

AFR 374E 30565
Introduction to Ethnographic Methods
Austin/Los Angeles Domestic Study Program
2019

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Office Hours: W, 10-12 CST
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The crucial distinction for me is not the difference between fact and fiction, but the distinction between fact and truth. Because facts can exist without human intelligence, but truth cannot.

Toni Morrison

Opening and interpreting lives is very different from opening and closing books.
Dwight Conquergood

Background

The Austin/Los Angeles Domestic Study Program provides a unique opportunity to contrast two major U.S. cities experiencing severe disparities in its responses to home and home ownership. Studied together, Austin, Texas and Los Angeles, California offer powerful indications of how cities are failing to address issues of race and class that leave many residents seeking new environments and many others without homes. In Austin, according to Eric Tang in “Outlier: The Case of Austin’s Declining African American Population,” the city is losing African Americans at a higher rate than any other U.S. city of its size. In Los Angeles, gentrification is transforming the historically Black neighborhood of Leimert Park and historically Latinx neighborhood of Boyle Heights. In addition, Los Angeles currently has the second highest rate of homelessness (55,000 in 2017) in the country. This data, coupled with the Texas-to-California migration patterns of African Americans documented by Isabel Wilkerson in *The Warmth of Other Suns*, indicates that a comparative analysis of Austin and Los Angeles could yield significant alternative approaches to home that maintain the integrity of neighborhoods and the dignity of everyone.

Course Description

This course provides students with skills in critical ethnography by positioning the students as advocates for the communities in their ethnographic sites. Students will develop research projects that compare the demographic changes that are happening in Austin, Texas and Los Angeles, California by focusing on education, policy and legislation, poverty, or employment. Using the ethnographic tools of self-reflexive analysis, oral histories, and observant participation, students will situate the Austin portion of their study in East Austin, North East Austin, and South Lamar, and the Los Angeles portion of their study in Leimert Park, Boyle Heights, and Koreatown.

Objectives

Upon completion of this course students should be able to differentiate between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, conduct ethnographic interviews, maintain a fieldwork notebook, conduct oral histories, and identify the major components of critical ethnography as a methodology.

Required Readings

All Readings are Available on Canvas

Assignments

Essay Presentation (10 pts.)

With a partner, you will select one of the course readings listed below. Together, you will discuss 1-2 key ideas from the essay, relate the essay directly to ethnography and/or community and offer at least 3 discussion questions based on the essay. You may summarize the essay in no more than 2 succinct sentences. You will lead the class in a discussion of the essay designed to help the class understand how the essay might contribute to their own thinking around the issues of the class. Be prepared to answer questions about the essay from your peers or from the teacher. This is a collaboration in which you and your partners will receive one grade based on your joint work. The presentation/discussion should be no more than 20 minutes.

*“The Case for Reparations,” by Ta-Nehisi Coates

**Reproducing Racism* (excerpt), Wendy Moore

*“Six Discourses on the Postmetropolis,” Edward Soja

*“The Physical Creation of Society,” in *Suburban Nation*, Duany, Plater-Zyberk, Speck

*“The Racist Housing Policy that Made Your Neighborhood,” Alexis C. Madrigal

*“The Politics of Solidarity: Interethnic Relations in the Third World Left,” Laura Pulido (USC)

**The Beloved Community* (excerpt), Joy James (Williams College)

**The Next American Revolution* (excerpt), Grace Lee Boggs (Detroit Activist)

**Development without Displacement* (pp. 50-92), Causa Justa/Just Cause, Oakland/San Francisco

Fieldwork Notebook (30 pts. = 15 pts./submission)

You will keep a fieldwork notebook that includes—

1. citational data: date, time, location, event, people present, attitude,
2. observant participation details/“thick description,”

3. reflections on your positionality,
4. reference to a theory/concept/idea from class readings or discussion,
5. challenges and discoveries encountered during fieldwork, and
6. areas of research for you to pursue.

Each entry should address each of these six items.

*Number each **required** entry. Required entries will be designated throughout the semester.*

There must be at least one entry each week.

While the notebook may be informally written, strive to make it legible. There are no page requirements; you should write freely, fully addressing the areas listed above. You may include personal drawings, photos, maps, pamphlets, or any other items that seem relevant to your research. The notebook will be graded twice during the semester. The notebook is due as indicated on the syllabus at the beginning of class. Late notebooks will be penalized.

Oral History Presentation (20 pts.)

You will conduct an oral history of someone connected to your ethnographic community. This will require 2-3 1-hour conversations with the artist; at least one of these conversations will be videotaped. Your focus will be “Making Art in a Changing City.” You will design three preliminary questions that open the community member to reflection and speculation. You will make a presentation about the oral history that includes 1) the three preliminary questions; 2) a verbatim excerpt from the oral history, and 3) a discussion of the significance of the excerpt in considering how gentrification shapes artistic production. The presentation will be no longer than 10 minutes. You should be prepared to respond to questions from your peers and the teacher.

