

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SAN MARCOS

EDUC 643

Ethnography of Education

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FALL 2000

**INSTRUCTOR:** Lillian Vega Castaneda  
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**OFFICE HOURS:** Thursday, 3:00 - 4:00  
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**CLASS MEETING TIME/PLACE:** Thursdays, 4:30p.m. to 7:15 p.m., ACD 306

*Mission Statement*

*The mission of the College of Education Community is to collaboratively transform public education by preparing thoughtful educators and advancing professional practices. We are committed to diversity, educational equity, and social justice, exemplified through reflective teaching, life-long learning, innovative research, and ongoing service. Our practices demonstrate a commitment to student centered education, diversity, collaboration, professionalism, and shared governance.*

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course examines the nature of ethnography as a standard tool of investigation in describing, understanding, explaining the behavior of individuals from different societies and settings, and of people from the same society in different social contexts. The course focuses on the social description of a particular group's culture. A focus on cultural anthropology and educational ethnography serve as a foundation for this course, in that the complexity of human behavior as well as its diversity can best be comprehended by exposure to other people's ways of knowing, doing, and behaving. An undergirding emphasis is to prepare the student to further understand the complexity of human practices by making familiar the activities of people from other societies or other groups, and thus, make "strange" (objective or unbiased) our own familiar practices when placed against the "eyes" of other people. The course focuses on theoretical underpinnings, foundations, and the conduct of educational ethnography.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Castaneda, Lillian Vega (1998). Reader, Ethnography of Education. Copy Serve.

Brizuela, Barbara M., Pearson, J. Stewart., Carrillo, R.G., and Jennifer Garvey Berger, Editors. (2000). Acts of Inquiry in Qualitative Research. Harvard Educational Review, Reprint Series No. 34, Harvard Educational Review, Cambridge, MA.

Hammersley, M. (1996). *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.

**RECOMMENDED:**

Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Lawrence-Lightfoot, Sara and Jessica Hoffman Davis (1997). *The Art and Science of Portraiture*. Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, San Francisco, CA.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

Each student will be expected to attend class regularly and participate in class discussions. More than three unexcused absences may result in the student being dropped from the course. Reading should be completed before the class meeting. Assignments must be typed and double spaced. Please note: In order to receive a grade of A or B students may miss no more than 2 classes and must turn in all assignments in on time.

**The Governance Community of the College of Education has adopted the following policy as of 12/19/97:**

Attendance Policy

Due to the dynamic and interactive nature of courses in the College of Education, all students are expected to attend all classes and participate actively. At a minimum, students must attend more than 80% of class time, or s/he may not receive a passing grade for the course at the discretion of the instructor. Individual instructors may adopt more stringent attendance requirements. Should the student have extenuating circumstances, s/he should contact the instructor as soon as possible.

- Ethnography In-Progress 45 points
- Hanging around exercise 25 points
- Discussion of Readings 15 points
- Attendance and participation 15 points

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

*Ethnography In-Progress:* Students are encouraged to think about an area of concern/interest that you would like to examine in relation to the education of learners in and/or outside of schools in formal and/or informal situations. This paper will be conducted as an educational “ethnography in-progress”. While it will allow you the flexibility to explore issues of personal interest, the guidelines must be followed.

This assignment will involve ethnographic data collection, questioning of the data and recursive analysis along with critical reflection and reflexivity. Minimally, data collection must include observations, field-notes and review of related documents. Other means of data collection may include interviews, videotaping, audiotaping, etc.

The dates for submission of the various draft sections for review are intended to assist you in the timely conduct of this ethnography in-progress and will be discussed at the specified class meeting. You are expected to maintain the timelines for each of the activities. While a true ethnography includes data collection over an extended period of time (2-3 years on average), you will be asked to gather data toward the development of an “ethnography in-progress” while applying the ethnographic method. **Given the semester schedule, the suggested optimum time for data collection is from early September to late November.** Ethnographic data may be collected in a classroom, school, community or related setting. **You must conduct 7-10 observations/visits along with detailed fieldnotes.** The following summary describes the component parts and due dates for each section of the in-progress ethnography.

