

## Course Syllabus

Contemporary Ethnography  
Anthropology 520, Autumn 2019  
Meeting time: W 11:00-1:50pm  
Meeting location: SS 252

Instructor: Gilbert Quintero, Ph.D.  
Phone: 243-5825  
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 ethnographies. The general goal is to examine ethnographic texts in order to explore and understand theoretical, methodological, and representational 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 and the production of ethnography.

### Goals

There are three main goals for this course:

1. To increase students' ability to identify, describe, and evaluate current practices and issues in ethnography;
2. To increase students' knowledge regarding the major 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:

Seminar discussion	20%
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 meeting 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.

There are a number of general strategies and questions for organizing discussion. These are offered as a guide:

- 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 about a week before they are due. These exams are to be developed and completed by each student individually. More details will be provided.

## **Policies**

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

Electronic devices: Cell phones should be turned off and out of sight for the duration of class. Laptops adversely affect the quality of seminar discussion and are highly discouraged.

Students with disabilities: Students with documented disabilities must contact me (via email) during the first week of the semester if they wish to request any appropriate accommodations. 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. I will generally not respond to email originating from an account outside UM.

## Course Supplement

A web-based supplement for this class (along with technical support) is available on Moodle: <http://umonline.umt.edu/>.

## 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.

Gay y Blasco, P. and H. Wardle. *How to Read Ethnography*. Routledge, 2007. ISBN 978-0-415-32867-8.

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

Kenworthy, N. *Mistreated: The Political Consequences of the Fight against AIDS in Lesotho*. Vanderbilt University Press, 2017. ISBN 9780826521552/ 082652155X.

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

Powell, D. E. *Landscapes of Power: Politics of Energy in the Navajo Nation*. Duke University Press, 2018. ISBN 9780822369943/ 082236994X.

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 28	Course Introduction
2/Sep 4	The Face of Contemporary Ethnography Read Emerson: Preface and p.1-111
3/Sep 11	Fieldwork Practice Read Emerson: p.113-279
4/Sep 18	Producing Ethnographies Read Emerson: p.281-395
5/Sep 25	Ethnographic Theory Readings: TBA
6/Oct 2	How to Read Ethnography I Read p.1-95

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7/Oct 9	How to Read Ethnography II Read p.96-197
8/Oct 16	<b>Take home exam due – No class meeting</b>
9/Oct 23	Global Health: <i>Mistreated</i>
10/Oct 30	Social Abandonment: <i>Vita</i>
11/Nov 6	Being Human: <i>How Forests Think</i>
12/Nov 13	Global Flows: <i>Friction</i>
13/Nov 20	Sovereignty and Energy Development: <i>Landscapes of Power</i>
14/Nov 27	<b>Thanksgiving Break – No class meeting</b>
15/Dec 4	Fugitive Ethnography: <i>On the Run</i>
16/Dec 11	<b>Take home exam due 12 noon</b>

Detailed reading assignments and responsibilities will be discussed in class. Please note that this syllabus provides a general plan for the course; changes may be necessary and will be announced in class.