



TYNDALE

• SEMINARY •

Course Syllabus

FALL 2018

TOOLS FOR READING SOCIAL CONTEXT: ETHNOGRAPHY FOR MINISTRY

CHED 0662

SEPTEMBER 13 – DECEMBER 6

THURSDAYS, 8:15 – 11:05 AM

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Access course material at <http://classes.tyndale.ca/>

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The mission of Tyndale Seminary is to provide Christ-centred graduate theological education for leaders in the church and society whose lives are marked by intellectual maturity, spiritual vigour and moral integrity, and whose witness will faithfully engage culture with the Gospel.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Ethnographic research aims to equip students to “read” people in their contexts reliably and accurately. If contextualized ministry is being accountable to the hermeneutical obligations of the gospel, contextual analysis is fundamental to all Christian work. Skills of observation, in-depth interviewing, data analysis and the preparation of instruments for testing generalizations in larger or contrasting settings will be developed. This course facilitates the ability to carry out field research in the style, form and discipline of anthropological inquiry.

Ethnography is a tool that anthropologists use to better understand people groups. Ethnographers learn to attend to what people do by being a participant observer, embedded

in a community of practice. Pastors and ministry leaders are “shepherds” of the people. As we look at who is coming and going, the important questions are not just where they come from, but the cultural liturgies (formative practices) that shape them, and the contested spaces they occupied before they enter sacred space. Other important questions ministry leaders need to ask include how people are engaging with the various Christian ministries, and what the Holy Spirit is actually doing in the faith community.¹

This course seeks to meet the Master of Divinity learning outcome #2: “To acquire capacities for understanding and engaging cultural, social & global context of God’s mission in world.”

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this course, students will 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, and ongoing assessment of effectiveness.
3. Write, read and evaluate ethnographic studies 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 and students should view these as essential and complementary to class learning.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. REQUIRED READING

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

This text would be referred as “TCE (2005)” in the syllabus.

¹ James K. A. Smith, *You are What You Love* (Brazos, 2016) note that “pastors need to be ethnographers of the everyday, helping parishioners see their own environment as one that is formative, and all too often deformative.” (p. 40). Some of the ideas for this course description are adapted from a wonderful interview with James K.A. Smith and Rev. Jay Greener, “Pastor as Ethnographer,” Carl Henry Center, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Oct. 31, 2013. See <http://henrycenter.tiu.edu/resource/pastor-as-ethnographer/>

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

This text would be referred to as “EPP (2008)” in the syllabus.

Selection of articles and/or book chapters (on Moodle, <http://class.tyndale.ca>) for class discussion. Completion of readings prior to small group discussions is expected, and although this would not be “graded,” your participation here could enhance or negatively impact your overall grade.

B. RECOMMENDED READING AND TOOLS

Fetterman, David M. *Ethnography Step by Step*. Third edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2010.

A more technical treatment of ethnography but with many examples of its applications in higher education, health and business, making it an interesting read. This book is on Tyndale Library reserve; we will discuss a chapter from this book.

Baker, Dori Grinenko. Editor. *Greenhouses of Hope*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2010. A wonderful compilation of inspiring stories of congregations who invested in helping young leaders discern their gifts and pastoral calling. All the authors employed ethnographic research as method for data collection in this fascinating study. This book is on Tyndale Library reserve; we will discuss a chapter from this book.

Patton, Michael Q. *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. 3rd edition. Newbury Park, CA: 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 scholars in this field, so it’s important to be familiar with his work. This book is on Tyndale Library reserve; we will discuss one chapter and review another from this book.

Denzin, Norman K. 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.

Tyndale recommends www.stepbible.org – a free and reputable online resource developed by Tyndale House (Cambridge University) – for word searches of original-language texts, as well as for topical searches, interlinear texts, dictionaries, etc. Refer to the library for other [online resources for Biblical Studies](#).

C. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

As you embark on fieldwork, you will begin the process of observation and reflection with the following ethnographic sequence in mind:²

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.

1. Field Trip & Report (15% of grade).

One field trip will be planned for the group as a whole early in the course to provide observation experiences in a unique social-cultural scene/situation. You will write a report of your experiences and observations. Further details for this field trip would be provided in class.

Guidelines for Report:

Your report should contain the following sub-headings.

(a) “Clear the Mind”

What were some ideas, feelings that you have about the cultural scene/situation before you began this observation? What did you need to put aside so as not to “color” what you see?

(b) “Observations & Patterns”

² These insights are from Ted W. 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.

What "patterns" did you observe (recurring behavior; artifacts [things used in human interactions] you kept encountering; and kinds of repeated phenomena [events, incidents, episodes]? You can list these in "point form."

(c) "Interpretation"

What possible meanings can you infer from these patterns? What "hypothesis/es" can you draw about the cultural scene/situation?

This exercise is purely to nurture skills of observation, so you need a notepad and pen. No conversations with anyone is required. However, other than observing, you are encouraged to be immersed in the whole of the "experience" with all your relevant senses (sound, touch, smell); you need to "feel" the general atmosphere too. You will soon learn that "ethnography" engages the whole person; it's a holistic approach.

