

ANTH 2210

ANTHROPOLOGICAL FIELD METHODS

The Chinese University of Hong Kong | Spring 2026

Lecture: Thursday 3:30pm-5:15pm (UCA 103)

Tutorial 1: Thursday 5:30-6:15 pm (UCA 103)

Tutorial 2: Thursday 5:30-6:15 pm (UCC 114)

Faculty Instructor: ZHANG Chaoxiong

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Office Hour: By making appointments

Course Description:

This course introduces students to anthropological field methods through a combination of reading, discussion, and fieldwork practice. Students will gain hands-on experience with ethnographic methods as they design and develop their own original ethnographic projects. Throughout this course, students will read and engage with a diverse range of case studies to inform their work. Designed as an extended workshop, each week students will learn both practical skills and theoretical foundations of doing ethnographic fieldwork research. Topics covered include the history of ethnographic research, ethical considerations in fieldwork, research design and formulating research questions, undertaking participant observation, writing fieldnotes, preparing for and conducting interviews, and using visual tools. Students will also learn how anthropologists conceptualize and analyze their research, equipping them with the tools and knowledge needed to conduct thoughtful and rigorous fieldwork.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon completing this course, students will be able to

- employ and further explore anthropological research methods and data analyzing techniques;
- deepen their understanding of anthropology and anthropological knowledge production;
- enhance their critical and reflexive reading of ethnographic works.
- design a research project that uses ethnographic research methods appropriate to then specific field site and community of study.

Reading Materials:

All readings will be made available on Blackboard

Course Requirement:

This course is discussion intensive. You are expected to finish all required readings before and participate actively in class.

- **Participation (15%):** Come to class on time, complete weekly readings, engage with your classmates, come with questions, and contribute to class discussion.
- **Ethics Case Presentation (10%):**
 - Group Presentation on **Feb 5**.
 - 2-3 students/group
- **Ethnographic Article Analysis Presentation (15%):**
 - Select one ethnographic article that you find most compelling or convincing. Analyze the article to identify the questions the author(s) seek to answer and the methods and ethnographic materials used to address those questions. The goal of this assignment is to help you develop an understanding of how ethnographic research questions are addressed through fieldwork and ethnographic materials.
 - In your presentation, you should identify and discuss the following major parts of the article: (1) the research question(s); (2) the central argument; (3) the literature review; (4) the ethnographic discussion; (5) any critiques, or additional steps (such as additional materials, perspectives, field sites, interlocutors, ethical considerations, or researcher positionality) you would take to further address the research question if you were the ethnographer.
 - Submit the article title, abstract, and DOI or online link to the Blackboard Discussion Board by **Mar 5**.
 - Individual Presentation on **Mar 12**.
- **Mini-Ethnography (60%):**
 - Design a mini-ethnographic research project to be carried out on campus that investigates a question related to the social and cultural life of CUHK. Detailed instructions will be provided in class.
 - **Proposal (10%)**
 - One page (single-spaced, around 400-500 words in English)
 - Deadline: Mar 26
 - Optional: one-on-one discussion on Apr 2
 - **Short Progress Presentation (15%)**
 - Individual presentation on Apr 16.
 - Share your proposed research project and current progress
 - **Final ethnography (35%)**
 - Deadline: May 7

Course Schedule (Subject to modification)

