

**SOSC 4604.30**

**Winter 2020**

**Aspects of Development Research: The Field Experience**

**Tuesdays 11:30-2:30 PM      Room: VH 2016**

**Course Director:** Professor Judy Hellman, Politics and Social Science

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**Course Description:**

By 4th year, International Development Students will have been exposed to a large body of literature much of which examines badly conceived development projects, well-conceived projects with unfortunate unexpected outcomes and, occasionally, projects that could be said to have worked very well, at least for the period of time under study.

This course explores the ways that ethnographic fieldwork can help us to formulate development goals and projects that are likely to have positive outcomes for the people whose lives will be impacted by the proposed changes. To do this, we will examine both new and long utilized qualitative methods and approaches to the study of the people who become the subjects of ethnographic research but also – sometimes only a generation later – the protagonists in development projects.

Thus, we will look at the issues and challenges of qualitative research in the field. Using the approach of sociology of knowledge, we consider what have been regarded over time as ethical and efficacious practices in fieldwork, along with some of the most serious fieldwork mishaps, if not to say disasters, beginning in the 1960s with the crisis for researchers generated by the CIA sponsorship of “Project Camelot” in Latin America, and with the use of ethnographic work that had been carried out in Indochina in decades past that was employed by the U.S. military in the 1960s and 1970s to advance the pursuit of the war in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

From this period, we move forward to trace the evolution of scholars’ and practitioners’ thinking about the techniques and the ethics of inserting oneself into other people's lives and the terms under which we enter “strange foreign lands” --- including "foreign" places that are right next door within the society in which we are based, that is, the one we call “home.”

In this effort, we will also trace the evolution of thinking about fieldwork and how fieldwork can contribute to the formulation of better, more realistic, more effective development projects. To do this we will examine the writings of the most candid practitioners who have engaged in critical reflection about basic “epistemological” questions: that is, *how* we know *what* we know about the people whose lives we hope our projects will improve, and what is the role that well-conceived research projects can play in this effort. The course concludes with a consideration of the most recent debates around “action research,” volunteer work, “positionality” and ethnography not only as “curiosity based research,” but as research for development.

**Evaluation:** The final grade for the course will be based on:

10% **Attendance**

20% Well-informed **participation** in discussion

20% **Mid-term (in class) exam** which will be based on the required readings and held on March 3<sup>rd</sup>

25% **Final exam**

25% **Fieldwork Essay** (of which 5% will be allotted to the oral presentation in class)

Your Fieldwork Essay will consist of your report on either an interview or series of interviews you have carried out with a “research subject” or, alternatively, your report on your observation, or participant-observation of the meetings of an organization that is involved in fostering change of some kind. This exercise is intended to hone your skills in observation and/or your ability to come away from an interview with useful, meaningful material. In the course of carrying out this fieldwork, you will have the opportunity to ask and answer all the most important ethical questions that we will be studying in the course of the term.

SOSC 4604 consists of one three-hour session each week in which the assigned readings will be discussed. All students are expected to *complete* the required readings, think carefully about them before coming to class, and take an active part in the discussion. Except for the brief report that you will give on your fieldwork experience, generally no oral reports will be assigned. Instead, all seminar members will be expected to come prepared to introduce, summarize, and analyze *any* of the required readings upon request of the instructor.

Given the centrality of seminar participation, *anyone absent from seminar more than once will lose participation points except in the case of a fully documented medical problem or emergency.* Those who regularly come late to class will lose participation credit in proportion to their tardiness.

The policies regarding missed examinations will be as stated on Professor Canel’s website at the following link: <http://www.yorku.ca/ecanel/policies/misexam.htm>.

**Syllabus:**

All the readings listed below are required for the week in which they appear, except when a reading is explicitly noted as "recommended," or appears between square brackets [ ].

**Week 1: January 7<sup>th</sup> Introduction to the course: The perennial challenges of fieldwork**

**Film:** Maurice Godelier, "To Find the Baruya," film #3681-3682,

**Week 2: January 14<sup>th</sup> Finding a role and overcoming distrust**

Myron Glazer, *The Research Adventure: Promise and Problems of Fieldwork*, (New York: Random House, 1972), Introduction and chapter 1 and 2

**Week 3: January 21<sup>st</sup> Reciprocity and other ethical issues**

Glazer, *op. cit.*, Chapter 3-A

Laura Bohannon, "Shakespeare in the Bush," in James P. Spradley and David W. McCurdy, *Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology*, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990, pp.78-88.