DUE DATE	ETHNOGRAPHY IN-PROGRESS SECTION
September 7	<u>Focal Area/Research Questions:</u> This section describes the focal area of interest and states the question/s you are asking and the rationale for the question/s. Why are the questions significant?
September 14	<u>Introduction :</u> Background Information related to the classroom/ educational/ community setting that you have chosen for study. Provide background information as to why you selected this setting. What is it you are setting out to describe and analyze?
September 21	<u>Entry:</u> Describe your entry into the setting. This section must include a descriptive account of how you negotiated entry into the setting, e.g., letters, e-mail, telephone, meeting. Share how the initial process of making contact and (ultimately) gaining entry (permission) into the setting occurred. If you are conducting this ethnography-in-progress in your classroom please write up your concerns and considerations with respect to the work you are conducting with respect to your students. This "entry" section should include a general overview of how you came to the site, when your "entry" began both officially and unofficially. For example, if you are a teacher in the school, tell how you came to the school. This section must also include a section on role definition, formal characteristics of role, and technical implications of entry and initial role along with ethnical implications of entry and role.
September 28	<u>Setting.</u> In this section you will describe the larger community context and classroom, school, class population and the specific group with which you will be working during your ethnographic project. The following must be included: a description of the larger community context, including demographic information (e.g., SES, ethnicity, single family households, ELL, EO); a description of the outer physical plant appearance; structure along with a map of the structure. Tell how you have arranged this "map" and place your focal area of interest in this map; provide an overview of the school's curricular and instructional emphasis and a description of the students (demographics) who attend the school. <u>Entering the school:</u> In this section you need to include a thick description of the actual school/ community site AND the classroom environment. This description should guide the reader as if "drawing a portrait." Include information with respect to the academic program offered in this situation. Provide specific information on those observed in the setting.
October 5	<u>Methodology - Data Collection:</u> For this section you will provide an overview of the data collection procedures, e.g., fieldnotes, videotaping, audio recordings, interviews, etc. Include any questionnaire, survey, interview questions or observational checklist, or whatever other instrument or tool you will use to collect your data. Include interview/ observation protocols and schedules.
October 12	<u>Social Structure:</u> "Social structure stresses not so much the actual relations between persons or groups as the expected realities, or even the ideal relations" (Firth, 1981). Social structure refers to the "expectations" and "idealized beliefs" of what is done. In this section you will describe the structural aspects of social relations in the setting you have chosen to study.
October 26	<u>Social Organization.</u> According to Firth (1981) it is necessary to think "separately of social organization in terms of concrete activity. Generally, the idea of organization is that of people getting things done by planned action." You will describe the social process in operation (in the setting) and how it accounts for how things get accomplished in the organization/setting. You will provide a descriptive account of the main interactants in the setting.
November 9	<u>Social Function.</u> "Social function can be defined as the relation between a social action and the system of which the action is a part, or, alternatively, as a result of the social action in terms of the means-ends scheme of all those affected by it." (Firth, 1981). Social function is the way social relations serve given ends. In this section you will describe the prime social function in your setting and responsibilities of each of the interactants in the setting.
November 16	<u>Analysis - Patterns, Categories:</u> Describe the various patterns uncovered in your preliminary analysis. Next, tell why a pattern became a pattern. Tell how you have categorized your patterns and your thinking involved in creating specific categories. Connect this discussion back to social structure and social organization. Begin a discussion around the original research questions.

November 30 *Analysis - Propositions*: Based on your initial and ongoing analysis, you are now ready to make some statements (propositions) about your research. What sense can you make of your data (in the context of your research questions, and, anything else that seems significant to your work?) Place the discussion in the form of "making sense" of the data. State your propositions here, and support with your prior identification of patterns and categories. Also, discuss any other significant findings that have emerged from your analysis. Conduct deeper analysis of social structure vs. social organization.

