

Religion and Fieldwork Religious Studies 4936 Section 1764/5937 Section 1015

Fall 2014
T 2-3 /R3 (MAT 105)

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Course Description

Many scholars in religious studies conduct fieldwork and ethnographic research to explore religious traditions and cultures from an insider's perspective. Combining classroom based learning with supervised field research, this class will introduce students to the theoretical and practical issues of religion and fieldwork and will focus on the "nuts and bolts" of fieldwork. Over the semester, students will discuss and practice a variety of methods, including participant-observation and interviews, and will explore the role of emerging communications technologies in the fieldwork process.

Objectives and Goals

Learning Objectives

1. Introduction of students to field methods in religious studies;
2. Development of specific field skills;
3. Awareness of historical development of ethnography and field methods;
4. Improvement of students' ability to write analytically and comparatively about the broad themes and theories, as well as specific texts and cases, studied; and
5. Work collaboratively and in multidisciplinary teams on class projects.

Goals: Students will learn how to

- apply for IRB approval
- negotiate field relationships and gain access to field sites
- write fieldnotes and write up field research
- conduct open ended interviews
- critically analyze ethnographic data

Policies, rules, expectations, and resources

1. *Attendance and reading:* I expect you to attend all meetings of the class, barring extraordinary circumstances, and to come prepared to discuss the reading at each and every class meeting.

2. *Handing in Assignments*: Place all papers in my mailbox in the Religion Department, 107 Anderson Hall. DO NOT slip them under the door or leave them on the door of my office, the main department office, or the teaching assistant's office. Please also keep a dated electronic copy of all your papers.

3. *Late or Make-Up Assignments*: You may receive an extension on an assignment only in extraordinary circumstances *and* with prior approval from the instructor. If an extension is not granted, the assignment will be marked down 1/3 grade (e.g., from B to B-) for each day late.

4. *Completion of All Assignments*: You must complete all written and oral assignments and fulfill the requirement for class participation in order to pass the course. I will not average a grade that is missing for any assignment or requirement.

5. *Common Courtesy*: Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. Students who receive or make calls during class will be asked to leave. You may take notes on a laptop computer or other device, although the instructor reserves the right to ask you to turn off the computer. The instructor also reserves the right to ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (e.g., whispering, reading a newspaper) to leave the class. Repeat violations of these rules will result in dismissal from the class.

6. *Honor Code*: On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The university specifically prohibits cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, bribery, conspiracy, and fabrication. For more information about the definition of these terms and other aspects of the Honesty Guidelines, see <http://www.chem.ufl.edu/~itl/honor.html>. Any student demonstrated to have cheated, plagiarized, or otherwise violated the Honor Code in any assignment for this course will fail the course. In addition, violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and the sanctions listed in paragraph XI of the Student Conduct Code.

7. *Accommodation for Disabilities*: Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

8. *Counseling Resources* available on campus for students:
- University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575
 - Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171
 - Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161
 - Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601

9. *Software Use:* All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

10. *Conferences*

Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor during office hours or by appointment.

11. *Grading Scale*

Full information about UF's grading policy, including credit for major, minor, General Education, and other requirements, is available at this website:
<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

The grade scale for this course is as follows:

- A 94-100
- A- 90-93
- B+ 87-89
- B 84-86
- B- 80-83
- C+ 77-79
- C 74-76
- C- 70-73
- D+ 67-69
- D 64-66
- D- 60-63
- F Below 60

Please note that a C- is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, General Education, Gordon Rule, or College Basic distribution credit. To achieve such credit you must achieve a C or better in this class.

Required Books:

Michael Angrosino, *Doing Cultural Anthropology: Projects in Ethnographic Data Collection*, 2ed. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2007.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*

Emerson, Robert M. *Contemporary Field Research: Perspectives and Formulations, Second Edition.*

Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*

Ring, Laura, *Zenana: Everyday Peace in a Karachi Apartment Building*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Research plan

Students will turn in a research plan (October 21). This plan will detail your proposed research question and methods and will build on your existing data. This plan should demonstrate your ability to conduct this research. (25% of grade)

2. Fieldnotes and Research Activities/

There will be multiple research activities over the semester in which you will write up notes and observations relevant to the activity. These research activities must be completed by the assigned date. (25%)

3. Classroom discussion

This class is primarily a discussion-based class. You should come to class prepared to discuss the readings and fieldwork exercises and to participate in fieldnote exchanges. (20%)

4. Final portfolio and presentation

Students will assemble a portfolio consisting of the semester's work. The portfolio will be turned in on December 4, and each student will give a presentation of this portfolio on an assigned date later in the semester.

The portfolio will consist of each of the semester assignments (revised, if necessary); an auto-ethnographic writing sample; a portfolio reflection piece (7 page max), explaining and contextualizing your semester's work. (30%)

Readings and Assignments

August 26

Introduction
Discussion of field sites
Discussion of IRB

Visit this site: <http://irb.ufl.edu/education/trainreq.htm>
Read items 1–4 (Belmont Report, Code of Federal Regulations, IRB Policies, and researcher responsibilities)

August 28

Emerson, "The Development of Ethnographic Field Research"

September 2

Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street* (selected chapters)

- Angrosino, "Becoming a Participant-Observers" and "Exploring Genealogy"
Due: First Observation
- September 4 Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street* (selected chapters)
- September 9 Agrosino, "Conducting a Life History Interview"
 Emerson, *WEF*, "Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research"
Due: Genealogy/Social Networks
- September 11 Emerson, *WEF*, "In the Field"
- September 16 Emerson, *CFR*, "Constructing Participant/Observation Relations"
 Angrosino, "Analyzing Narrative Data"
Due: Life History
- September 18 Linda Hess, *Ramlila: The Audience Experience*
- September 23 Emerson, *CFR*, "Issues in Participant Observation"
Due: Analyzing Narrative Data
- September 25 Pintchman, Tracy, "Reflections on Power and the Post-colonial Context: Tales from the Field", *Method and Theory in the Study of Religious Studies* 21 (2009) 66-72
- September 30 Emerson, *WEF*, "Writing Up Fieldnotes, Part I"
 Angrosino, "Carrying out a Structured Observation"
- October 2 Emerson, *CFR*, "How the Problem of Crafting Selves Emerged"
- October 7 Irwin, "Into the Dark Heart of Ethnography"
 Emerson, *WEF*, "Writing Up Fieldnotes, Part II"
Due: Structured Observation Notes
- October 9 K. Narayanan, "Ethnography and Fiction: Where is the Border?"
- October 14 Angrosino, "Designing a Questionnaire"
 Emerson, *WFR*, "Pursuing Member's Meanings"
- October 16 Emerson, *CFR*, "On the Evolution of Sidewalk"
- October 21 Emerson, *WEF*, "Processing Fieldnotes"
 "Designing a Questionnaire" discussion
Due: Research plan

October 23	Emerson, <i>CFR</i> "Ethnography and the Representation of Reality" In class: Fieldnote exchange – coding exercise
October 28	Ring, <i>Zenana</i> Due: Questionnaire
October 30	Ring, <i>Zenana</i>
November 4	Emerson, <i>WEF</i> , "Writing an Ethnography" Fieldwork and Emerging Technologies
November 6	Angrostino, "Developing an Electronic Ethnography" Angrostino, "Constructing a Virtual Ethnography"
November 11	Veteran's Day -- No Class
November 13	Emerson, <i>CFR</i> , "Grounded Theory" Due: Angrostino, Virtual/Electronic Ethnography Outline
November 18	Angrostino, "Composing Auto-ethnographic Stories"
November 20	AAR/Exercise
November 25	AAR/Independent work
November 27	Happy Thanksgiving!!!
December 2	Portfolio discussions
December 4	Portfolio Presentations
December 9	Portfolio Presentations