- **Week 1 (Jan 8): Introduction to the Course**
 - Go through syllabus
 - Golub, Alex. 2011. "Why I <3 Anthropology." *Savage Minds*, February 20. <https://savageminds.org/2011/02/20/why-i/>.
 - No tutorial
- **Week 2 (Jan 15): What is Ethnography?**
 - Spradley, J. P. 1980. "Chapter 1: Ethnography and Culture" and "Chapter 2 Ethnography for What?" in *Participant Observation*. Waveland Press. Pp. 3-25.
 - Malinowski, 1922. "Introduction: The Subject, Method and Scope of this Enquiry." In *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. Pp. 1-25.
 - Xiang, Biao. 2015. 《敘述的力量》 in 《回應與反響--我們如何敘述當下、進入歷史：兼論人類學的現實角色》，*考古人類學刊* 83:91-92.
 - In-class practice: brainstorming mini-ethnography ideas
 - Further readings:
 - Fassin, Didier. 2013. "Why Ethnography Matters: On Anthropology and Its Publics." *Cultural Anthropology* 28 (4): 621–46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cuan.12030>.
 - Ingold, Tim. 2017. "Anthropology Contra Ethnography." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7 (1): 21–26. <https://doi.org/10.14318/hau7.1.005>.
- **Week 3 (Jan 22): Fieldwork Ethics**
 - American Anthropological Association (2009) "Code of Ethics."
 - American Anthropological Association (2012) "Statement on Ethics: Principles of Professional Responsibility."
 - Bourgois, Philippe. 1990. "Confronting Anthropological Ethics: Ethnographic Lessons from Central America". *Journal of Peace Research* 27 (1): 43–54.
 - In-class practice: brainstorming mini-ethnography and discuss relevant ethical issues
 - Further Reading:
 - Price, David H. 2016. "A Short History of American Anthropological Ethics, Codes, Principles, and Responsibilities – Professional and Otherwise." In *Anthropological Ethics in Context: An Ongoing Dialogue*, edited by Dena Plemmons and Alex W. Barker, 23-38. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press, Inc.
- **Week 4 (Jan 29): Asking Research Questions & Writing Proposal**
 - Spradley, J. P. 1980. "Chapter 3: The Ethnographic Research Cycle", In *Participant Observation*. Waveland Press. Pp. 26-35.
 - Kelly, M. 2017. "Chapter 6: Research Questions and Proposals," In *Researching Society and Culture*, ed. C. Seale, 4th Edition, pp. 80-102.

- Sterk, Claire. 2000. "Tricking and tripping: fieldwork on prostitution in the era of AIDS." In *Annual Editions: Anthropology 07/08* (2006). McGraw-Hill. Pp. 23-28.
- In-class practice: formulating your research question
- **Week 5 (Feb 5): Conducting Research: Power Relations & Positionality**
 - Nordling, Linda. 2020. "Who Gets to Study Whom?" *Sapiens*.
<https://www.sapiens.org/culture/anthropology-colonial-history/>
 - Musante, Kathleen and Billie R. DeWalt. 2010. "Gender and Sex Issues in Participant Observation." In *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*, 2nd edition, Lanham: AltaMira Press. Pp. 99-108.
 - Low, Setha M. and Sally Engle Merry. 2010. "Engaged Anthropology: Diversity and Dilemmas." *Current Anthropology* 51: S203-S226.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/653837>
 - Group presentation on ethical dilemmas & solutions
 - Further Readings:
 - Tsuda, Takeyuki. 2015 "Is native anthropology really possible." *Anthropology Today* 31(3): 14-17. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8322.12175>
 - Zhang, Chaoxiong, and Yang Zhan. 2025. "Taking Distinction Practices Seriously: Methodological Reflections on Ethnographic Distance in Fieldwork with Marginalized People." *American Anthropologist* 127 (2): 308–18. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.28067>.
- **Week 6 (Feb 12): Conducting Research: Entering your field & Rapport Building**
 - Rabinow, Paul. 1977. "Chapter 3. Ah: An Insider's Outsider & Chapter 8. Friendship." In *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
 - Ortner, Sherry B. 2010. "Access: Reflections on Studying up in Hollywood." *Ethnography* 11 (2): 211–33.
 - Kawulich, Barbara B. 2011. "Gatekeeping: An Ongoing Adventure in Research." *Field Methods* 23 (1): 57–76. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X10383388>.
 - In-class practice "entering field" (University Station) *Please bring note-taking tools.
 - Further Reading:
 - Tillmann-Healy, Lisa M. 2003. "Friendship as Method." *Qualitative Inquiry* 9 (5): 729–49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800403254894>
- **Week 7 (Feb 19): No Class**
 - Happy New Year ^_^
- **Week 8 (Feb 26): Conducting Research: Observing**
 - Musante, Kathleen. 2015. "Participant Observation." In *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, edited by H. Russell Bernard and Clarence C. Gravlee. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Pp251-292.
 - Johnson, Jeffrey C., Christine Avenarius, and Jack Weatherford. 2006. "The Active Participant-Observer: Applying Social Role Analysis to Participant Observation." *Field Methods* 18 (2): 111–134.