December 7 *Initial Findings and Reflections on the Process*: In this section you will *reflect* on the process regarding your conduct of the in-progress ethnography. Include *reflections* on concerns associated with the process. Also include *what you would do differently* as you reflect on the process. End with *what you would do next* if you were to continue this ethnographic study.

December 14 *Ethnography In-Progress Due*

*Hanging Around Exercise* : This assignment is designed to prepare you as a future ethnographer. An ethnographer uses a variety of data collection methods and questioning in order to "make sense" of a given setting, event, or set of occurrences. A good ethnographer asks this initial question to guide her inquiry: what is going on here? This is followed by: what is going on here that may be of some sort of significance? Each of these are important questions, in that, the ethnographer seeks to gain meaning and understanding from events that are often "common" to her set of experiences; the challenge is to address these common occurrences in ways that make the events, settings, etc., "strange" or "uncommon." It is a challenge to the educational ethnographer to gain meaning and make sense out of events, situations, settings, (e.g., playtime, reading time, sharing time, the school community, a game of jump rope) that are in fact, "commonplace." As ethnographers we are asked to look at common events as "exotic" and/or "new."

An underlying notion of the ethnographic method is to begin to make meaning, by describing events, settings, interactions, etc., in ways that are value-free and unbiased. This is our challenge for this assignment -- to describe in a value-free context. Good luck!

#### Where

You will visit a store that sells groceries. It is up to you to select the type of store, e.g., mini-mart, supermarket, corner grocery, farmers market, etc. You will spend at least 45 minutes in the setting.

#### What

(a). You will spend the first 5-6 minutes "casing/checking-out" the setting. As you walk around the setting, make note of the:

1. physical lay-out of the store;
2. construct a spatial map and attach to your write-up; participants, food sections, etc.;
3. take notes regarding the setting; and
4. include a one paragraph statement that tells the location, time, & date.

(b). Next, you will observe customers as they shop. Take notes on one particular customer. Record how this customer shops, e.g., what section of the store does s/he begin to shop in? What observable behaviors do you note as your shopper selects her/his purchases? Write at minimum a one page description that objectively describes your shoppers behavior.

(c). Classification scheme: How are store items organized in this setting? (e.g., foods, beverages, dry goods) (1-2 paragraphs).

(d) Social Organization:

1. Who goes to the supermarket?
2. What social rules are used in the setting? (1-2 paragraph.)

(e) Reflective Notes: (separate page) Note your impressions and reflections regarding this experience. Reflections may be stated accordingly: e.g.,

R-1 "I was very tired and had never before shopped at this supermarket. I wondered how everything would turn out."

(f) Questions: Please note any questions, issues of concern that you might raise if you want to continue as a researcher in this setting.

(g) Synopsis: What did you observe? (1-page)

