

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION COMM 368 Spring 2024

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T/R 11:30am -12:45pm
CLC 523 WTC
Student Hours by apt/Zoom

Ethnographic Research Methods in Communication

Prerequisites: COMM 175 or 201 and Junior Status.

Course Description:

This course teaches the principles of participant-observation research as a critical practice to produce a 'thick description' of meanings, values, hierarchies of interests, power structures and ideals of a particular cultural group or community. Students will engage with a multitude of interdisciplinary toolsets that allow for communication with both rigor and empathy.

Students will leave this course having applied qualitative research methods to questions based on everyday social issues, communication, and culture. As an Engaged Learning course, there will be the expectation of in-depth reflection on the topics throughout the semester and the course as a whole throughout the guided learning process.

Course Objectives:

Throughout the semester, students will:

- 1) Build their skills and understanding for what is involved in ethnography as a method of social inquiry, meaning-making, and storytelling.
- 2) Learn best practices for how to conduct ethnographic research and its procedures, deciding on a fieldsite, taking field notes, conducting interviews, examination of data and artifacts, and presenting research results to a public audience.
- 3) Gain a vocabulary for discussing ethics, bias, subjectivity, cultural norms, and notions of power.
- 4) Critically assess their own communication, thinking and writing as means of expression and persuasion.

Course Readings:

Throughout the semester the instructor will guide students through core material that is accessible through our Sakai course system, Loyola Libraries, and the Web.

As a key learning outcome of the course, students will be able to further hone their skills engaging with a wide variety of digital media.

Technologies are permitted in the classroom with the understanding they are to be used in a mutually respectful and ethical manner for full participation in course objectives. We will discuss best practices regarding online discussions social media policies and consent as part of our work this semester.

Course Organization:

This class meets 75 minutes, twice a week.

Assignments and Grading:

1. Standpoints – Self-Introduction (10%)
2. Skills Exercises (3) (15%)
3. Cultural Encounter (10%)
4. Prospectus (Proposal) (10%)
5. Ethnographic Project/Paper (20%)
6. Final Presentation (5%)
7. Online discussion retrospective (15%)
8. Final Exam (15%)

Course Website: <https://sakai.luc.edu/>

Our Sakai space is where we will post information on COMM 368 online. It will also act as a central community space. So, check it at least once a week for course updates and other information. Depending on how you build your own responses to assignments, you may need to seek out more sophisticated technical skills through work in class or by taking advantage of our many workshops and resources through ITS. The instructor will also make recommendations for tools and services that may help you save time and minimize uncertainty in the learning process.

Attendance/Participation/Deadlines/Professionalism:

Together, we are responsible to one another in fulfilling our shared course objectives that include in-depth participation and discussion grounded in the assigned material you will read this semester. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with the professor if you foresee difficulties in scheduling or require consultation on how to best approach your work. There are also synchronous and asynchronous ways to engage with the class. For example, you may earn participation points as you go with online forum posts that follow up on our in-class discussions. At the end of the semester, you may submit your own curation of those posts via the “online discussion retrospective,” with a selection of your “Top 10 posts.” Please see the syllabus for the submission date of this, and other assignments.

Assignments are due on the dates indicated in the syllabus schedule for submission in the Sakai course management system. As a best practice in your courses, use your syllabus to look ahead in your schedule for the semester and make note of any conflicts. Then, you may request an extension if you foresee a need.

Arranging Meetings

Most uncertainties can be clarified with a quick meeting. In addition to our interaction during the course of the semester, office/student hours are an important opportunity to discuss more confidential matters and/or gain one-on-one instructor feedback, real-time. If you wish to arrange group consultations together with class partners or self-organized teams, I welcome that as well. Please send me an email and we’ll set a time that works. Depending on the nature of the inquiry and time sent, responses to emails may take 24 to

48 hours. Always follow through on your appointments, as they are for your benefit. If you cannot make a meeting at the last minute, please let me know ASAP so that I can free up that block of time for another meeting.

Academic Integrity <https://www.luc.edu/soc/academicintegrity/>

The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical support. The School expects that the grades in this course will bear some reasonable relation to established university-wide practices with respect to both levels and distributions of grades. For more specific examples of academic integrity guidelines, please consult the Loyola School of Communication statement on “Academic Integrity” for information and guidelines.

These policies, procedures and guidelines protect your rights, as well as those of the faculty. It is particularly important that you be aware of and avoid plagiarism (intentional or not), submitting the same or similar paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself. Violations of these principles will result in a failing grade in the course, and be reported to the proper university office.

If you have uncertainties about any of these practices, **consulting with the professor is generally the quickest and most efficient way to clarify and resolve most issues.**

Special Accommodations <https://www.luc.edu/sac/>

While the instructor will accommodate student needs in the best way possible given the constraints of the course content and processes, it is the student's responsibility to plan in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates. This includes providing any documents needed for accommodations for matters such as University Athletics or Accessibility (SAC) confidentially to the instructor.

Land Acknowledgment Statement

<https://www.luc.edu/celts/about/landacknowledgmentstatement/>

The Loyola University Chicago community acknowledges its location on the ancestral homelands of the Council of the Three Fires (the Ojibwa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi tribes) and a place of trade with other tribes, including the Ho-Chunk, Miami, Menominee, Sauk, and Meskwaki. We recognize that descendants of these and other North American tribes continue to live and work on this land with us. We recognize the tragic legacy of colonization, genocide, and oppression that still impacts Native American lives today. As a Jesuit university, we affirm our commitment to issues of social responsibility and justice. We further recognize our responsibility to understand, teach, and respect the past and present realities of local Native Americans and their continued connection to this land.