

Exploring Ethnography
Department of Anthropology
Lakehead University
ANTH-2517
Fall 2023

Instructor: Frederico Oliveira, PhD
Email: foliveir@lakeheadu.ca
Dates of Appointments: September 5 to November 30, 2023
Classes Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30 pm to 4 pm
Room: OA-2018
Office Hours: Tue & Thu (11 am - 1 pm) or by appointment – Office: OR-1041

Land Acknowledgment:

Lakehead University respectfully acknowledges its campuses are located on the traditional lands of Indigenous peoples.

Lakehead University acknowledges the history that many nations hold in the areas around our campuses and is committed to a relationship with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples based on the principles of mutual trust, respect, reciprocity, and collaboration in the spirit of reconciliation.

Course Description and Objectives:

The understanding and explanation of cultural diversity worldwide is the focus of study of sociocultural anthropologists. Ethnography is the methods and systematic procedures by which anthropologists connect with people and gather relevant data that will inform more elaborated analysis of a particular social issue or a human cultural phenomenon. The meaning and purposes underlying how ethnography is applied have changed considerably since the origins of the discipline in the late 19th century until the current days. These changes also reflect the political, intellectual, and ethical transformations that have shaped anthropology and its “objects” of study since its foundation.

This is essentially a methods course that will provide directions to how sociocultural anthropology, as a scientific discipline, establishes rigour and scientific guidelines for data collection and organization of information. Differently from several other scientific fields, anthropology’s “objects of study” present an elevated level of subjectivity. As a consequence, it becomes difficult to predict beforehand how the subjects will behave in each cultural context – and this is not even expected from an anthropologist. In that sense, each situation demands a specific methodological approach, which makes it almost impossible to dictate the rules that will be applied in the field. Many authors agree that the best way to learn ethnography is by reading other ethnographies and putting oneself in practical situations with real human beings. The course is organized to expose the students to a variety of ethnographies conducted by classical and contemporary authors. Class discussions and practical examples will exercise the students into the vast possibilities to engage with people and analyze cultural patterns beyond common sense perceptions.

The successful students are expected at the end of the course to be able to:

- a) Describe and see the limitations and potentials of the methods associated with ethnographical research;
- b) Understand how anthropologists elaborate research questions and direct their observation while doing fieldwork;
- c) Learn to be respectful of the research participant's cultural protocols and to follow ethical guidelines;
- d) Be familiar with scientific papers and their structural organization;
- e) Understand the differences and similarities between academic and applied anthropology;
- f) Develop, at least from the introductory level, the capacity to critically look and think anthropologically about social phenomena;

The course is organized around lectures and class discussions. We will go through some of the conceptual ideas about a particular topic in the initial sessions of each week, and then broader discussions will be proposed to expand such concepts or methodological debates in the second session. Discussions will form an essential part of the learning process and will revolve around current and controversial issues in anthropology. Student attendance and participation are essential.

Course Readings:

Mannik, Lynda & McGarry, Karen (2017). *Practicing Ethnography: A Student Guide to Method and Methodology*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

A number of articles and book chapters are required readings and are listed below for each week. All are available electronically on the course website.

Course Requirements and Grading:

Graded assignments include the following:

Class Participation
10% of course grade

Reading Notes – Seminar Facilitation
30% of course grade

Quizzes
10% of course grade (5% for each quiz)

Midterm Exam
20% of course grade

Final Project
30% of course grade

Class Participation: Attendance is mandatory. Reading (sometimes a lot) and attendance are critical to achieving a satisfactory grade and learning objectives in this course. Students are required to critically read all assigned materials prior to class and participate actively (in their own way) in class discussions and assignments.

Reading notes (of approximately 600 words) are required for a minimum of 8 (eight) discussion sessions. That means that students are allowed to miss one delivery without a penalty. Each subsequent miss will result in a 5-point penalty for this assignment. Students must submit their notes by Wednesday at 11:59 pm.

Reading notes are reflections on the week's readings: statements of the argument(s), critical commentaries, and discussion questions (it's not a summary of the readings).

In order to achieve a satisfactory grade on this assignment, you are expected to elaborate your answers, demonstrating a clear and concise understanding of important concepts and showing a capacity for critical thinking. Remember to submit your answers using the D2L internal folder (not my regular LU email address).

Here are some tips for organizing your reading notes:

It is important that you mention all the required readings for that week.

Try to explain the main points of the ethnographies and the readings. Try to get the big picture.

What is the phenomenon being explained? What are the methodologies employed? Main challenges and how the author(s) managed to circumvent them.

What is the explanation offered?

Find some portions of the text you want us to discuss for close reading and interpretation.

Try connecting the textbook chapter with the other assigned readings whenever possible.
Find portions that are difficult or unclear to you.
Find portions that you think exemplify the author's most important insights.

Seminar Facilitation: Throughout the semester, every week (each second session), 3 or 4 students will introduce the assigned readings and help facilitate the discussions. You will be given about 15 minutes within which to both present your ideas and facilitate a short discussion (you should be aiming for something like a ten-minute presentation and a five-minute discussion). You may use your reading notes as a guide, or you are free to read what you have written. You may depend entirely on class readings for your presentation, or you may look for additional information from external sources, as long as it is clear from where you are taking others' ideas. Each student is required to participate at least two times in the seminar facilitation.

