

## **ENCOUNTERING COMMUNITY: ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK AND SERVICE LEARNING**

**Bates College  
Anthropology S10**

**Short Term 2009  
Loring M. Danforth**

### **Goals of the Course**

This course has two primary purposes. The first is to provide students with a structured opportunity to conduct individual, original, and in-depth ethnographic fieldwork on a topic of their choice. In preparation for this research we will read and discuss a variety of material dealing with the methodological aspects of “doing anthropology.” We will begin with some readings that convey the nature of ethnographic fieldwork as a powerful personal experience. Then we will read two short books dealing generally with qualitative research methods in the social sciences and more specifically with ethnographic research. We will focus on designing a research project, setting goals, and writing a proposal. Then we will concentrate on methods of ethnographic fieldwork – participant observation, ethnographic interviewing, constructing genealogies, analyzing texts, and conducting library research. This training is intended to prepare you for doing your own fieldwork when you are abroad during your junior year so that you will be in a strong position to write a thesis on the research you conducted there. Next we will read several articles on interpretive anthropology, which will provide a basic theoretical perspective from which to conduct our ethnographic analysis. Finally, we will consider some of the important political and ethical implications involved in doing ethnographic research. Students will write a paper in which they present their analysis of their ethnographic fieldwork. They will also turn in the field notes that they kept during their research.

The second goal of the course is to learn more about Lewiston and contribute something to the community through community service. This year we will carry out a group service learning project at the Lewiston Adult Learning Center at the Multi-Purpose Center on Birch Street in Lewiston. We will be doing individual tutoring with Somali immigrants. In preparation for this, we will have two basic information and training sessions in teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). We will also be involved in a more specific project in which adult Somalis prepare short stories in English about one of their middle school children and at the end of short term tell the story to their child’s class. In addition, we will do background reading on the history of Lewiston and the Somali immigration to Maine. Students will write a personal essay in which they present their reflections on their tutoring experiences and relate them to the class readings on Somali immigrants.

I would like to thank Heather Lindkvist for the valuable help she offered me in planning this Short Term Unit.

### **Required Books**

Rabinow, Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco  
Maxwell, Qualitative Research Design  
Angrosino, Doing Cultural Anthropology  
Coursepack

## **Topics and Readings**

### **1. Organization of the Course**

April 27 Introduction to the Course.

### **2. Ethnographic Fieldwork in Greece**

April 28 Friedl, "Fieldwork in a Greek Village," in Golde, Women in the Field, pp. 195-217.

Danforth, Firewalking and Religious Healing, pp. xii – 40.  
Slides of fieldwork in Greece.

### **3. Ethnographic Fieldwork as Personal Experience**

April 29 Rabinow, Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco.

### **4. Immigration to Lewiston: French Canadian and Somali**

April 30 Leamon, Historic Lewiston.

Finnegan, "New in Town," New Yorker, December 11, 2006, pp. 46-58.

Jones, "The New Yankees," Mother Jones, March/April 2004, pp. 64-69.

Go through the Somali Bantu Experience website:

<http://www.colby.edu/somalibantu>

Video: Rain in a Dry Land, on Somali immigration to the United States.

### **5. Doing Ethnographic Fieldwork: Methods and Practice**

May 1 Presentation by visiting anthropologist John Commaroff.

May 4 Maxwell, Qualitative Research Design, Chapters 1-3.

• 9:00am: Meeting with Ann Kemper at the Adult Learning Center.

May 5 Maxwell, Chapters 4-7.

May 6 Angrosino, Doing Cultural Anthropology, Chapters 1-5.

May 7 Angrosino, Chapters 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 15.

### **6. Interpretive Anthropology**

May 8 Geertz, "Thick Description" and "Deep Play." In Interpretation of Cultures, pp. 3-30 and 412-53.

### **7. Ethical Issues in Anthropology**

May 11 Kiste, "The People of Enewetak Atoll versus the U.S. Department of Defense." In Rynkiewich and Spradley, Ethics and Anthropology, pp. 61-81.

American Anthropological Association Statement on Ethics

<http://dev.aaanet.org/stmts/ethstmt.htm>

AAA Code of Ethics

<http://dev.aaanet.org/issues/policy-advocacy/Code-of-Ethics.cfm>

Ethical Dilemmas: Cases and Solutions

<http://dev.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ch3.htm>

## 8. Applied Anthropology

May 12 Video: Anthropologists at Work.

“What is Anthropology?”

<http://www.aaanet.org/about/>

“Careers in Anthropology”

<http://www.aaanet.org/profdev/careers/cfm>

## 9. Ethnographic Fieldwork with the Somali Community of Lewiston

May 13 Lindkvist, “The Reach and Limits of Cultural Accommodation: Public Schools and Somali Muslim Immigrants in Maine.”

## 10. From Interview Transcript to Completed Analysis

May 14 Danforth, unedited and edited interviews with Mary Rossos.

Danforth, “We Crossed A lot of Borders: Refugee Children of the Greek Civil War,” Diaspora 12 (2): 2003, 169-209.

## Course Requirements and Due Dates

By Friday, May 1, students should have met with me individually to discuss their own fieldwork projects. On Monday, May 4, a written prospectus for the research paper is due. After May 15, we will meet regularly to discuss methodological, ethical, and theoretical aspects of your fieldwork projects. During this time students will also give oral progress reports on their research. During the last week of Short Term students will give final oral presentations based on their research papers, which are due on May 29, at 1:00pm. Students’ fieldnotes and essays on their tutoring experiences will be turned in then also. Late papers will be graded down unless an extension has been granted.

The prospectus for the research paper should be about three pages long. It should include a specific statement of the topic to be investigated, as well as a discussion of the nature of fieldwork that will be involved (where you will spend your time, whom you will talk with, the kinds of questions you will ask, etc.). It should also include some of the major problems you plan to investigate and a statement of the theoretical approach you plan to adopt. Finally, it should include a bibliography of the sources (both ethnographic and theoretical) that you will make use of in your analysis.

Your research paper should be about ten pages long. You may present your ethnographic data in as vivid and personal a manner as you wish, but the paper should not simply be a diary or a narrative of your fieldwork experience. To insure you do not remain at a purely descriptive level, but go on to do analysis and interpretation as well, make certain that you use a theoretical approach to derive insights into your ethnographic material that you could not have arrived at without the benefit of theory.

A possible format for the paper would be:

- I. Introduction (1 page)
- II. Ethnographic description (2 pages)
- III. Theoretical approach (2 pages)
- IV. ANALYSIS (4 pages)
- V. Conclusion (1 page)

You are encouraged to be more creative in developing your own format. However, please make sure that your paper does contain the above components in roughly the suggested proportions.

The final course requirement is a personal essay (approximately three pages in length) dealing with your tutoring experiences. In this essay you should describe your interactions and your relationship with the person you have been tutoring. You should also present any insights you have gained into the challenges facing Somali immigrants to the United States. It is important to relate your personal experiences to the readings we did and the video we saw earlier in the Short Term.

### **Grading**

Class Participation	25%
Research paper	50%
Personal essay	25%

### **PLEASE NOTE:**

1. All students are responsible for having read and understood the Bates College Statement on Plagiarism and Guide to Source Acknowledgements. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or what is involved in proper citation of sources, please see me.
2. Please bring your copy of the assigned readings to class. Readings should be completed before class on the date indicated.
3. Your fellow students and I would appreciate it if you arrive in class on time, refrain from getting up and leaving the room during class, and turn off your cell phone. Thank you.