



TYNDALE

• SEMINARY •

Course Syllabus

Fall 2012

ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH: TOOLS FOR ANTHROPOLOGICAL MAPPING
CHED 0662

SEPTEMBER 13 – DECEMBER 14, 2011
THURSDAYS 1:00 – 3:50 PM

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To access your course material, please go to <http://mtyndale.ca>

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

“I wish I understand the congregation better!” Have you uttered this in exasperation? Can you really know people and their contexts at a deeper level? Are there tools to “exegete” a community or parish, some kind of anthropological mapping or cultural hermeneutic? If you struggle with these important questions, this course is for you. Ethnographic research aims to equip you to “read” people groups in their contexts reliably and accurately. If contextualized ministry is being accountable to the hermeneutical obligations of the gospel, competent contextual analysis is fundamental to all Christian ministers. We will learn basic skills of observation, making fieldnotes, in-depth interviewing, data analysis and the preparation of instruments for testing generalizations in larger or contrasting settings. The basic aim of this course is to facilitate the ability to carry out field research in the style, form and discipline of anthropological inquiry so you can better appreciate the complex and multi-layered social contexts for church and mission.

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Develop a theological perspective of the nature and role of social science research in Christian ministry.
2. Carry out accurate cultural description and evaluate sociological phenomenon as a preliminary step in strategic ministry planning.
3. Write, read and evaluate ethnographies (cultural descriptions) with greater depth and understanding.
4. Design simple survey instruments for testing generalizations in social phenomena.

Experienced teachers of ethnographic research affirm the value of fieldwork for beginning students. The best way to develop the craft of field research is through regular practice in actual social situations. This course will have a fair amount of fieldwork (observation, interviewing, and making field notes) and students should view these as essential and complementary to class learning.

As you embark on fieldwork, you will begin the process of observation and reflection with the following sequence in mind:

-----Generalization of the Ethnographic Sequence¹-----

¹ These insights are from Ted Ward, Professor Emeritus at Michigan State University and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS), my doctoral mentor who first taught me the delight of living the ethnographic life.

1. Clearing the mind (as much as possible) of the presuppositions, expectations, and predictions, which can so easily become self-fulfilling prophecies—and as a contrast, to watch or ask with an openness to see and hear things as they really are.
2. Searching for patterns—recurring behaviors, sequences, or any other observable phenomena, which seem not to be random or coincidental.
3. Documenting observations—writing or committing to memory (for prompt audio recording) the essential elements of the observed encounters and transactions.
4. Interpreting evidences—while suppressing the temptation to jump to conclusions, it is necessary to propose meanings (often several possible meanings) inferred from the observations. These too must be reduced to writing.
5. Seeking opportunity for reexamination—to look and ask again in order to seek corrections and to note possible alternatives to the previous observations and judgments.
6. Reporting—with the objectivity and clarity of a data-based journalist and the reflective depth of a philosopher, to set forth the most reasoned and insightful conclusions that the data will support.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. REQUIRED READING

James P. Spradley, David W. McCurdy and Dianna Shandy, *The Cultural Experience: Ethnography in Complex Society*. Second edition. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2005).

This book is abbreviated SMS in the rest of this document.

David M. Fetterman, [Ethnography Step by Step](#). Third edition. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2010).

Selected articles and book chapters (on Moodle, <http://class.tyndale.ca>)

You will read a selection of 4-5 articles or book chapters and engage in discussion learning on select days.

Note: Completion of readings and your participation in discussions will comprise 10% of your grade (see “Evaluation of Readings & Discussions Criteria” on Moodle). You may only contribute to the discussions if you have completed the readings; otherwise you will only listen in the group.

B. RECOMMENDED READING

Michael Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. 3rd edition (Newbury Park, C.A.: Sage Publications, 2002).

This book is massive in size and cost, but it is readable and often quoted in the field. Patton is one of the most lucid, creative and dynamic scholar in the field, so it's good to be familiar with his work. We will discuss one chapter and review another in this course; this book is on Library Reserve.

Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Editors), [Handbook of Qualitative Research](#), 3rd. Edition (Newbury Park, CA.: Sage Publications, 2005).

This third edition is housed in the Reference Section of the Tyndale Library, but the second edition (published 2000) is on the stacks. This handbook is an amazing collection of articles by renowned scholars in the discipline and comes with a rich bibliography.

Jonathan Kozol, Jonathan, *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation* (New York: Perennial, HarperCollins Publishers, 1996).

Kozol is a non-fiction writer, educator and activist who is well-known for his books on public education in the US. *Amazing Grace* is a study of children in the South Bronx and the challenges they encounter in their challenging social-cultural contexts. Participant observation and in-depth interviews are evident in the research for this book.

Moschella, Mary Clark. *Ethnography as Pastoral Practice: An Introduction*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2008).

Moschella developed a course to help pastors and pastoral counselors enter into the complex social world of their congregations through the use of ethnographic skills.

C. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

1. **Field Trip Report:** Due on Oct. 1, 2012; 10% of final grade.

One field trip will be planned for the group as a whole very early in the course. This field trip provides observation experiences wherein intercultural differences can be identified. You will write a report of your experiences and observations. Further details for this field trip will be provided during the course.

Length: Not more than 2 pages, single-spaced (to be submitted via Moodle).

2. **Critique of One Ethnography:** Due on Nov. 26, 2012; 20% of final grade.

You will select and read 5 ethnographies in Part II of Spradley, McCurdy and Shandy. Select ONE of these five ethnographies and write a critique in which the purpose, method, findings, and quality of the work are evaluated.

Length: 3 pages, single-spaced.

3. Major Project: Due on Dec. 17, 2012; 45% of final grade.

This course includes a fair amount of fieldwork (best way to learn ethnography) and experience shows that beginning ethnographers learn best working in pairs. You will find a partner (preferably with a different background) with somewhat similar interests to carry out field research and with whom the major reporting and writing tasks can be shared.²

The major project for the course will be accomplished jointly by partnership groups (dyads). The project will be based on a series of 15 to 20 hours of field observation and at least three interviews. Your final submission will consist of three written components:

(a) Written field notes, transcribed from your observations and interviews at each session (only 1-2 pages of sample field notes need be included in your project).

(b) Written analysis represented by marked and coded field notes (sample of 1-2 pages only).

(c) Written findings and conclusions as a summary document reflecting the summation of evidence and the meanings of the observations and interviews.

Length: 10-12 pages, single-spaced (excluding sample field notes).

Evaluation criteria posted on Moodle.

Ground Rules for the observations and the interviews³

1. No unexpected and unplanned visits or encounters please. Make arrangements and explain the nature of your assignment. Do not attempt to interview or observe if you are not truly invited.

2. Respect anonymity and personal privacy. No invasive questions, especially into matters of marital status or behaviors, personal finances, family relationships, or other matters, which may be emotionally charged and especially sensitive.

² If you have personal circumstances, which present significant problems to working in pairs, please see the instructor at the end of the first class. Due to the established value of dyad partnerships in social research, as well as in Christian ministry, only extenuating circumstances will be entertained.

³ Adapted from Ted Ward.

3. Stay long enough to see the whole of an experience. People are very resentful of "thirty-minute experts." Try to revisit the situation or a very similar event or meeting. Ideally, observe the same group on several occasions. In order to get this desirable continuity you will need to make arrangements early.

4. Select a situation or series of situations, which will give you some sort of new and different experiences. In other words, avoid situations which are already well within your previous experience and background.

5. Select as a partner someone whose perspective is apt to be different from yours, then as you work together you will have a greater likelihood of challenging each other's tendencies to jump to premature conclusions. You don't have to come to agreement on everything; it may help to give your jointly written papers some extra texture and character if you don't. Try to help each other rather than just "giving in" on differences of opinion.