David Rohde, "Army Enlists Anthropology in War Zones," *The New York Times*, October 5, 2007. [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/05/world/asia/05afghan.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/05/world/asia/05afghan.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

**Film:** "Papua New Guinea: Anthropology on Trial"

**Week 4 January 28<sup>th</sup> Race, Gender, Age and other characteristics of the researcher**

David J. Banks, "From Structure to History in Malaya," in Lawless et al, *Fieldwork: The Human Experience*, (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1983), pp. 35-48;

Niara Sudarkasa, "In a World of Women: Field Work in a Yoruba Community," in Peggy Golde, ed., *Women in the Field: Anthropological Experiences*, second edition, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

If you are interested in reading more from this collection, The Introduction and first three chapters of Peggy Golde, *Women in the Field* can be found on line at:

<http://books.google.ca/books?id=n7G22sTOxHQC&pg=PA2&lpg=PA1&ots=GmYxalbQiV&dq=peggy+golde+women+in+the+field>

**Week 5 February 4<sup>th</sup> Contemporary challenges in fieldwork: Inside and outside the law**

Judith Adler Hellman, "Ask an 'open' question and you'll get a surprising answer: Counter-intuitive findings on Mexican migration to the United States." in Jeffrey H. Cohen and Ibrahim Sirkeci, eds. *The Handbook of Culture and Migration*. (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, forthcoming, 2020).

Judith Adler Hellman, *The World of Mexican Migrants: The Rock and the Hard Place*, (New York: The New Press, 2008), Prologue, pp. xiii-xxiv; Chapters 1,2,3,and 4 pp. 17-56; Chapters 6-9. pp. 65-91;

[**Please note:** This book is available through the library as an **e-book**]

[ Recommended: "Pedro P." in Judith Adler Hellman, *Mexican Lives*, (New York: The New Press, 1994), pp. 171-184.]  
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**Week 6 February 11<sup>th</sup> Contemporary challenges in fieldwork: Inside and outside the law (continued)**

Hellman, *The World of Mexican Migrants*, Chapter 14, 15 and 16 (pp. 119-166); Chapter 17, pp. 169-175 and chapter 19 (pp.191-209). [Recommended: "A Note on Methodology," pp. 232-241]

**READING WEEK: February 17<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup>**

**Week 7 February 25<sup>th</sup> Contemporary Challenges: From social movements to gangs**

Dennis Rodgers, "Joining the Gang and Becoming a *Broder*: The Violence of Ethnography in

Contemporary Nicaragua.” *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol. 26, No.4. 2007, pp. 444-61.

Dennis Rodgers, “Living in the Shadow of Death: Gangs, Violence and Social Order in Urban Nicaragua, 1996–2002,” *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 38, 2006, 267–292.

Jon Lee Anderson, “Slumlord: What has Hugo Chavez Wrought in Venezuela?” *The New Yorker*, January 28, 2013, pp. 40-51.

<http://www.upworthy.com/wow-the-crazy-story-of-how-a-skyscraper-became-a-45-story-slum?c=ufbl>

This is the link for the Torre de David video. “Vocative video” seems to be the film maker <vocativ.com>

### **Week 8: March 3<sup>rd</sup> Deeper into danger zones: Reliable sources?**

Robert Gay, “Dangerous Liaisons: Reflections on a Serial Ethnography, in Miriam Boeri and Rashi K. Shukla, eds. *Inside Ethnography: Researchers Reflect on the Challenges of Reaching Hidden Populations*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2019), pp. 2015-218.

Robert Gay, *Lucia: Testimonies of a Brazilian Drug Dealer’s Woman*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), pp. 1-136. [Available as an e-book]

### **Midterm Exam: In Class 1.5 Hours**

### **Week 9 March 10<sup>th</sup> Studies of NGO programs, aid policy and practice**

David Mosse, *Cultivating Development: An Ethnography of Aid Policy and Practice*, (London: Pluto Press, 2005). Preface plus Chapters 2-3. [Please note: Chapter 1 is recommended but not required.] [Available as an e-book]

**Week 10    March 17<sup>th</sup>    Studies of NGO programs, aid policy and practice (continued)**

D. Mosse, *op. cit.*. Chapter 4 and 5

Monica deHart, “Fried Chicken or *Pop*? Redefining Development and Ethnicity in Totonacapan,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, Vol. 28 Issue 1, January 2009, pp. 63-82.

**Week 11    March 24<sup>th</sup>    The International Volunteer: The personal and the professional in international development**

Rebecca Nelson Jacobs, “‘Valorando la Cultura Maya’: Volunteer Tourism and Globalized Cultural Production in a Guatemalan Weaving Cooperative,” Paper presented to the Third International Graduate Student Research Conference, CERLAC, York University, Toronto, 15-16 March 2013.

Katharina Mangold, “‘Struggling to Do the Right Thing’: Challenges during international volunteering,” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 33, Issue 8, 2012, pp. 1493-1508.

[Recommended only: Eric Anton Heuser, “Befriending the Field: Culture and friendships in development worlds,” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 33, Issue 8, 2012, pp.1423-1437.; and Anne-Meike Fechter, “The Personal and the Professional: Aid workers' relationships and values in the development process,” Special Issue: The Personal and the Professional in Aid Work, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 33, Issue 8, 2012, pp. 1387-1404].

**Week 12    March 31<sup>st</sup>    Final Class: Presentations of the Fieldwork Essays**

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