ANTHROPOLOGICAL FIELD METHODS
ANTH 5020
Spring 2026

Time: Tuesday 6:30 – 9:15 pm
Location: YIA 402
Instructor: Dr. Gabriella Angelini
Email: gabriellaangelini@cuhk.edu.hk
Consultation Hours: By appointment

Course Description:

How do anthropologists carry out their research? What obstacles and ethical dilemmas do they encounter "in the field"? What are the advantages and limitations of ethnographic methods? In this course, we explore how anthropologists design, implement, and interpret research projects. The class combines theoretical knowledge with practical application, helping students grasp each step of anthropological research through hands-on activities. Students will have the opportunity to practice traditional methods like interviews and participant observation, as well as explore innovative techniques, including arts-based research, digital fieldwork, and sensory ethnography, tailored to their interests and research contexts. The ethnographic research skills gained in the course, such as interviewing, field observation, and data analysis, can support careers in social research, program evaluation, and cultural consulting, while also enhancing personal communication and critical thinking.

Learning Outcomes:

As a result of this course, students will be able to:

- Compare and explain the aims and methods of anthropological knowledge production
- Apply anthropological research methods and data collection techniques
- Design a research proposal based on personal research interests
- Assess the ethical considerations involved in conducting research with, on, and as human beings
- Critically evaluate ethnographic work based on the methods used for data collection

Reading Materials:

All readings and materials will be posted on Blackboard or accessible through the University Library

Course Assessment:

1. **Attendance and Active Participation (20%)**

   Students are expected to attend class, read the assigned materials, and participate <u>actively</u> in in-class discussions and activities, raising their own questions, ideas, or criticisms, responding to other students' interpretations, and sharing examples or materials that may be useful to enrich or further the conversation.

2. **Research Methods Mini-Exercises and Short Reflections (50%)**

- We will conduct several fieldwork exercises.
- You will submit the assignments to Blackboard, and we will discuss them in class.
- The exercises will be introduced and explained in detail during the lecture.

	Assignments	Deadline	Percentage
1	Ethics and Positionality Analysis	February 3	(10%)
2	Reflection on Participant Observation	March 3	(10%)
3	Annotated Interview Transcript	March 17	(10%)
4	Ethnographic Vignette	March 31	(10%)
5	Creative Method of Choice	April 14	(10%)

3. Research Proposal (30%)

- Submit a draft research proposal for a mini ethnographic project of choice. The proposal should include research questions, a brief literature review, methods, ethical concerns, and potential contributions. The course adopts the Wenner-Gren Foundation model of proposal writing, which will be further discussed in class. The different modules and exercises will provide theoretical and practical guidelines to help you develop your project.
- Length: 2,500 words (+/- 500) excluding reference list
- Format: Single-line spacing, Times New Roman, 12-pt font.
- Submit to Blackboard with the signed VeriGuide certificate.
- **Due by May 5**

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (January 6) | Introduction

- Golub, Alex. 2011. "Why I <3 Anthropology." *Savage Minds*, February 20. https://savageminds.org/2011/02/20/why-i/.

Week 2 (January 13) | What is Ethnography? History and Reflection

- Spradley, J. P. 1980. "Chapter 1: Ethnography and Culture" and "Chapter 2: Ethnography for What?" in *Participant Observation*. Pp. 3-25.
- Malinowski, Bronislaw. 2016. "The Subject, Method and Scope of This Inquiry." In *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*, Fifth Edition. University of Toronto Press.
- "Ten Myths about Ethnography." 2012. In *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method*, by Tom Boellstorff, Bonnie Nardi, Celia Pearce, and T.L. Taylor. Princeton University Press.

Week 3 (January 20) | 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.
- Tillmann-Healy, Lisa M. 2003. "Friendship as Method." *Qualitative Inquiry* 9 (5): 729–49.
- **In-class "ethics debate" exercise**

Week 4 (January 27) | Power Relations, Positionality, and Rapport

- Narayan, Kirin. 1993. "How Native Is a 'Native' Anthropologist?" *American Anthropologist* 95 (3): 671–86.
- 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.
- Nordling, Linda. 2020. "Who Gets to Study Whom?" *SAPIENS*, July 17. https://www.sapiens.org/culture/anthropology-colonial-history/.

Week 5 (February 3) | Asking Research Questions and Writing Proposals

- Spradley, J. P. 1980. "Chapter 3: The Ethnographic Research Cycle," In *Participant Observation*. Pp. 26-35.
- Kelly, M. 2018. "Chapter 6: Research Questions and Proposals," In Researching Society and Culture, ed. C. Seale, 4th Edition, pp. 80-102.
- **Submit Assignment 1: Analysis of positionality and ethical concerns**

Week 6 (February 10) | Choosing and Entering the Fieldsite(s)

- Constable, Nicole. "Ethnography in Imagined Virtual Communities." In *Romance on a Global Stage: Pen Pals, Virtual Ethnography, and 'Mail Order' Marriages*, 31–58. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- Ortner, Sherry B. 2010. "Access: Reflections on Studying up in Hollywood." *Ethnography* 11 (2): 211–33.
- Optional: Xiang, Biao. 2013. "Multi-Scalar Ethnography: An Approach for Critical Engagement with Migration and Social Change." *Ethnography* 14 (3): 282–99.
- **In-class "entering the field" exercise (50 minutes) *Please bring a notebook and a pen**

Week 7 (February 17) | Happy Lunar New Year!

