CAST 300/301: Situated Research and Practicum
Fall 2013: Tues/Thurs 9-10:50 am in Carnegie 212

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Situated Research is a qualitative methods course that uses community-based learning pedagogies as a way to reflect on and critically engage with issues of power, ethics, participatory research, and the production of knowledge. This field-based course explores the experiential and analytical aspects of qualitative research through the study of institutional practices and social interaction, with particular attention to issues of gender, race, sexuality, and class. It is also a course that invites students into a deeper engagement with the larger Oberlin and Lorain County communities and brings together scholarship, community service, and community-based research in order to reflect on the ethics, challenges, and methods of qualitative participatory research. Both CAST 300 and CAST 301 (the practicum) are required for all Comparative American Studies majors.

The principal goal of this course is for each student to prepare an ethnographic report by the end of the semester. In order to meet this goal, Situated Research consists of two components: First, a weekly seminar which provides space to reflect, analyze, and discuss social theory, the production of knowledge, power, ethics, social location, and positionality, as well as mechanics of data collection, analysis and writing of ethnographic texts. And second, the practicum in which each student will volunteer on a weekly basis at a local community organization, agency, grassroots group or research site. Mature, engaged, and responsible participation in both components is absolutely critical in order to complete this course successfully.

This course has applied for approval from the Oberlin College Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects. We are awaiting approval for the course. **No research may be undertaken until the Oberlin College IRB has approved the application, however, you can (and should) begin volunteering at your site as soon as possible.**

**Course Goals:**
1) to think critically about issues of method, methodology and epistemology by completing an original qualitative research project
2) to understand ethical issues and power relations in social science research, especially in relation to race, class, gender, and sexuality
3) to develop an analysis of advocacy research, the politics of non-profit social service institutions, as well as educational institutions
4) to link theories of intersectionality to research design and methodology
5) to foster a global and/or transnational sensibility analyzing local phenomena
6) to explore issues of accountability and collaboration in community-based research
7) to become more aware of what northeast Ohio might teach us about the central concerns of the CAS major
Required Texts

Recommended Texts

Textbooks can be purchased at the Oberlin College Bookstore. Additional articles are available on blackboard (BB).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation and Attendance: Students are expected to attend and participate in weekly seminars as well as in their chosen placement for the practicum. Given the myriad of ethical, political, and personal issues involved in doing qualitative research and working with community partners, it is absolutely essential for all students to engage each other respectfully. The relationships you build with community partners also involve establishing rapport, building trust, and mutual respect. Timely arrival, honest discussion, and respectful engagement are key to your success in the seminar and in your practicum placement.

P/NP: If you are taking this class P/NP, you must fulfill all course obligations to receive credit.

LATE WORK: All assignments must be completed on time. Papers not turned in at the specified time on the specified date will be considered late and will be penalized 1/3 grade for each day it is overdue. Late assignments will not receive written comments, and must include on the first page the date you turned in the assignment. On the rare occasion I agree to grant an extension on an assignment, you must include a note on the first page stating that you were granted an extension and the new due date. If you fail to do so, the assignment will be regarded as late and penalized accordingly.

ACADEMIC INCOMPLETES at the end of the semester will not be given except case of an emergency.

HONOR CODE: The policies described in the Oberlin College Honor Code apply to this class. Written work must include proper citations and must be the product of your own work. You are also required to include the following statement on all written assignments with your signature: "I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment." If you have any questions about how to
cite sources properly or about the Honor Code, please feel free to approach me. For more information on the Honor Code see https://oncampus.oberlin.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp?tab_tab_group_id=_33_1

STUDENTS NEEDING EXTRA ASSISTANCE: Please speak with me if you need disability-related accommodations in this course. Student Academic Services is also an important resource for students needing academic assistance. Please contact Jane Boomer, Office of Disability Services, Peters G27, extension 5-5585.

CAST 300/Research Seminar Assignments

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<th>Assignment</th>
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<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Situating field research assignments</td>
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I. Participation and Attendance in Research Seminars

Weekly seminars provide a space to share the experiences, challenges, concerns and joys of student placements and the research process. Discussing the ethics of research and disclosure are absolutely central to this course, and our first seminar meeting will be dedicated to discussing not only the ethics of research, but also issues of confidentiality. Because each of you will bring reflections of your placements and of the people with whom you work into the classroom, as a class we will establish the seminar as a confidential space and stress that information, stories, concerns, and issues shared cannot be discussed outside of the seminar.