**This assignment is due September 7, 2000.**

**COURSE OUTLINE:** Readings are expected to be done prior to class meeting.

Date	Topic	Assignments
8/24	Introduction/Course Overview - What is ethnography?	
8/31	Ethnography - Theoretical Foundations	Gumperz & Hymes, What is Ethnography? (Reader); Spindler and Spindler, Teaching and Learning: How to Do the Ethnography of Education, (Reader); Hammersley and Atkinson, pp. 1-22, What is ethnography? <b>In-Class: Erickson, Qualitative Methods in Research on Teaching (Bring your reader).</b>
9/7	Ethnography – What does it mean? Anthropological theory in education;	Wolcott in Spindler & Spindler, On Ethnographic Intent (Reader) Hymes, What is Ethnography? (Reader). Brice-Heath, Ethnography in Education: Defining the Essentials (Reader); Spindler & Hammond in HER: The Use of Anthropological Methods in Educational Research, pp. 17-24. <b><i>Hanging Around Exercise Due (to be shared in class);</i></b> <b><i>Focal Area; Rationale/Research Questions.</i></b>
9/14	Ethnography and Culture; Entry - Gaining Access; variation in interpretive research;	Valdes, Between Two Worlds (Reader); Hammersley & Atkinson, Access, pp. 54-79; The Turn Inward in Qualitative Research in HER, pp. 3-13; Metz, Sociology and Qualitative Methodologies in Educational Research, in HER, pp. 37-44. <b><i>Introduction (Ethnography in-progress)</i></b>
9/21	Habits of Thought and Work; multiple interpretive communities; researcher perspective.	HER: Gitlin, Educative Research, Voice, and School Change, pp. 95-116; Mishler, Validation in Inquiry-Guided Research, pp. 119-141. Hammersley & Atkinson, Field Relations, pp. 80-123; Harris, Anthropology and Post-Modernism (Reader). <b><i>Entry</i></b>
9/28	Insider/Emic Accounts; Relationship Between Researcher and Researched. Critical Ethnography.	Hammersley & Atkinson, Insider Accounts: listening and Asking Questions, pp. 124-156; Rogers, Voice, Play, and a Practice of Ordinary Courage in Girls' and Women's Lives, in HER pp. 149-173. Delgado-Gaitan, Researching Change and Changing the Researcher in HER, pp. 389-409. <b><i>Setting</i></b>

- 10/5 Studying Different Societies and Settings; Ethics; Data collection; Introduction to grounded theory; Etic interpretation; Critical Ethnography. Watson-Gegeo and Gegeo, Schooling, Knowledge, and Power: Social Transformation in the Solomon Islands (Reader); Hammersley & Atkinson, Ethics, pp. 263-287 & Documents, pp. 157-174; Carspecken, What is Critical Qualitative Research? (Reader)  
*Methodology-Data Collection*
- 10/12 Recording and Organizing Data; Critical Approaches. Hammersley & Atkinson, Recording and Organizing Data (social structure and social organization), pp. 175-204; Freeman, To Take Them at Their Word, in HER, pp. 293-317; Bredo & Feinberg, The Critical Approach to Sociology & Educational Research (Reader).  
*Social Structure*
- 10/19 The Process of Analysis - patterns, categories, propositions - theory building; Reporting to informants; Hammersley & Atkinson, The process of analysis, pp. 205-238; Page et al, Reporting Ethnography to Informants in HER, pp. 321-348.
- 10/26 The process of analysis - explicit and implicit Relationships; Rigor in data collection and analysis; social structure and social organization Frake, Rigor and Respect as Standards in Ethnographic Description, (Reader);  
*Social Organization*
- 11/2 The process of analysis and formal theory building; Building a social description of a given group, event, context; Grounded formal theory: awareness contexts, pp. 241-248; Hammersley & Atkinson, Writing Ethnography, pp. 239-262;
- 11/9 Understanding the complexity of human behavior and interaction; sociolinguistics & discourse analysis. Saferstein, Ethnomethodology (Reader); Carrasco, Language Use, Participation Structures & Lesson Engagement (Reader).  
*Social Function*
- 11/16 Understanding the complexity of human behavior and interaction; transcripts, audiotaping & videotaping; Maldonado-Guzman, A Multi-Dimensional Ethnographic Framework for Studying Classroom Organization and Interaction, Harvard University (Reader); Gumperz & Gumperz, Beyond Ethnography: Some Uses of Sociolinguistics for Understanding Classroom Environments (Reader).  
*Analysis - Patterns, Categories*
- 11/23 **THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY**

11/30 Triangulation; Uses of Research;

Nieto, Lessons from Students on Creating a  
Chance to Dream, in HER, pp. 355-384;  
*Analysis - Propositions*

12/7

*Initial Findings and Reflections on the  
Process*

12/13 Final Class Meeting/Evaluation

*Ethnography in-progress due.*

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