- No class

Week 8 (February 24) | Participant Observation

- DeWalt, Kathleen and Billie R. DeWalt. 2011. "What is participant observation." In *Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*, 2nd edition, Lanham: AltaMira Press.
- Emerson, R. M., R. I. Fretz, et al. 2011. "Chapter 1: Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research" and "Chapter 2: In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes." In Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes. Pp. 1-43 (Selections)
- Optional: "Participant Observation in Virtual Worlds." 2012. In *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method*, by Tom Boellstorff, Bonnie Nardi, Celia Pearce, and T.L. Taylor. Princeton University Press.
- **In-class "observation" exercise (50 minutes) *Please bring a notebook and a pen**

Week 9 (March 3) | Reading Week

- No class
- Optional (but highly recommended): Preliminary Fieldwork for Week's 12 fieldwork practice
- Optional: one-on-one Q&A
- **Submit Assignment 2: Reflection on Participant Observation**

Week 10 (March 10) | Interviews

- Bernard, H. Russell. 2011. "Interviewing I: Unstructured and Semistructured," In *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 5th edition, 171-202. Lanham: AltaMira Press.
- Howlett, Marnie. 2021. "Looking at the 'Field' through a Zoom Lens: Methodological Reflections on Conducting Online Research during a Global Pandemic." *Qualitative Research*.

- Optional: Agar, Michael, and James MacDonald. 1995. "Focus Groups and Ethnography." *Human Organization* 54 (1): 78–86.

Week 11 (March 17) | Analysis and Writing

- Fetterman, David M. 2010. "Finding Your Way Through the Forest: Analysis." In Ethnography: Step by Step, Third Edition. 93-109. Los Angeles: Sage.
- DeWalt, Kathleen and Billie R. DeWalt. 2011. "Analyzing Field Notes." In Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers, 2nd edition, 156-183. Lanham: AltaMira Press.
- Emerson, R. M., R. I. Fretz, et al. 2011. "Chapter 7: Writing an Ethnography." In Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes. Pp. 201-242
- "Writing Tips" from AnthroWrites website https://www.anthrowrites.com/writing-tips
- **Submit Assignment 3: Annotated Interview Transcript**

Week 12 (March 24) | Fieldwork Practice

- **Out-of-class Exercise: Conduct participant observation in a selected social situation (at least three hours)**
- *No class on Mar 24

Week 13 (March 31) | Sensory Ethnography

- Pink, Sarah. 2015. "Preparing for sensory research: Practical and orientation issues." In Doing Sensory Ethnography. Second edition. London; Sage Publications, pp. 51-70.
- Law, Lisa. 2005. "Home Cooking: Filipino Women and Geographies of the Senses in Hong Kong." In Howes, David. Ed. *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*. Oxford; Berg.
- Sun, Rui. 2024. "'You Need to Listen to the Market!': Making Decisions Through Senses in China's Largest Cut-Flower Market." *American Behavioral Scientist*.
- **Submit Assignment 4: Ethnographic Vignette**

Week 14 (April 7) | Creative and Alternative Research Methods

- "Chapter 1: Imagining: An Introduction" and "Chapter 2: Writing." 2017. In *A Different Kind of Ethnography: Imaginative Practices and Creative Methodologies*, by Denielle A. Elliott and Cara Culhane. University of Toronto Press.
- Weeber, Christine, and Justin D. Wright. "What Is Anthropological Poetry?" *SAPIENS*, August 30, 2022. https://www.sapiens.org/culture/what-is-anthropological-poetry/
- Bonanno, Leticia. 2019. "Drawing as a Mode of Translation." American Anthropologist. http://www.americananthropologist.org/ethno-graphic-bonanno/

Week 15 (April 14) | Why Ethnography Matters?

- Shah, Alpa. 2017. "Ethnography? Participant Observation, a Potentially Revolutionary Praxis." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7 (1): 45–59.

- Fassin, Didier. 2013. "Why Ethnography Matters: On Anthropology and its Publics." *Cultural Anthropology* 28, no. 4: 621–46.
- **Submit Assignment 5: Creative Method Application and Reflection**

<div align="center">>>>Research Proposals due on May 5<<<</div>

Course Policies:

- **Late Work Submission:**

Assignments submitted late will be penalized by deducting a grade for each day. For example, an A will become an A-. If you are unable to submit on time due to a valid and compelling reason, please inform me as soon as possible.

- **Citation, Plagiarism, and Use of AI:**

You must **cite properly** and **avoid plagiarism or cheating**. In case of doubt, err on the side of caution and cite the source, or consult the course instructor. You can use any citation system, as long as it is consistent throughout the assignment.

In accordance with University regulations, students are **prohibited from representing as their own any output generated by or derived from generative artificial intelligence (AI) in** any work submitted to fulfill an academic requirement. Any student violating this provision is subject to disciplinary action.

Refer to the University's Academic Regulations for more details:

https://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_htm_files_(2013-14)/index_page2.htm

- **Special Accommodations:**

The university is committed to granting **equal access and learning opportunities** to students with disabilities If you need special accommodations, you can submit a request at the following link: https://www.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/services/special-educational-needs-sen-support/

- **Discussion Rules:**

The class is a safe space where ideas and different opinions can be discussed openly. You are expected to **be polite and respectful** of other students' views. Listen attentively before speaking and critique ideas, not individuals.

- **Classroom Recording:**

To create a safe space for the free and open discussion of ideas, **please do not record** lectures or tutorials. If you have any special needs for recording, please consult me first.

- **Writing and Other 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:

A	Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.
A-	Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.

B-range	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.