Weekly seminars will also include a discussion of assigned readings. The reading list will include articles discussing the ethics of research; issues of social stratification and hierarchies based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability; the challenges and importance of interdisciplinary and advocacy research; as well as a discussion of other methodologies, including feminist approaches, archival research, survey and content analysis. Course readings will also include ethnographies as a way to think through methodological questions and concerns students will face throughout their placement. An important course goal is for students to be able to identify various methods scholars use, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of various methodologies and to use their deep engagement with ethnographic methods as a way for understanding other methodologies.

Engaged and critical discussion of the readings is absolutely required. I encourage each of you to use the readings to reflect on your experiences as researchers and to bring that analysis to each seminar. In order to facilitate seminar discussion, students will use the discussion board on blackboard to post comments to the readings each Monday and Wednesday by midnight. These postings are not graded but are required and are factored into your final participation grade. You may also feel free to use blackboard to continue conversations/debates from class, but you are asked not to discuss matters regarding individual placements in these postings. Students will also develop groups of approximately 4 people to help lead discussion for one seminar this semester. I have indicated on the syllabus the 4 seminar meetings students will facilitate. Finally, by the third week of class each of you will identify a peer review partner with whom you will work throughout the semester. There are two seminar meetings dedicated to in-class writing workshop (one in October and one in November), and instances when your peer review partner will provide you with written and verbal feedback on your work. You are
encouraged to work with your peer review partner beyond these assigned times and to work closely with the TA in the course in your readings and written assignments.

The success of this seminar is contingent on your thoughtful engagement with the texts and with the comments, critiques and issues raised by your classmates and your instructor. Therefore, your attendance, timely arrival, and informed participation in class are absolutely required and constitute 15% of your final grade. *If you anticipate missing class, please inform me by email of your absence prior to class. Each unexcused absence will reduce your participation grade by 2/3 (from an A to a B+, for example). If you are arrive once class has begun, you will be considered absent. Finally, missing more than 3 seminars will result in a failing grade for the course.*

II. Written Assignments

This class is a writing-intensive course and as such includes a variety of written assignments designed to introduce students to the process of recording field notes, proposal writing and research design as well as ethnographic writing.

A. Situating Your Field Research Assignments

Your ethnographic research this semester is part of a larger body of knowledge, research, and activism. As researchers, it is your responsibility to learn as much as you can about the problem and issues at hand. To this end, you will have several short assignments aimed at providing that context for your project. These assignments will also introduce you to other methods of research (literary, archival, census data, etc.) *Assignments are typically due on Fridays Noon.*

1. *Field Site Description, September 27th (5%)* Provide a detailed description of your placement site. Where is it located? Describe the physical space and its relation to other places nearby. Who works at your placement? What kinds of jobs do they do? *Don’t take anything for granted in describing your field site.* 500-750 words.

2. *Literature Review, October 29th (5%) (Due at the beginning of class after fall break)* What are the scholarly texts that speak to your central research question? Use peer-reviewed academic journals and book-length monographs to provide an analysis that situates your research in relation to scholarly writing related to your project. 1250-1750 words.

3. *Census Report, November 8th (5%)* Provide a narrative of the socio-economic context for your research using demographic data from the U.S. census. 750-1000 words.

4. *Coded Field Notes Memo, November 15th (5%)* This assignment identifies the key categories/codes pulled from your field notes that support the central argument of your project, 1000-2000 words.

B. Ethnographic Project Assignments

Your field notes will serve as the basis for your final ethnographic paper, which will also incorporate class readings and field research assignments to provide a framework for your project. You will be invited to meet with me in the first few weeks of the semester to discuss your project. Each of you will be required to identify a research question that will serve as the basis for your ethnographic project. Given the intersubjective nature of engaged field research, I suspect (and expect) your understanding of the research question will change over the course of the semester. Final papers should be approximately 20 pages in length.
1. **Project Proposal, October 11th (5%)** Clearly state your research question, your methods for investigating this question, and methodology. This writing assignment is meant to show how to define a research problem and discuss methods and methodology in a clear, succinct fashion. You should also include an annotated bibliography of at least 3 sources. 1-2 pages for project description; 2-3 pages annotated bibliography.