Quizzes: Two quizzes will be applied to verify the comprehension of basic concepts in ethnography. The First Quiz is scheduled for October 3, and the Second Quiz is scheduled for November 14. The quizzes will be answered using the D2L Quiz feature. On those days, there will be no classes, and students will be given a time window to start and finish the tests. Also, during those weeks, Thursday sessions will be used to discuss the reading material, and no Seminar Facilitations will be held.

Mid-Term Exam: In order to verify the comprehension of the course material, students will be given a number of questions to respond to after the reading week. More details will be provided.

Final Project – For this assignment, students will be given directions to elaborate their own ethnography about a topic of their interest. Each student should prepare an oral presentation to be given in the final week of class. You should also organize a written paper to be delivered by December 10. The Final Paper follows the format of a research paper. This assignment allows students to develop an in-depth practical exercise using the material seen during the course. Required length: 3000-4000 words, excluding bibliography. There will be a handout explaining the details of this assignment.

Class Format

The first class of the week (scheduled for Tuesday at 2:30 pm) will cover the content of that week's readings. Primary concepts and the guiding ideas will be explained.

The second class of the week (scheduled for Thursday at 2:30 pm) will be exclusively dedicated to the seminar presentations, discussing the essential concepts and expanding on the main issues regarding the reading material.

Policies and Procedures:

Grading Policy:

Assignments will be evaluated primarily based on a student's understanding of the material presented in the course. Other factors that figure in the evaluation of assignments include creative and critical insight and writing (clarity, coherence, and organization).

General Course Policies:

1. Avoid disrupting class by joining in late or allowing background noise to disturb the dynamics of the class. Disruptions will result first in a warning and then in a 5% penalty to the student's final grade. If the student's behaviour is disturbing the learning environment of the class, they will be asked to leave.
2. It is expected that students will be respectful of their fellow students, their instructor, and cultures and traditions that are not their own.
3. Plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc., that belong to someone else. In accordance with this definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy another person's work and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of that person. This is a serious issue. Violation of the university's policy will result in a grade penalty or failure of the course. This type of violation will stay in your academic record.
4. Assignments must be delivered on time. Penalties will be applied for late or not returned assignments.
5. Students are responsible for taking their own lecture notes. Course outline, journal articles and book chapters will be posted online on Desire2Learn at least one week prior to the due date. With the exception of the required textbook, all the course readings will be provided as scanned PDF documents and posted on Desire2Learn.
6. The primary communication tool between the instructor and students is Lakehead University's e-mail account. Students are asked to check regularly (including before the class) their LakeheadU e-mail account and Desire2Learn for unforeseen changes to the class. As a general rule, student questions sent 24 hours prior to an assignment or test will not be replied. Grades are supposed to be returned to the students at a maximum period of two weeks after the assignment is delivered.
7. Students are welcome to schedule online appointments to discuss any topic related to their academic progress or course content.
8. This syllabus is subject to minor changes during the course of the semester.

Course Schedule

Week 1:

Introduction to the Course / Film

(Sept-5)

(Sept-7)

Week 2:

Origins and development of fieldwork in Sociocultural Anthropology

(Sept-12)

(Sept-14)

Mannik, Lynda & McGarry, Karen (2017). Introduction and Chapter 1 (The Origins and Development of Sociocultural Anthropological Fieldwork in North America). In: *Practicing Ethnography: A Student Guide to Method and Methodology*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 1-33.

Moore, Jerry. (2009). Franz Boas: Culture in Context (Chapter 3)
In: *Visions of Culture*. Lanham: Altamira Press, pp. 33-45

Week 3:

Practicing Ethnography I: Participant Observation

(Sept-19)

(Sept-21)

Mannik, Lynda & McGarry, Karen (2017). Chapter 2 (Participant Observation). In: *Practicing Ethnography: A Student Guide to Method and Methodology*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp. 34-50.

Malinowski, Bronislaw. [1922]. Introduction: Argonauts of the Western Pacific". New York. E.P. Dutton, pp. 1-25.

Clifford Geertz. 2005. "Deep Play: notes on a Balinese cockfight" (from *Daedalus Journal*), pp. 56-87.

Week 4:

Practicing Ethnography II: Connecting with Others

(Sept-26)

(Sept-28)

Mannik, Lynda & McGarry, Karen (2017). Chapter 4 (Connecting with others: interviews, conversations, and life stories). In: *Practicing Ethnography: A Student Guide to Method and Methodology*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp.69-84.

Gladwell, Malcolm. (2019). "Introduction: Step out of the car". In: *Talking to Strangers: What we should know about the people we don't know*. New York, Boston, London. Little, Brown and Company, pp. 1-16

Gladwell, Malcolm. (2019). "Chapter 6: The Friends fallacy". In: *Talking to Strangers: What we should know about the people we don't know*. New York, Boston, London. Little, Brown and Company, pp. 145-167.