“Block Party” (20 pts.)

You will present your ethnographic research during the “Block Party” at the end of the semester. This will include some elements from the oral history you conduct, your fieldwork notebook, and your ethnographic paper. Together, we will develop the specifics of this assignment that will align with our evolving understanding of our ethnographic work; in this way, this assignment has an emergent rather than predetermined structure.

Participation (20 pts.)

You are expected to participate vigorously in class discussions and exercises. This includes completing impromptu short research assignments that will occur throughout the semester. You must also attend all required events outside of class. In Austin, you will be expected to conduct independent research that will require attending a community event in the neighborhood you have selected, mapping your selected neighborhood, and establishing a working relationship with an Austin organization.

Attendance

You are allowed one unexcused absence from class. If you have more than one unexcused absence, your final grade will be lowered by one letter. If you arrive more than 10 minutes late

to class, or leave before class has ended, you will be counted as absent. If you have an emergency, notify the teacher as soon as you are able.

Course Protocols

*We will work as an energetic and supportive community as we learn the intricacies of deep collaboration.

*Rules for respectful discussion will be followed. These rules will be established and agreed upon by everyone early in the semester. If a student violates these rules, that student will be counted as absent for the day.

*Being on time for class and events means arriving early.

*As we work to build community with many people, consider how your style of dress may exclude you from being seen, heard, and understood. We will discuss dress codes for our public events.

*During in-person instruction, devices are not to be used in class. During in-person instruction, notes should be taken in a notebook.

*Do not use your devices—phones, computers, tablets—while attending public events unless permission is granted.

*Written assignments are due by email by class time on the due date indicated in the syllabus.

* The University of Texas rules and regulations regarding plagiarism and intellectual honesty will be enforced. For details please see:

<https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/rhetoric/RHE%20306/plagiarismcollusion.php>

* Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Disability Programs and Resource Center at San Francisco State University.

<http://access.sfsu.edu/content/students>

* By UT Austin policy, you must notify the teacher of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

*If English is your second language, let me know and we work together to create appropriate accommodations for you.

Course Schedule

FIELD SITE: AUSTIN

WEEK 1

JAN 23

Introduction to Ethnography
Read: Jemisin, “The Ones Who Stay and Fight”

WEEK 2

30

Read: “1928 City of Austin Master Plan”
Read: Madison, *Critical Ethnography*, Chapter 1
Read: Conquergood, “Performance as a Moral Act”
View in Class: “We Will Always Be Here”

WEEK 3

FEB 6

Tour: East Austin, Harrison Eppright, City of Austin
Read: Tang, “Outlier: The Case of Austin’s Declining African-American Population”

WEEK 4

13

1 Essay Presentation
View in Class: “Seen and Unseen”
View in Class: Loretta Lees’ TED Talk
Read: Lees, “The Birth of Gentrification,” Chapter 1

WEEK 5

20

2 Essay Presentations
View in Class: “What We Don’t Know about Gentrification,” Stacey Sutton, TEDTalk

WEEK 6

27

2 Essay Presentations
Read: Campbell, *Making Black Los Angeles*, Chapter 4
Costa-Vargas, *Catching Hell . . .*, Chapter 4
View: “City Rising”

WEEK 7

MAR 6

Due: Oral History Sharings

WEEK 8

13

NO CLASS
MAR 14-15 *Attend:* Black Studies Conference

FIELD SITE: LOS ANGELES

WEEK 9

16

ARRIVE IN LOS ANGELES
Event: Program Dinner, Bloom

17

Site Visit: KAOS Network, Art + Practice, Leimert Park

- 18 *Tour:* Watts Towers
 Event: Southern California Library
 Guest Speaker: Damien Sojoyner
- 19 *Site Visit:* KIWA, Koreatown
 Event: Beverly Soon Tofu Restaurant
- 20 *Tour:* USC
 Event: Volunteer at Lava Mae
 Due: Fieldwork Notebooks I
- 21 *Site Visit:* InnerCity Struggle, Boyle Heights
 Event: Program Dinner, Homegirls Café
- 22 *Tour:* Universal Studios
 Event: Program Dinner, My 2 Cents
- 23 ARRIVE IN AUSTIN

FIELD SITE: AUSTIN

WEEK 10

- 27 *View in Class:* “We Will Always Be Here”

WEEK 11

- APR 3 Shape Research for “Block Party”

WEEK 11

- 10 Shape Research for “Block Party”

WEEK 12

- 17 Shape Research for “Block Party”

WEEK 13

- 24 Block Party Responsibilities

WEEK 14

- MAY 1 ***Presentation: “Block Party”***

WEEK 15

- 8 ***Due: Fieldwork Notebooks II***
 Summation of the Course

NOTE: The course schedule is subject to change due to the necessity to improvise.