2. **IRB Project, October 18th** Complete an IRB application for your project. Your peer review partner will read and review your IRB application. This assignment is not graded, but failure to complete it will result in reducing your project proposal grade by one letter.

3. **Rough Draft and Draft report, November 26th and November 27th (10%)** You must bring in two printed copies at the beginning of class (one for me and one for your peer review partner). Your rough draft must include all required sections of the final report. You must also submit by the following day a 1-2 page report about how you will revise your rough draft based on comments you received from your partner.

4. **Community Research Symposium, Saturday December 7th or Sunday December 8th (10%)** This public presentation is an opportunity to present your research project to community partners and the larger Lorain County community.

5. **Ethnographic Report, due Finals Week, Thursday December 19th, 11am (40%)**

### SUMMARY OF KEY COURSE DEADLINES

- **September 27th** Field Site Description
- **October 11th** Project Proposal
- **October 18th** IRB Project
- **October 29th** Literature Review
- **November 8th** Census Report
- **November 15th** Coded Field notes Memo
- **November 26th** Rough Draft
- **November 27th** Rough Draft Report
- **December 7th or 8th** Community Research Symposium
- **December 10th** Practicum Reflection
- **December 19th** Ethnographic Report Due 11am

### CAST 301/Practicum Assignments

1. **Attendance (30%)** Each student is required to spend 8-10 hours weekly in her/his placement. The time you spend at your field site is determined by the credit you receive for the practicum component, although you may choose to spend more time than is required at your field site if you choose to do so. **You must arrange a placement by September 13th** and you must attend weekly. Each student is responsible for 10 weeks of fieldwork over the course of the semester (8 sets of required, ungraded field notes). You are required to make up for missed time at your placement, even in the case of excused absences.

2. **Field notes (60%) Due each Friday 5pm beginning September 27th** Once you begin working at your chosen field site, each of you will be required to take field notes. Taking, writing, and circulating field notes are a central requirement to this course and will be the basis for your final ethnographic paper. While there are clearly important concerns about the writing of field
notes (issues of power, representation, and textuality, to name a few), this course is premised on the notion that there is value in close documentation and observation of different field sites in order to, as homelessness activist/researcher/anthropologist Kim Hopper notes, “render a faithful (“just”) reconstruction” of people’s points of view as one way of effecting lasting social change (Hopper 2003: 9). In order to facilitate this methodological enterprise, each student is required to take daily field notes, at least 10 ds pages / 2500-3000 words per week, or 1 ds page / 250-300 words for each hour at your placement. I will read your individual field notes on a weekly basis, but I will not comment on individual field notes except in cases where the work is unsatisfactory or by appointment. I will provide critical feedback to the class as a group with the goal of helping each of you improve data collection, to engage you with issues of ethics of data collection, and to help you analyze your field notes in order to construct grounded theory. We will also engage in peer-and-professor review of field notes so that everyone will receive some individual feedback on their individual field notes. I may email individual students prior to class to ask permission to use an especially good example from your field notes in order to show others how a particular thing may be done well. I will also meet with each person regularly to discuss the mechanics of taking field notes and documentation, and to work with you to use these data to design a research proposal and ultimately write the final ethnographic project.

**NB:** If you fail to turn your field notes in a timely fashion, this will negatively affect your grade in the course. I typically read field notes within one week of receiving them.

3. Practicum Reflection (10%) Due December 10th at 9AM, 4-5 ds pages / 1000-1500 words
This is an opportunity for you to reflect on your semester’s work and consider what you learned from your practicum experience. Each student will surely face a range of issues related to engaging in qualitative, community-based research; this paper is a space to write about these experiences, including self-evaluation, your thoughts about the relationship between academic research and social change, concerns about social inequality and specifically about membership in the larger Lorain County community. While this assignment is designed to be a personal reflection, please be sure to provide a clear analysis that engages with the themes of the course.

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: Introduction: Defining Ethnography and Situated research**
September 3   Organizational meeting, discussion of placements and taking field notes

September 5  **Histories, Motivations, and Mechanics of Ethnographic Research**
Emerson, “The development of ethnographic field research” (BB); Best, “Introduction” (BB); Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, “Field notes in Ethnographic Research” (BB); Lofland, “Field Notes” (BB).