Length: 2 pages, single-spaced.

Due: Oct. 4, 2018

Evaluation: Your report will be assessed on how well the guidelines (above) are followed.

2. Critique of One Ethnography (20% of grade).

You will select and read three ethnographies in Part II of "TCE." Select ONE of these ethnographies and write a critique in which the purpose, method, findings, and quality of the work are evaluated.

The criteria this evaluation come from what you learned in this course as foundations for good ethnographic work. In addition, the "ethnographic sequence" provided by Prof. Ward (Syllabus, pp. 2-3) would be additional supplement to your criteria.

Length: 3 pages, single-spaced.

Due: Nov. 29, 2018

Evaluation: Your critique should demonstrate a clear outline of the author's purpose, method (data collection, analysis) and findings in this ethnography. The main evaluation question is whether these findings are supported by the data, as well as areas in which the work could be improved.

3. Major Project & Presentation

Major Project (50% of grade)

The major project would involve about 12-15 hours of fieldwork (three interviews, transcription, data analysis). Your written project should demonstrate the following components:

- (a) Introduction and field work: description/choice of group; major research question; gaining entry; working with participants; list of interview questions; and fieldnotes (observations, experiences) are to be clearly presented.
- (b) Data analysis and triangulation: strategy for organizing and coding of data for analysis; triangulation for accuracy. You need to provide one page of sample fieldnotes and one page of interviews (with markings/codes).
- (c) Conclusion: findings, implications, and issues for further study.
- (d) Throughout this paper, you should make references to the required readings in this course (“TCE, EPP”, articles discussed), with referenced citations (quotes). This demonstrates your major project is well-grounded theoretically.

Length: 8-10 pages, single-spaced (excluding sample pages of fieldnotes and interviews).

Due: Dec. 13, 2018

Evaluation: Criteria posted on Moodle.

Presentation (15% of grade)

Students will share their research project with the whole class on the last day of class (Dec. 6, 2018). Use of MS PowerPoint, with a clear outline of major question (with supplementary interview questions), data collection process, analysis, photos (if available), and significant quotations that support your findings is expected. You would likely not have completed writing up the whole project, but I expect you to have done the data analysis for this presentation.

Review of Research Ethics

All research at Tyndale Seminary involving interaction with human subjects, where data is systematically collected for a research paper or presentation is subjected to rules governing such research and reviewed by the Research Ethics Board (REB). However, in class projects like this, a general review by the chair of REB is sufficient, to ensure steps are taken to protect the anonymity of participants, preservation of the confidentiality of the information, and the safe keeping and disposal of the information after the research. Students would be working with the instructor to complete this review by the chair of REB; no research or fieldwork can begin before this is done. With help from your instructor, you should have a clear idea of what project you want to do by Oct. 4 (week #4) and develop your proposal by Oct. 11 (week #5). This would allow for a good “turn-around” time, so you can begin fieldwork by Nov. 8 (week #9).

Ground Rules for the observations and the interviews³

It is essential that you observe some basic “ground rules” during your observation and interviews (fieldwork).

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.
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 audio 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.

D. EQUITY OF ACCESS

³ Adapted from Ted Ward.

Students with permanent or temporary disabilities who need academic accommodations must [contact](#) the [Accessibility Services](#) at the [Centre for Academic Excellence](#) to [register](#) and discuss their specific needs. *New students* must self-identify and register with the Accessibility Office at the beginning of the semester or as early as possible to access appropriate services. *Current students* must renew their plans as early as possible to have active accommodations in place.

E. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation is based upon the completion of the following assignments:

| | |
|----------------------------|------|
| Field Trip Report | 15 % |
| Critique of Ethnography | 20 % |
| Major Project | 50 % |
| Major Project Presentation | 15 % |
| Total Grade | 100% |

F. GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

All assignments will be submitted via Moodle by 11:55PM on the due dates. Late work 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. All assignments will adopt the Turabian/Chicago (footnotes) or APA style (footnotes). Students are encouraged to consult [writing resources](#).

Academic Integrity

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.

Students should also consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) for academic policies on Academic Honesty, Gender Inclusive Language in Written Assignments, Late Papers and Extensions, Return of Assignments, and Grading System.

G. COURSE EVALUATION

Tyndale Seminary values quality in the courses it offers its students. End-of-course evaluations provide valuable student feedback and are one of the ways that Tyndale Seminary works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student's learning experience. Student involvement in this process is critical to enhance the general quality of teaching and learning.

Before the end of the course, students will receive a MyTyndale email with a link to the online course evaluation. The link can also be found in the left column on the course page. The evaluation period is 2 weeks; after the evaluation period has ended, it cannot be reopened.

Course Evaluation results will not be disclosed to the instructor before final grades in the course have been submitted and processed.