6. Partnership groups are to consist of two people. Only in a very unusual situation does it work well for three people to work together on this sort of assignment.

7. You will require some tools for your fieldwork. A small battery-powered cassette recorder is necessary to record data from your interviews. Recorders that require an external electrical source is obviously not appropriate. A photographic, digital or video camera can be an advantage to capture some of the social situations encountered. These are especially helpful in your report and presentation.

4. Major Project Presentation: Due on Dec. 3, 2012; 15% of final grade.

Each dyad group will share their field research and findings with the whole class. A creative presentation using MS PowerPoint, pictures and relevant artifacts (cultural elements including food, music, etc.) will add depth and understanding. Though you may not have completed the project, I expect you to have completed good fieldwork, with detailed qualitative description and/or findings. Please upload your presentation to USB key and bring to class for that day.

D. GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

Integrity in academic work is required of all our students. Academic dishonesty is any breach of this integrity, and includes such practices as cheating (the use of unauthorized material on tests and examinations), submitting the same work for different classes without permission of the instructors; using false information (including false references to secondary sources) in an

assignment; improper or unacknowledged collaboration with other students, and plagiarism. Tyndale University College & Seminary takes seriously its responsibility to uphold academic integrity, and to penalize academic dishonesty.

All assignments must be submitted online via Moodle by 5:00PM on the due date. Late papers will be penalized, with the reduction of 1 mark per day, inclusive of Saturdays and Sundays. Late work will be graded but will not receive any comments from the instructor. Any extension after Dec. 19, will have to be in writing to the Registrar.

Students should consult the current *Academic Calendar* for academic polices on Academic Honesty, Gender Inclusive Language in Written Assignments, Extensions, Return of Assignments, and Grading System. The Academic Calendar is posted at tyndale.ca/registrar/calendar.

E. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation is based upon the completion of the following assignments:

Field Trip Report	10%
Critique of Ethnography	20%
Major Project	45%
Major Project Presentation	15%
Readings & Discussion Learning	10%
Total Grade	100%

IV. COURSE SCHEDULE, CONTENT AND REQUIRED READINGS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Readings/Assignments</u>
September 10	
Introductions and Course overview	SMS 1-2 ⁴
Psalm 19 (reflections from ethnographic perspective)	Siew article ⁵
September 17	
Ethnography: nature & applications	SMS 3-4
Four major learning tasks in ethnography	Patton chapter

⁴ MSS refers to McCurdy, Spradley and Shandy; numbers refer to book chapters.

⁵ All articles or book chapters for discussion learning are posted on Moodle

Ethnography projects (previous students)
Discussion: Patton chapter
Field trip ideas

(on Moodle)

September 24
Field trip

SMS 5-7
Read 1 ethnography
(SMS)

October 1
Joshua 1-2
Field trip—reflections
Ethnographic sequences
Entering field, working with “informants”
Research Ethics Board (REB) requirements
Project ideas (each student to share)

Read 1 ethnography
SMS 8-9
Due: Field trip report

October 8
Thanksgiving (no classes)

October 15
REB proposal and consent form
Doing fieldwork: Ground rules for observation
Discussion: Yamona article & Peter Cha chapter

Peter Cha chapter
Yamona article

October 22
Matthew 8-9
Ethnographic interview
Researcher role/relationships

Fetterman 1-2
Read 1 ethnography

Note:
Seminary Reading Days are Oct. 23-26 (Tuesday-Friday).