**Week 2: Ethnography and Qualitative Research**
September 10  **Method, Methodology and Epistemology**
Becker, “The Epistemology of Qualitative Research” (BB); Harding, “Is There a Feminist Method?” (BB); Nygreen, “Reproducing or Challenging Power in the Questions
We Ask and the Methods We Use” (BB); Gerard Forsey, “Ethnography as Listening” (BB)

September 12 **Why We Write I: Why Ethnography?**
Behar, “Believing in Anthropology as Literature” (BB); Costa Vargas, “Limits and Possibilities in Times of Black Genocide” (BB); Farmer, “Fighting Words” (BB)

**Week 3: Ethics and Academic Research I: History of Research Ethics and Codes of Ethics**
September 17: Berg, “Ethical Issues” (BB); Morse, “Does Informed Consent Interfere with Induction?” (BB); Schrag, “Preface”, “Introduction,” and “Ethics and Committees,” (BB)

Also access the professional organization codes of ethics below:
American Anthropological Association Code of Ethics
[http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm](http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm)
American Historical Association, Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct
[http://www.historians.org/pubs/Free/ProfessionalStandards.cfm](http://www.historians.org/pubs/Free/ProfessionalStandards.cfm)
American Sociological Association, Code of Ethics
[http://www.asanet.org/about/ethics.cfm](http://www.asanet.org/about/ethics.cfm)

September 19: **Ethics and Academic Research II: Power and Representation** Cauce and Nobles, “With All Due Respect” (BB); Islam, “Research as an Act of Betrayal” (BB); Cox, “Moving the Field: Young Black Women, Performances of Self and Creative Protest in Post-Industrial Spaces” (BB)

**Week 4: Promises and Perils of Ethnography**
September 24: Denton-Mendoza, *Homegirls* GROUP 1 FACILITATION

**Friday September 27th Field Site Description Due, Blackboard, Noon.**

**Week 5: Developing a Project Proposal and IRB Application**
October 1: Pascoe, *Dude, You’re a Fag* GROUP 2 FACILITATION

October 3: Students will work with their peer review partners on their project proposals and IRB applications. Please bring hard copies of your IRB application draft, the IRB review document, as well as your project proposal to exchange with your peer review partner.

**Week 6: Activism, Advocacy and Ethnographic Practice**
October 8: Library trip for Literature Review Workshop MEETING IN MUDD 113

October 10: Goode, *The New Poverty Studies Reader (Selections)* GROUP 3 FACILITATION

**Friday, October 11th Project Proposal Due, Blackboard, Noon.**

**Week 7: Transnationalism and the Politics of Race and Migration**
October 15: Kang, *The Managed Hand* GROUP 4 FACILITATION

**Friday October 18th IRB Project Due To My Box, King 141E, Noon**
**********Fall Break**********

**Week 9: Census Data**
October 29: Library Trip for Census Workshop MEETING IN MUDD 113

*Literature Review Due at the Beginning of Class*

**Week 10: Data Analysis and Managing Field notes I**
November 5: Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, “Processing Field notes” (BB); Charmaz, “Grounded Theory in the 21st Century,” (BB).

*Friday November 8th Census Report Due, Blackboard, Noon.*

**Week 11: Data Analysis and Managing Field notes II**
November 12: On your own and with your peer review partner you will continue coding and analyzing your field notes

*Friday November 15th Coded Field notes Assignment Due, Blackboard, Noon*

**Week 12: Approaches to Ethnographic Writing and Presentation of Findings**
November 19: Richardson, “Writing: A Method of Inquiry,” (BB); Vissing, “A Roof Over Their Head” (BB); Narayan, “Postscript: Writing to be Alive” (BB)

**Week 13: Writing Workshop**
November 26 *Rough Draft due at the beginning of class (2 copies) to be exchanged with classmate*

*Wednesday November 28th Rough Draft Report Due, Blackboard, Noon*

**Week 14: Reflections on Community-Based Academic Research**
December 3: Cammarota, “A Map for Social Change” (BB); Agnotti and Sze “Environmental Justice Practice” (BB) *Practice giving symposium presentation*

*Community Symposium Saturday December 7th or Sunday December 8th place and time TBA*

**Week 15: Why We Write II: Why Ethnographers Do What They Do**
December 10: Zavella, “Tenemos que Seguir Luchando,” (BB); Davis, “Knowledge in the Service of a Vision” (BB)

*Practicum reflection due at the start of class.*

**THURSDAY DECEMBER 19th, FINAL ETHNOGRAPHIC REPORT DUE @11AM to BlackBoard**
BIBLIOGRAPHY