IV. COURSE SCHEDULE, CONTENT AND REQUIRED READINGS

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Readings/Assignments</u> |
|---|--|
| September 13 Course overview & assignments Covenant, community & culture of learning | TCE (2005), chs. 1-3 Siew (2006) ⁴ |
| September 20 Psalm 19 Ethnography: nature & applications Discussion: EPP (2008), Introduction, ch. 1; Siew (2013) | EPP (2008), Introduction; ch. 1 Siew (2013) |
| September 27 Field trip (meet at observation site) | TCE (2005), chs. 4-6 Read 1 ethnography, TCE (2005) |
| October 4 Joshua 1-2 Field trip reflections What's Your Questions? Research Design Discussion: EPP (2008), chs. 2-3 | EPP (2008), chs. 2-3 Due: Field trip report |
| October 11 Matthew 8-9; Phil. 2: 5-11 Doing fieldwork: ground rules for observation | Peter Cha (2006) EPP (2008), chs. 4 |

⁴ All articles or book chapters for discussion learning are posted on Moodle. Pre-reading of all discussion material before class is expected.

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|---|---|
| Ethics of Pastoral Research Discussion: EPP (2008), chs. 4; Cha (2006) | Due: Proposal for Ethics Review |
| October 18 Doing fieldwork: ethnographic interview Researcher role/relationships Discuss: EPP (2008), ch. 5 | EPP (2008), ch. 5 Read 1 ethnography, TCE (2005) |
| Reading Days (Oct. 23-26) | TCE (2005), chs. 7-8 |
| November 1 Acts 17: 16-34 Doing fieldwork: Rudiments of good field notes Discuss: Grinenko (2010); EPP (2008), ch. 6 | Grinenko (2010) EPP (2008), ch. 6 |
| November 8 & 15 Fieldwork ⁵ | Transcribe field notes |
| November 22 Data analysis (bring your transcripts/field notes) Discuss: EPP (2008), chs. 7-8 | Read 1 ethnography, TCE (2005) EPP (2008), ch. 7-8 |
| November 29 Writing the report Research-ministry balance (Jos. 3-8) Likert-type instrumentation & generalization of findings Discuss: EPP (2008), chs. 9-10 | EPP (2008), chs. 9-10 Due: Critique 1 ethnography, TCE |
| December 6 Project presentations & Community Breakfast at Siew's Review of Learning Journey | Due: Project presentation Due: Major project (Dec. 13) |

V. ONLINE RESOURCES

(Tyndale Library supports this course with [e-journals and e-books](#). See the [Library FAQ page](#).)

⁵ Learning the basic skills of 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 25% of class time would be devoted to fieldwork, which means class learning happens in the field. Note these two fieldwork days in the schedule and arrange your interviews and observations accordingly.

Ethnographic research is gaining respect in the academic world and you will find many such articles in established journals in education, health and social sciences. You are encouraged to preview some of these listed below in the course of this study.

Ecclesiologyandethnography.com

The Qualitative Report (fully online)

Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research

Practical Matters: A Journal of Religious Practices and Practical Theology (see Issue No.3, "Ethnography and Theology" (March, 2010).

Teachers College Record (Journal of Teachers College, Columbia University, see qualitative research section)

International Journal for Qualitative Studies in Education

Christian Education Journal

Religious Education (Journal of the Religious Education Association)

Anthropology and Education Quarterly

Educational Researcher

Harvard Educational Review

Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion

Review of Religious Research

Sociology of Religion

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. Prof. Ward, my mentor in the PhD program, first taught me the delightful adventure of living the ethnographic life. Though I included many of my own ideas as I mature in qualitative research in this course, I have drawn liberally from my first course with him.

Select Bibliography

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

Baker, Dori Grinenko. Editor. *Greenhouses of Hope*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2010.

Caroll, 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.

- Emerson, Robert M, Rachel I Fretz and Linda L Shaw. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. 2nd edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- 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.
- Mason, Jennifer. *Qualitative Researching*. Second edition. London: Sage, 2002.
- Mellott, David. *Ethnography as Theology: Encountering the Penitentes of Arroya Seco, New Mexico*. PhD dissertation. Atlanta, GA: 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.
- Murchison, Julian M. *Ethnography Essentials: Designing, Conducting, and Presenting Your Research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010.
- Patton, Michael P. [*Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*](#). 3rd edition. Newbury Park, C.A.: Sage Publications, 2002.
- Roberts, Omar M. *Streets of Glory: Church and Community in a Black Urban Neighborhood*. Revised edition. University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Scharen, Christian B. "'Judicious Narratives,' or Ethnography as Ecclesiology." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58 (2005), 125-142.
- Scharen, Christian B. *Fieldwork in Theology: Exploring the Social Context of God's Work in the World*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015.
- Scharen, Christian B. *Explorations in Ecclesiology & Ethnography*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012.

Spradley, James P. *Participant Observation*. 1st Kindle edition. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2016.

Spradley, James P. *The Ethnographic Interview*. 1st Kindle edition. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2016.

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

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

Ward, Pete. Editor. *Perspectives on Ecclesiology & Ethnography*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2012.