October 29
Phil. 2: 5-11
Doing fieldwork: Rudiments of good fieldnotes
Discussion: Porro article

Porro article
Fetterman 3-4

November 5
Fieldwork⁶

Fetterman 5-7
Survey Patton chapter
Transcribe fieldnotes

November 12
Fieldwork

Read 1 ethnography
Transcribe fieldnotes

November 19
Acts 17: 16-34
Student fieldwork update
Analysis of fieldnotes⁷
Research & ministry balance

Data analysis
Read 1 ethnography

November 26
Joshua 3-8
Writing the ethnographic report
Generalization of findings
Likert-type survey instrumentation
Review of lessons & course evaluation

Data analysis
Due: Critique of 1
Ethnography

December 3
Community meal @ Siews

Due: Project
presentations⁸

⁶ Ethnographic research is most effectively acquired when one is engaged in fieldwork, keeping in mind the theoretical principles acquired in readings and class learning. About 30% of class time will be devoted to fieldwork, which means class learning happens as you are in the field. Please note these specified fieldwork days in the schedule and arrange your interviews and observations accordingly. For your major project, you are expected to do fieldwork outside of class hours to complete your data collection, thus this flexibility.

⁷ Students will be expected to bring some of their own field notes and interviews for analysis.

⁸ Please bring a dish from your culture to share. Each dyad group will present their findings with the whole class. A creative presentation using MS PowerPoint, pictures and relevant cultural artifacts (food, music, etc.) will add depth and understanding. Though you may not have finished the project, you are expected to have completed all fieldwork, with detailed qualitative description and some key findings.

V. ONLINE RESOURCES

A number of journals publish articles involving ethnographic research. You are encouraged to preview some of these listed below in the course of this study.

Anthropology and Education Quarterly
Christian Education Journal
Educational Researcher
Harvard Educational Review
International Journal for Qualitative Studies in Education
Journal of Christian Education
Journal of Christian Higher Education
Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research
Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion
Religious Education
Review of Religious Research
Sociology of Religion

An excellent site is the website of *Teachers College Record*, the journal of Teachers College, Columbia University (www.tcrecord.org); look under “Research” (qualitative).

Other website resources will be posted on Moodle.

Acknowledgment

This course is adapted from an ethnographic research course by Ted W. Ward, Professor Emeritus of Education at Michigan State University and Professor Emeritus of Educational Studies and Mission at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago. Dr. Ward, my mentor in the PhD program, first taught me the delightful adventure of living the ethnographic life. Though I included much of my own thoughts as I mature in qualitative research in this course, I have drawn liberally from his ideas and course outline.

Select Bibliography

Atkinson, Paul, *Handbook of Ethnography* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 2001)

Ammerman, Nancy T., Jackson Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998).

Carroll, Jackson W. *God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006).

Denzin, Norman K. and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Editors), [Handbook of Qualitative Research](#), 3rd. Edition (Newbury Park, CA.: Sage Publications, 2005).

Fetterman, David M. [Ethnography Step by Step](#). Third edition. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2010).

Hammersley, Martyn, and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*. Third edition (New York: Routledge, 2007).

Hoge, Dean R. and Jacqueline E. Wenger, [Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2005).

Kozol, Jonathan, *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation* (New York: Perennial/HarperCollins Publishers, 1996).

Mason, Jennifer. *Qualitative Researching*. Second edition. (London: Sage, 2002).

Mellott, David. *Ethnography as Theology: Encountering the Penitentes of Arroya Seco, New Mexico* (PhD dissertation, Graduate Division of Religion, Emory University, 2005).

Moschella, Mary Clark, "Faith, Food, and Formation: A Case Study on the Use of Ethnography in Pastoral Theology and Care," *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 12, no. 1 (January 2002).

_____, *Ethnography as Pastoral Practice: An Introduction*. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2008).

Patton, Michael P. [Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods](#). 3rd edition (Newbury Park, C.A.: Sage Publications, 2002).

Scharen, A. B., "'Judicious Narratives,' or Ethnography as Ecclesiology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58 (2005), 125-142.

Spradley, James P, David W. McCurdy and Dianna Shandy, *The Cultural Experience: Ethnography in Complex Society*. Second edition. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2005).

Tweed, Thomas A, *Our Lady of the Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).