx>.

## Texts

Biehl, J. *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*. University of California Press, 2013. ISBN 978-0-520-27295-8.

Emerson, R.E. *Contemporary Field Research: Perspectives and Formulations*. Waveland Press, 2001. ISBN 1-57766-185-0.

Goffman, A. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Macmillan, 2015. ISBN 978-1-250-06566-7.

Kohn, E. *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human*. University of California Press, 2013. ISBN 978-0-520-27611-6.

Tsing, A.L. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton University Press, 2005. ISBN 0-691-12065-X .

Other readings will also be assigned.

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## Schedule

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1/Aug 31	Course Introduction
2/Sep 7	The Face of Contemporary Ethnography
3/Sep 14	Fieldwork Practice
4/Sep 21	Producing Ethnographies
5/Sep 28	Ethnographic Theory I
6/Oct 5	Ethnographic Theory II
7/Oct 12	<b>Take home exam due</b>
8/Oct 19	Culture, Self & Semiotics
9/Oct 26	Being Human: <i>How Forests Think</i>
10/Nov 2	Social Suffering & Neoliberalism
11/Nov 9	Social Abandonment: <i>Vita</i>
12/Nov 16	Globalization
13/Nov 23	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>

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14/Nov 30	Global Flows: <i>Friction</i>
15/Dec 7	Race, Policing & Incarceration
16/Dec 14	Fugitive Ethnography: <i>On the Run</i> (8-10am) <b>Take home exam due</b>

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Detailed reading assignments and responsibilities will be discussed in class. These readings should be completed by the date outlined in this schedule. Please note that this syllabus provides a general plan for the course; changes may be necessary and will be announced in class.