ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS
ANTH 3358-002 CRN 27376 / SOCI 3358 CRN 27377
University of Texas at El Paso. Spring 2026 Semester
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Instructor: Luis Diaz Cepeda PhD.
Office Hours By appointment through Zoom
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Course Description and Goals

This undergraduate course introduces students to ethnography as a core method in anthropology and the social sciences, focusing on the study of everyday life through participant observation, interviews, and cultural analysis. Students will learn how ethnographers produce knowledge about social worlds by engaging with communities, attending to power, ethics, and positionality, and interpreting practices, meanings, and narratives in their historical and political contexts. Through classic and contemporary readings, field exercises, and writing assignments, the course develops students' skills in qualitative research, critical reflexivity, and analytical storytelling.

Course work

Weekly assignments (10 pts each, 160 total):
Every Monday morning, the instructor will post an assignment on Blackboard related to that week's readings. Assignments can take the form of a quiz, a questionnaire, or a post and two comments on a discussion forum. Students must read and be prepared to answer class questions. Note that each week's readings and assignments will be available only for that week.

Fieldwork (150 pts)
This is a hands-on class and will require students to conduct fieldwork on a cultural group of their choice. The two major fieldwork assignments will be participant observation and in-depth interviews**.**

a) Participant observation

This requires at least two participant observation experiences to apply your diary of camp analysis, systematic observation analysis, and Ethno-photography analysis. **Take detailed field notes** of the places, people, and activities of the event, and specifically describe **at least two distinct cultural scenes** you observed. Pay attention to how this place/space is used, while also taking note of the people's verbal and non-verbal forms of communication. Write a 2 to 3-page, double-spaced narrative essay that describes your observations and interaction(s) with others as well as your critical descriptions, reflections, and interpretations of the social interactions you observed. Your goal is to **describe** and **interpret** the social events that took place in the space(s) you have observed. The place or event may be photographed or video-recorded if permission is acquired.

b) In-depth interviews

Students are to contact a person to interview, gain a signed consent form, develop semi-structured open-ended interview questions, conduct and record the interview, transcribe and code the

interviews to identify key themes in the person's narrative, write a 2-paragraph abstract of the interview, and then write a 2–3-page synthesis of the interviewee's life and labor history**. Goals: To develop skills in listening and interviewing, transcription, qualitative data analysis, coding, and the ability to synthesize and write about critical events in a person's life and labor history.**

Final Paper (50 pts)

Write a 2500-3000-word paper on your research topic. It is a journal article-like paper, so it must include your research question, a thesis statement, a literature review, methodology, analysis, findings, and conclusion. It is your opportunity to showcase all the hard work you did throughout the semester. It will be graded on the quality of your work (i.e., appropriate fieldwork, analyzing abilities, coherence, originality, grammar).

Required Readings

Will be posted on Blackboard

Goals

- Students will acquire theoretical knowledge on the fundamentals of Ethnography.
- Students will gain ethnographic fieldwork abilities.
- Students will become familiar with academic research and writing.
- Students will develop critical thinking skills.
- Students will harvest an appreciation for cultural diversity

Requirements

- Students are responsible for doing the assignments properly. Failure to do so will result in a failing grade
- Reading is mandatory. Students will be asked to complete a quiz, answer a questionnaire, or post a critical comment on the assigned readings.
- Turn in assignments on time. Late submissions will not be accepted unless there is a documented emergency (e.g., a doctor´s note).
- Students will conduct fieldwork on a regular basis. Among other fieldwork activities, students are required to conduct at least two observation sessions and two in-depth interviews. Notice that success on these assignments necessitates building rapport with the cultural group students are working with. To reach an appropriate level of acquaintance may require spending additional time with them.
- Students will produce a piece of original academic research where they will analyze their collected data.
- As the course requires being in touch with cultural groups that may have a different perspective, some sensitive issues may arise. Students are to conduct themselves with the

highest respect for their informants, classmates, and professors. According to UTEP policies, incendiary language will not be tolerated.
- The estimated time required for this class is 8 hours a week on average.

Course Structure

- This is a 100% online course, but students are required to conduct face-to-face fieldwork.
- Assignments due dates are set for Mountain Standard Time.
- Grades will be uploaded within two business days.
- Students are responsible for being attentive to the assignments and due dates. Keep in mind that some assignments may require students to complete some prior work. I.e. Conducting an interview most likely would require reaching an agreement on the time and date with the interviewee before the actual interview takes place.
- Given that this is a hands-on class, students need to have a proactive attitude and plan their schedules in advance.
- No late assignment will be accepted, unless there is a documented extraordinary circumstance (i.e., a doctor's note).
- Drop Policy**.** If, for any reason, students decide not to continue with the class, they are responsible for officially withdrawing from it. Failure to do so will result in a failing grade (F).

Academic Integrity

Any form of academic misconduct is prohibited and constitutes a violation of the UTEP Operating Procedures Manual. This includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from others, sharing answers, using unauthorized materials during exams, or falsifying research data in reports. Plagiarism occurs when a person knowingly or deliberately presents another person's words or ideas as their own. Collusion refers to working together with others to commit any act of academic dishonesty. This type of behavior is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All alleged violations at the University of Texas at El Paso should be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR) for possible disciplinary action. Additional information is available in the HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline.

Prohibition of AI Use

The use of artificial intelligence or automated tools, especially generative systems such as ChatGPT or DALL·E, is not permitted in assignments for this course. Students are expected to complete assignments using their own critical and creative thinking, rather than relying on machine-generated content. Submitting AI-produced material as original work will be considered plagiarism and will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR).

Accommodation

The University is committed to providing appropriate accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Pregnant students may also request reasonable accommodations in accordance with state and federal regulations and university policies. To request support, students must register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). You can contact CASS at 915-747-5148, by email at cass@utep.edu, or through the online application on the CASS portal.

