

## Ethnography of Language and Literacies: A Doctoral Seminar Fall 2019

Dr. Katherine Mortimer

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Office Educ 600

Office hours Wed 12-3, and by appointment

BED 6314-001 [CRN 18614]

3 credit hours

Meets Tuesdays, 5:30-8:20pm

EDUC 100

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the study of languaging and literacies—their learning and use—in social context. We focus on how ethnography can be used to illuminate languaging and literacy practices and processes, as well as social injustice and inequities that result. We examine sociocultural, sociolinguistic, and linguistic anthropological theories that locate languages and literacies within their historical, cultural, and institutional contexts. Students will develop an ethnographic way of seeing languages, literacies, and people’s lived experiences; they will develop a deep understanding of ethnographic data collection and analysis and of researcher reflexivity; and they will critically analyze ethnographic texts.

Ethnography is a form of inquiry that has emancipatory potential—that is, the potential to advance social justice and reduce inequity and marginalization—and ethnographers often think of their research as investigation through involvement with members of a community. One way of thinking about ethnography is as a process of building critical awareness: of making the strange familiar and the familiar strange.

### COURSE OVERVIEW

WEEK	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENTS
1	Introduction—What is ethnography? Why ethnography?	Podcast & graphic novel reading
2	Ethnography of communication in context	Reading Choices for discussion leadership
3	The postmodern turn + decolonizing research	Reading
4	What is language/literacy? Theory and objects of analysis	Reading Choices of book for analysis
5	Ethnography and funds of knowledge	Reading
6	Social action through language: Performativity	Reading
7	Identity as practice	Reading Proposal for final paper topic
8	Ethnographies of language and literacies by UTEP faculty	Reading
9	Discourse analysis	Reading

10	Analyses of ethnography presentations	Presentation and paper
11	Humanizing research	Reading
12	Story as ethnography	Reading
13	Ethnographic monitoring and participatory action research	Reading
14	Work and consultation on literature reviews	No class
15	Presentations of final papers	Presentation Final paper

## REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

Gonzalez, Norma (2005). *I Am My Language: Discourses of Women and Children in the Borderlands*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press. ISBN 9780816525492 (paperback). \$20.95

Kaplan-Weinger, Judith and Ullman, Char (2015). *Methods for the Ethnography of Communication: Language in Use in Schools and Communities*. New York: Routledge. ISBN 9780415517775 (paperback). \$59.95

Kirkland, David E. (2013). *A Search Past Silence*. New York: Teachers College Press. ISBN 9780807754078 (paperback). \$40.95

Mendoza-Denton, Norma (2008). *Homegirls: Language and Cultural Practice among Latina Youth Gangs*. New York: Blackwell. ISBN 9780631234906. \$25.95

Philips, Susan U. (1983). *The Invisible Culture: Communication in Classroom and Community on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press. ISBN 0881336947 (paperback). \$20.95.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai (2012). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. 2nd ed. New York: Zed Books. ISBN 9781848139503 (paperback). \$22.36

**Additional readings** are listed in the course schedule (below) and will be available on Blackboard (BB) or through the university library.

## ASSIGNMENTS

<b><i>Class attendance and participation</i></b>	(18% of grade)
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[5 points/session; 14 sessions; 70 points total] Your success in this course, as a doctoral-level seminar, depends upon your active participation, which includes the following:

- Being present for the full class session in each of the 13 weeks we meet, including arriving on time and staying until the end.
- Reading all of the required readings for each class session before that session.
- Thinking carefully about these readings and coming prepared with questions, reflections, and connections between these readings and with other material in this or other courses. (See weekly reading syntheses below).

- Extensive verbal participation in each class session, including the contribution of your ideas/questions/reflections as well as verbal engagement with others' ideas/questions/reflections.
- Extensive non-verbal participation in each class session, including demonstrating active listening, thoughtful engagement, and growth across each discussion.

Your grade for participation will be based on both your self-assessment and my assessment. At the end of class each week I will ask you to reflect on your participation and preparedness and to submit a self-assessment online through a Google form. Submission of a self-assessment is required each week.