- Bernard, H. Russell. 2011. "Field Notes and Database Management." In *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 5th edition, 156-186. Lanham: AltaMira Press. Pp291-305.
- In-class practice: "observation" (University Station) *Please bring note-taking tools.
- Further Reading:
 - Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 2011. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. 2nd ed. Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing. The University of Chicago Press.
- **Week 9 (Mar 5): No Class**
 - Reading week
- **Week 10 (Mar 12): Ethnographic Article Analysis Sharing**
 - Ethnographic article analysis presentation
- **Week 11 (Mar 19): Conducting Research: Asking**
 - Musante, Kathleen and Billie R. DeWalt. 2010. "Chapter 8: Informal Interviewing in Participant Observation." In *Participant Observation: a Guide for Fieldworkers*. Pp. 137-156.
 - Bernard, H. Russell. 2011. "Interviewing I: Unstructured and Semistructured" & "Interviewing III: Cultural Domains." In *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 5th edition. Lanham: AltaMira Press.
 - In-class practice: Semi-structured interview
 - Further Reading:
 - Levi Agar, Michael, and James MacDonald. 1995. "Focus Groups and Ethnography." *Human Organization* 54 (1): 78–86.
- **Week 12 (Mar 26): Conducting Research: Using Visual Materials**
 - Pink, Sarah. 2020. "Introduction." In *Doing Visual Ethnography*. 4th ed. SAGE Publications Ltd. pp. 1-18. (Online access available via CUHK library)
 - Hinthorne, Lauren Leigh. 2012. "A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words: Using the Visual Interpretation Narrative Exercise to Elicit Non-Elite Perceptions of Democracy." *Field Methods* 24 (3): 348–64.
 - Film screening (*We were Smart*, Director: LI Yifan, 2019)
 - Further Readings:
 - Childs, Geoff, and Gareth Barkin. 2006. "Reproducing Identity: Using Images to Promote Pronatalism and Sexual Endogamy among Tibetan Exiles in South Asia." *Visual Anthropology Review* 22 (2): 34–52.
 - Wang, C., and M. A. Burris. 1997. "Photovoice: Concept, Methodology, and Use for Participatory Needs Assessment." *Health Education & Behavior: The Official Publication of the Society for Public Health Education* 24 (3): 369–87.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/109019819702400309>.
- **Week 13 (Apr 2): Doing fieldwork for Mini Ethnography**
 - Optional: one-on-one discussion on your mini-ethnography proposal.
- **Week 14 (Apr 9): Conducting Research: Analyzing & Writing-up**

- Bernard, H. R. 2011. "Chapter 18 Text Analysis I" and "Chapter 19 Text Analysis II", In *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Pp. 407-457.
- Besnier, Niko, and Pablo Morales. 2018. "Tell the Story: How to Write for American Ethnologist." *American Ethnologist* 45 (2): 163–72.
- *Further Reading:*
 - Emerson, R. M. et al., 2011. "Chapter 7: Writing an Ethnography." In *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 201-242.
- **Week 15 (Apr 16): Mini-ethnography Sharing**
 - Mini-ethnography progress presentation

Course Policies:

- **Penalties for late work:** All assignments are due on the scheduled day and time. No extensions will be given except under extraordinary circumstances.
- **Class Culture:** Classes are a safe atmosphere where ideas can be discussed and different opinions respected.
- **Academic Integrity:** The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on academic honesty, and adopts a policy of zero tolerance on academic dishonesty. Any such offence will lead to disciplinary action including possibly termination of studies at the University. Students should know how to properly use source material and how to avoid plagiarism. Detailed guidelines and examples for the acknowledgement of sources can be found on the University's website at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>. All papers must be submitted through VeriGuide.
- **Writing Assistance:** For additional help on your writing, consult the expert staff of the English Language Teaching Unit (ELT). ELT's Peer Tutoring Scheme offers informal opportunities for CUHK undergraduates and postgraduates to consult trained Peer Tutors on English speaking and writing (<https://eltu.cuhk.edu.hk/pts/>).

Grade descriptors are as follows for the assessment of this course:

Grade	Overall course
A	Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
A-	Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.
B	Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.
C	Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.
D	Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.
F	Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.