Course Communication

- All communication is to be done through institutional accounts (UTEP email or Blackboard). I do not read or reply to communications from personal accounts.
- Use a professional and courteous language. Be concise and clear about what you want to communicate.
- Allow one business day to obtain a reply.
- Make sure to read this syllabus and/or any announcements on Blackboard thoroughly, as the information you are looking for may have already been addressed there.

Online"netiquete"

Students are to exhibit appropriate behavior during their online interactions with peers and the professor. Appropriateness is defined as avoiding cyber-harassment, including but not limited to cyberbullying, cyberstalking, or flaming. Refer to the Netiquette Guide in Blackboard for more details.

Blackboard

Blackboard is the platform we will use. As such, students must check it on a regular basis for assignments, announcements, and direct messages. Students can also find the syllabus, assigned reading list, and supplemental materials here. Grades will also be posted on the Blackboard.

Grading

160 points – Weekly assignments. 10 points each.
150 points - Fieldwork Assignments
50 points – Final Paper

360 total points

Grade Breakdown
A – 360 pts. – 324 pts.
B – 323 pts. – 288 pts.
C – 287 pts. – 252pts.
D – 251 pts. – 226 pts.
F – 225 pts. – 0 pts.

Schedule

Week	Topic	Assignment(s)	Value (pts)
Week 1	Syllabus Discussion What is ethnography?	Syllabus quiz Summarize	10 10
Week 2	Documentary "Tales from the Jungle: Margaret Mead"	Questionary	10
Week 3	O'Reilly (2019) Ch. 2 "Where to Begin"	Questionary	10
Week 4	Murchison (2010) Ch. 2 "Choosing an Ethnographic Topic" FW 1. Select a Topic of Interest and Literature Review	Quiz Report	10 10
Week 5	Adeoye-Olatun, O. A., & Olenik, N. L. (2021). "Research and Scholarly Methods: Semi-structured Interview"	Questionary	10
Week 6	Zavisca, J. (2007). "Ethics in Ethnographic Fieldwork" Kennemore, A., & Postero, N. (2020). "Reflections on Collaborative Ethnography and Decolonization in Latin America, Aotearoa, and Beyond."	Questionary	10
Week 7	Harper, D. (2003). "Framing Photographic Ethnography. A Case Study" FW 2. Rite of passage	Quiz Report	10 10
Week 8	Atkinson and Hammesley ¨Ethnography and Participant Observation" FW 3. Participant observation 1	Quiz Report	10 20
Week 9	Tiener, G. in Agrosino, M. (2007) Ch. 1 "Becoming a Participant Observer" FW 4. Participant Observation 2	Quiz Report	10 20
Week 10	Alsaawl (2014). A Critical Review of Qualitative Interviews" F5. Two Interviews	Quiz Transcription	10 30
Week 11	"Piloting for Interviews in Qualitative Research: Operationalization and Lessons Learnt" FW 6. Interview Coding	Quiz Report	10 10

Week 12	Cantú, N. (1999). “La Quinceañera: Towards an Ethnographic Analysis of a Life-Cycle Ritual” FW 7 Interview Analysis	Quiz Portfolio	 30
Week 13	Reading TBD	Questionary	10
Week 14	Reading TBD	Questionary	10
Week 15	O’Reilly (2019) Ch. 9. “Writing and Representation” Final Paper Oral Presentation	Quiz Video presentation	10 20
Week 16	Final Paper	Academic paper	50

The instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus according to the class’s needs.

Sample Consent Forms for Research Purposes Below

Ethnographic Research Methods
Dr. Luis Díaz
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
UTEP

Sample Consent Form to be presented in writing to your research informants. Please translate, read or explain if necessary.

Consent Form

My name is _____. I am a student at the University of Texas in El Paso (UTEP). As part of the class, I am taking on Ethnographic Research Methods, I am required to conduct a short-term research project. I have chosen to do my research on _____. Your involvement in this project will contribute towards my personal and academic development by allowing me to fulfill my research requirement for this class.

Please understand that your participation in this research is voluntary and that you may withdraw at any time or decline to answer any question you choose. I would like to assure you that your responses will be held strictly confidential and that your actual personal identity will not be used in any publication(s).

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact my Professor, Dr. Luis Díaz at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at UT El Paso at (915) 747-5901 or at lrdiaz2@miners.utep.edu

_____ _____
Name of Participant Name of Researcher

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Signature of Researcher

_____ _____
Phone number or contact information Phone number or contact information
DATE: _____

Métodos de Investigación Etnográficos
Dr. Luis Díaz
Departamento de Sociología y Antropología
UTEP

Consentimiento para ser entrevistado/a

Mi nombre es _____. Soy estudiante en la Universidad de Texas en El Paso (UTEP). Como requisito para mi curso de metodología estaré haciendo un estudio. Yo he decidido estudiar _____. Su participación en este proyecto va a contribuir a mi desarrollo personal y profesional al apoyarme a cumplir con mis estudios.

Su participación en este estudio es voluntaria, ya que tiene el derecho de no contestar alguna pregunta que usted desee o dejar de participar en este estudio en cualquier momento. Deseo asegurarle que sus respuestas serán tratadas con respeto y confidencialidad. Su nombre o apellido no serán identificados en ningún documento o publicación si usted así lo desea.

Si tiene preguntas, favor de comunicarse con mi profesor, Dr. Díaz en el departamento de Sociología y Antropología en UTEP al (915) 747-5901 or at lrdiaz2@miners.utep.edu

_____ _____
Nombre del participante Nombre del estudiante

_____ _____
Firma del participante Firma del estudiante

_____ _____
Teléfono Teléfono

_____
Fecha de la entrevista