<b><i>Weekly reading synthesis + discussion question</i></b>	<b>(25% of grade)</b>
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[10 reflections at 10 points each, 100 points total] As a way of practicing thoughtful reading and preparation for class discussion, you will write a brief synthesis of the readings for each class session and include 1 question for discussion. The synthesis should demonstrate knowledge and understanding of all of the readings for that day, as well as thoughtful reflection and connection between the readings and across the course. These syntheses are brief versions of what you do when you write a review of literature, drawing connections across multiple works and illuminating patterns, contrasts, etc. With the synthesis, you will also include 1 thoughtfully composed discussion question that asks respondents to analyze, apply, or evaluate some aspect of the readings. A synthesis should be no more than 350 words, not including the discussion question.

<b><i>Engagement in scholarly community</i></b>	<b>(8% of grade)</b>
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[30 points total; 3 events at 10 points each]

*EL3 Lab Coloquios*

The EL3 Lab Coloquios are directly related to the target knowledge and skills in this course. I ask that you attend **two or more Coloquios** and, for each, submit a short assignment with the date of your attendance and a 150-word reflection on the event, including what you gained and what you would have liked to be different or remaining questions you have. If you foresee that attending ANY of the Coloquios will be impossible for you, please talk with me before Week 3 to arrange for an alternative assignment.

<b><i>Discussion leadership</i></b>	<b>(13% of grade)</b>
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[50 points total] You will take responsibility for leading a **45-minute** discussion of readings for one of the class sessions. This assignment has three parts: a plan, leadership that day, and a post-discussion reflection. Additional details will be provided in class.

<b><i>Analysis of an ethnography (paper and presentation)</i></b>	<b>(13% of grade)</b>
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[50 points total] You will choose a book-length ethnography that focuses on languages and/or literacies, read it in depth, write a 7-10 pp analysis of the work, and present this analysis in class using the PechaKucha presentation format (<http://www.pechakucha.org/>). Your book must be

chosen by Week 3. A list of possibilities will be available on BB. You can also propose one not on the list, but please speak with me about it before your choice is due in Week 3.

<b><i>Final literature review paper and presentation</i></b>	(25% of grade)
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[100 points total] This final assignment will take the form of a critical review of the ethnographic literature on a theme or question related to your interests. Your review will address specific issues of your choosing, starting with texts and ideas from our course. This is a place for you to synthesize and expand upon ideas we have discussed and which you would like to pursue in more depth. Choose ideas/questions that are related to your tentative dissertation topic(s). If you have IRB-approved original ethnographic data, talk with me about the possibility of incorporating those data into this paper. This final assignment includes 3 parts:

- A proposal in which you describe your plans (1 p), due Week 7
- A final paper (15 pp)
- An in-class presentation of your exploration, using the PechaKucha presentation format (<http://www.pechakucha.org/>) and delivered on the final evening of class, Week 15.

### ***Summary of components of the course grade***

Assignment	Points each	How many	Total	% of grade
Attendance, participation, discussion questions	5	14	70	18%
Weekly reading syntheses + discussion question	10	10	100	25%
Engagement in scholarly community	10	3	30	8%
Discussion leadership	50	1	50	13%
Analysis of an ethnography	50	1	50	13%
Final paper and presentation	100	1	100	25%
			400	100%

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### ***Inclusiveness and equity***

Learning happens only when we feel respected as a whole human being. My top priority in our classroom is to cultivate relationships of trust and respect and a sense that we see each other as whole, complex human beings. That you experience this in our classroom is important for the sake of your learning in our course *and* for the sake of your future students' learning, so that you know how to cultivate such relationships with them. To that end, I want you to know that all of you is welcome in our classroom space—all the parts of you as a person are welcome in our discussions, our activities, our assignments, and in our assessments. We are all complex people with a variety of perspectives, experiences, challenges, and resources—our gender identities, our sexual orientations, our religions, our races, our ethnicities, our economic statuses, our immigration statuses, our parenthoods, our veteran statuses, our ages, our

languages, our abilities and disabilities. All the parts of you are welcome in our learning community to the extent that you feel comfortable bringing them in. I strive to show respect for the variety and wholeness in each of you, and I expect that each of you shows respect for each other as well. If you feel marginalized in our class, and you feel comfortable discussing it, I would like to know so that I can support you, protect you, and make changes that feel more inclusive and equitable. You can also talk with our Department Chair, Dr. Alyse Hachey, 915-747-7573 or [ahachey@utep.edu](mailto:ahachey@utep.edu), and/or you can report a complaint of discrimination to the University's Equal Opportunity Office, Kelly Hall, Third Floor, 915-747-5662 or [eoaa@utep.edu](mailto:eoaa@utep.edu).