Week 5: Practicing Ethnography III: Ethics and the Politics of Fieldwork

(Oct-3) ** **First Quiz** ** (covering the content of Weeks 2, 3 and 4)

(Oct-5) Mannik, Lynda & McGarry, Karen (2017). Chapter 3 (Ethics and the Politics of Fieldwork). In: *Practicing Ethnography: A Student Guide to Method and Methodology*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp.51-68.

Carsten, Janet. (2000). "Knowing Where You've Come from: Ruptures and continuities of Time and Kinship in Narratives of Adoption Reunions". In: *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 6(4): 687-703.

Moland, Karen M. & Blystad, Astrid . (2010). "Counting on Mother's Love: The Global Politics of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV in Eastern Africa". In: *Anthropology and Public Health Bridging Differences in Culture and Society*. (Robert A Hahn, Marcia Inhorn, eds.), pp. 447-479.

Week 6: Fall Reading Week

(No Class: Thanksgiving & Fall Reading Week, Oct 9-13)

Week 7:

(Oct-17) **Film**

(Oct-19) **Midterm Exam**

Week 8: After fieldwork - Analyzing the data

(Oct-24)
(Oct-26) Mannik, Lynda & McGarry, Karen (2017). Chapter 6 (After Fieldwork – Analyzing the Data). In: *Practicing Ethnography: A Student Guide to Method and Methodology*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp.105-122.

Ong, Aihwa. (1988). "The Production of Possession: Spirits and the Multinational Corporation in Malaysia." *American Ethnologist*, 15(1):28-42.

Marcia Inhorn. (2003). "The Worms Are Weak". Male Infertility and Patriarchal Paradoxes in Egypt". In: *Men and Masculinities*, 5(3): 236-256.

Week 9:

Ethnography as Writing and the Politics of Representation

(Oct-31)

(Nov-2)

Mannik, Lynda & McGarry, Karen (2017). Chapter 7 (Writing up and the Politics of Representation). In: *Practicing Ethnography: A Student Guide to Method and Methodology*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp.123-139.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture". In: *The Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 3-32.

James Clifford: "On Ethnographic Authority." In: *Representations* 1(2), pp. 118-146

Week 10:

Applied Anthropology

(Nov-7)

(Nov-9)

Mannik, Lynda & McGarry, Karen (2017). Chapter 8 (Applied Anthropology). In: *Practicing Ethnography: A Student Guide to Method and Methodology*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp.143-159.

Gruenbaum, Ellen. (2010). "Honorable Mutilation? Changing Responses to Female Genital Cutting in Sudan". In: *Anthropology and Public Health Bridging Differences in Culture and Society*. (Robert A Hahn, Marcia Inborn, orgs.), pp. 397-421.

Nichter, Mark (et alli). (2010). "Anthropological Contributions to the Development of Culturally Appropriate Tobacco Cessation Programs: A Global Health Priority". In: *Anthropology and Public Health Bridging Differences in Culture and Society*. (Robert A Hahn, Marcia Inborn, orgs.), pp. 298-331.

Week 11:

Autoethnography: Shifting Perspectives

(Nov-14)

**** Second Quiz **** (covering the content of Weeks 8, 9 and 10)

(Nov-16)

Mannik, Lynda & McGarry, Karen (2017). Chapter 9 (Autoethnography: the Self and the Other Revisited). In: *Practicing Ethnography: A Student Guide to Method and Methodology*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp.160-175.

Edwards, David. (2010). "Counterinsurgency as Cultural System". In: *Small Wars Journal*, pp. 1-18.

Mosse, David. (2006). "Anti-social anthropology? Objectivity, objection, and the ethnography of public policy and professional communities". In: *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (NS) 12, pp. 935-956.

Week 12: **Thought-Provoking Ethnographies**

(Nov-21)

(Nov-23)

Brodwin, Paul. (2011). Futility in the Practice of Community Psychiatry. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 25 (2): 189-208.

Gusterson, Hugh. (1996). *Nuclear Rites: A Weapons Laboratory at the End of Cold War* (Chapter 5: Bodies and Machines). Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Week 13: **** Final Project Presentations ****

(Nov-28)

(Nov-30)

Desire2Learn

The course uses Desire2Learn for its course website. To access the course website or any other Desire2Learn-based course website, go to the LU portal login page at <https://myinfo.lakeheadu.ca/> and log in using your LU username and password. Once you have logged in to the portal, look for the **mycourselink** module, where you'll find the link to our course website along with the link to all other Desire2Learn-based courses you are registered.

Use of AI

Generative artificial intelligence (Generative AI or GenAI) is a category of AI systems capable of generating text, images, or other media in response to prompts. These systems include ChatGPT and its variant Bing (built by OpenAI) and Bard (built by Google), among several others. Other Generative AI models include artificial intelligence art systems such as Stable Diffusion, Midjourney, and DALL-E. **Any use of GenAI systems to produce assignments for this course is not permitted.** All work submitted for evaluation in this course must be the student's original work. The submission of any work containing AI-generated content will be considered a violation of academic integrity ("Use of Unauthorized Materials").

Accessibility Needs

Lakehead University is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible.