

Religion and Fieldwork/Fall 2016
Religious Studies 4936 Section 03E1/5195 Section 08B6

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T 4 (10:40-11:30) /R4-5 (10:40-12:35) (AND 0013)
Office hours: T11:30-1:30; R 9:30-10:30

Course Description

Many scholars in religious studies conduct fieldwork and ethnographic research to explore religious traditions and cultures. Fieldwork in Religious Studies includes ethnographic methods such as participant-observation, conducting surveys, gathering ephemera, and visiting archives. 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. Students will also learn about different modes of presenting research, written and digital.

This fall, students in this class will contribute to the “River of Dreams: The St Johns River and its Springs” exhibit to be held at the Matheson History Museum. This exhibit is an historical and ethnographic study of the St Johns River and its riverine cultures. This project offers opportunities to learn and practice skills in ethnographic fieldwork; digital humanities; public humanities; and exhibit design. In particular, students will learn how to map their projects and how to design an exhibit on Omeka. We will dedicate sufficient class time to adapting methods and skills to students’ own research areas.

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;
5. Work collaboratively and in multidisciplinary teams on class projects; and
6. Introduction to the Digital and Public Humanities.

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
- create narrative maps of fieldwork sites
- Develop an exhibit on Omeka

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:
 - a. University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575

- b. Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171
- c. Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161
- d. 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*

Course Requirements

1. Research plan (20%)

Students will turn in a research plan (October 21). This plan will detail your proposed research question and methods for either a grant or a thesis/dissertation. This plan should demonstrate your ability to conduct this research.

2. Fieldnotes and Research Activities (25%)

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. Most of the assigned fieldwork activities will focus on the St Johns River project, described below.

3. Exhibit Design (25%)

Students will conduct fieldwork, collect materials, and design an exhibit on the Omeka site created for this class. ““River of Dreams: The St Johns River and its Springs”, an historical and ethnographic study of the St Johns River, will be held at the Matheson History Museum in spring 2017. This project will serve as a practicum to develop specific skills, including ethnographic skills, exhibit design, and digital humanities. Teams of students will focus on a specific area on the St. Johns or nearby springs, learning about this area’s past, present, and possible future. Students will explore why people come to protect their “places” and learn how concerns such as sea level rise will shape ways of life.

In teams , students will conduct ethnographic and historical research, in consultation with UF libraries and the Matheson Museum. You will contribute digital materials, including photographs, interviews, and historical materials to Omeka site, and each team will create an exhibit on this site. This exhibit will be part of your semester portfolio and will also be a public “document” that showcases your work. In this process, students will learn about career opportunities in the public humanities, e.g., museum curator, and will create a digital portfolio that showcases their work. Groups will present their projects at the end of the semester. Please see assignment on Canvas for more details.

4. Class Participation and Weekly Blog (15%)

Students are expected to **read all** the assigned material carefully **before** coming to class and to participate actively in group discussions. Students will contribute to a team blog documenting their findings for the team project. Each student will contribute one entry per week. Entries are due by 11 pm, Wednesday night. The first blog entry is due on Wednesday, September 7, and entries continue until Wednesday, November 30, excluding the week of Thanksgiving. Blog entries should contain 1. materials related to the group project, including 1. photographs, considerations of exhibiting materials, references to historical materials, or a synopsis of what

you have discovered; and 2. queries or comments on the relationship between fieldwork exercises and assigned readings.

5. Final portfolio and presentation (15%)

Students will assemble a portfolio consisting of the semester's work. Portfolios are due on November 30 and will be presented on November 30 and December 2. This portfolio will contain work done in teams as well as individual work. 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.

Readings and Assignments

August 23 Introduction

Discussion of field sites and research teams
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 25

Emerson, "The Development of Ethnographic Field Research"
Continued discussion of IRB
Angrosino, "Becoming a Participant-Observer" and
"Exploring Genealogy"
Visit to Matheson History Museum

August 30

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

September 1

Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street* (selected chapters)
Omeka Workshop with Suzan Altieri/UF Library
Due: First Observation

September 6

Emerson, *WEF*, "In the Field" and
"Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research"
Watch "Imagining Sanskrit Land"

September 8

Wrisley, "Spatial Humanities"
Rossetto, "Theorizing Maps with Literature"
Visit to Map and Imagery Library

September 13

Site Visit and Mapping Exercise
Giesecking, "The People, Place, and Space Reader", Chapter 1
(<http://peopleplacespace.org/toc/section-1/>)

September 15

Linda Hess, *Ramlila: The Audience Experience*
Emerson, *CFR*, "Issues in Participant Observation"

Due: Genealogy/Social Networks and Initial Omeka Uploads

- September 20 Agrosino, "Conducting a Life History Interview"
Emerson, *CFR*, "Constructing Participant/Observation Relations"
- September 22 Emerson, *WEF*, "Writing Up Fieldnotes, Part I"
Due: Mapping Assignment/Map Exchange
- September 27 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
Due: Life History
- September 29 Emerson, *CFR*, "How the Problem of Crafting Selves Emerged"
Angrosino, "Analyzing Narrative Data"
- October 4 Angrostino, "Designing a Questionnaire"
Emerson, *WFR*, "Pursuing Member's Meanings"
Due: Analyzing Narrative Data
- October 6 Working with Archival Materials
Visit to MKR Archives/Flo Turcotte
Turcotte, "For This is an Enchanted Land"
- October 11 Emerson, *CFR*, "On the Evolution of Sidewalk"
- October 13 Public Humanities, Information, and Exhibits
Reading TBA/**Visit with Rebecca Fitzsimmons**
Due: Museum Visit
- October 18 Emerson, *WEF*, "Processing Fieldnotes"
"Designing a Questionnaire" discussion
Due: Research plan
- October 20 Irwin, "Into the Dark Heart of Ethnography"
Emerson, *WEF*, "Writing Up Fieldnotes, Part II"
All materials should be uploaded to Omeka site.
- October 25 Angrostino, "Constructing a Virtual Ethnography"
Angrostino, "Developing an Electronic Ethnography"
Due: Questionnaire
- October 27** K. Narayanan, "Ethnography and Fiction: Where is the Border?"
Angrostino, "Carrying out a Structured Observation"
- November 1 **Fieldwork Exercise - Surveys and Questionnaires**

November 3 Emerson, *WEF*, “Writing an Ethnography”
Due: Structured Observation Notes

November 8 Emerson, *CFR* “Ethnography and the Representation of Reality”

November 10 Emerson, *CFR*, “Grounded Theory”
Due: Angrostino, Virtual/Electronic

Ethnography

Outline

November 15 Angrostino, “Composing Auto-ethnographic Stories”

November 17 Exhibit Construction

November 22 AAR

November 24 Happy Thanksgiving!!!

November 29 Portfolio Presentations

December 1 Portfolio Presentations

December 9 Conclusions and Moving forward