### ***Academic citations***

Please provide APA-style in-text and bibliographic citations for all your written work.

### ***Language policy for this course***

You are encouraged to use and develop your biliteracy skills in this course. You may submit any written assignment in English or in Spanish. For discussion and other group work, including whole-class, the most important criterion is that everyone has an opportunity to understand and to be understood—thus, any discussion group may use Spanish, English, both, or any other language, as long as the members of the group agree.

### ***Electronic devices in class***

Everyone's engagement with each other in class discussion is of the highest importance. Do not use any electronic device in class in such a way that it may give someone the impression that you are not listening to them.

### ***Changes to the syllabus***

Like ethnography, itself, I want this course to be responsive to the sometimes-shifting conditions of our class community: our discussions, our interests, our extant experiences, our needs for growth. Some changes may be made to the syllabus along the way. You will always be notified—or participate in the decision to make changes—and the updated syllabus made available on Blackboard. All versions have a version number in the header with the form year, month, day.

### ***Different abilities***

If you have or believe you have a disability, you may wish to self-identify. You can do so by providing documentation to the Office of disabled Student Services located in Union E Room 203. Students who have been designated as disabled must reactivate their standing with the Office of Disabled Student Services on a yearly basis. Failure to report to this office will place a student on the inactive list and nullify benefits received. If you have a condition which may affect your ability to exit safely from the premises in an emergency or which may cause an emergency during class, you are encouraged to discuss this in confidence with the instructor and/or the director of Disabled Student Services. The Disabled Student Services Office can be reached at <http://www.utep.edu/dsso/>, (915) 747-5148 (voice or TTY), or [dss@utep.edu](mailto:dss@utep.edu).

### ***Academic integrity***

Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any form of scholastic dishonesty is an affront to the pursuit of knowledge and jeopardizes the quality of the degree awarded to all graduates of UTEP. Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating; plagiarism; collusion; looking at a peer's quiz while you are taking yours; the submission for credit of any work or materials that are not attributable in whole or in part to another person; taking an examination for another person; any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Proven violations of the detailed regulations, as printed in the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP) and available in the Office of the Dean of Students, may result in sanctions ranging from disciplinary probation, to failing grades on the work in question, to failing grades in the course, to suspension or dismissal among others. Refer to <http://sa.utep.edu/osccr/academic-integrity/> for further information.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, you will

- Have an understanding of key issues involved in ethnographic research in education.
- Appreciate the breadth and depth of ethnographic research in education.
- Have critically examined ethnographic methods and approaches to language and literacies.
- Have appreciated the ethical challenges of conducting fieldwork that "does no harm."
- Have learned to identify and ask ethnographic questions.
- Have experienced anthropological ways of seeing by practicing some of the techniques of ethnographic fieldwork, including taking field notes that employ thick description, and conducting ethnographic interviews.
- Have an understanding of numerous theoretical approaches used in ethnographic research.
- Have critically analyzed and written about influential texts within the field of educational anthropology.
- Have gained a greater awareness of your own and your colleagues' cultural backgrounds and the ways these continue to shape your choices and viewpoints.
- Have understood how ethnographic research functions and is used within the field of education.
- Have a deeper understanding of whether or not you would like to pursue further ethnographic research yourself.

These learning outcomes will be achieved through respectful scholarly discussion, projects, in-class presentations, and a variety of writing assignments. Students are responsible for coming to class having read the assigned materials and having submitted any required written assignments before class. Because this is a seminar, the emphasis is on scholarly discussion of the material.