

# ENCOUNTERING COMMUNITY: ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK AND SERVICE LEARNING

Bates College  
Anthropology S10

Short Term 2015  
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 explore various 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 later in the short term and later in your career, when you are abroad during your junior years so that you will be in a strong position to write a thesis on the research you conducted there, if you choose to. 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 immigrants from Somalia and other countries in Africa. In preparation for this, we will receive some basic information and training in teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). In addition, we will do background reading on the history of Lewiston and on the recent 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.

In addition, this year we will also devote some time to the Bates Purposeful Work Infusion Project. This program is designed to help students explore relationships between their academic interests and their career interests. We will see a film and have a guest speaker that will help us consider the links between the world of work and the world of academia.

## Required Books

Rabinow, Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco  
Applegate, Home of the Brave  
Other class readings are available on Lyceum

Most classes will meet from 1:00 to 4:00pm, but you will need to keep your schedule open to accommodate your independent research and your tutoring.

## **Topics and Readings**

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

April 27 No class.

April 28 Introduction to the course.  
Rabinow, Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco.

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

April 29 Friedl, "Fieldwork in a Greek Village," in Golde, Women in the Field, pp. 195-217.  
Danforth, Firewalking and Religious Healing, pp. 3-40.  
Danforth, Death Rituals on Rural Greece, pp. 3-23.

### **3. 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://wiki.colby.edu/display/AY298B/Home;jsessionid=AC05AC9C40AE6C2EBF10F7AFB57F9319>  
Video: Rain in a Dry Land  
There is My Home: Somali Bantu Farmers in Maine  
A Visit to the Pharmacy

May 1 Home of the Brave.  
Lindkvist, "The Reach and Limits of Cultural Accommodation: Public Schools and Somali Muslim Immigrants in Maine."  
Besteman, "Somali Bantus in a State of Refuge."

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

May 4 McPhee, "Elicitation." In class fieldwork exercises and interviews.

May 5 In class fieldwork exercises and interviews.

### **5. Interpretive Anthropology**

May 6 Geertz, "Thick Description" and "Deep Play." In Interpretation of Cultures, pp. 3-30 and 412-53.

### **6. Ethical Issues in Anthropology**

May 7 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>

Bates College IRB form

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>

## 7. Purposeful Work Infusion Project

May 8 Video: Anthropologists at Work.

“What is Anthropology?”

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

“Careers in Anthropology”

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

Cultural Survival

Reflection Paper

## 8. From Interview Transcript to Completed Analysis

May 11 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 11, 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 ten to fifteen 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 to five pages in length) dealing with your tutoring experiences or your research project. In this essay you should describe your interactions and your relationship with the people you have been working with. You should also present any insights you have gained into the challenges facing African 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.

You will also write a short ungraded essay reflecting on how you might envision creating a career for yourself that is informed and inspired by your interest in anthropology.

### **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.