

SOSC 4604.30

Fall 2013

Aspects of Development Research: The Field Experience

Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:30-4 PM Room: FC 117

Course Director: Professor Judy Hellman, Political Science and Social Science

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Office hours: (Fall term) Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:30-11:20 AM (drop in) or at other times by appointment.

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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 70s 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: *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 **Oct. 29th**

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.

The course consists of two 1.5 hour sessions 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.html>

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: September 10th Introduction to the course

September 12th The perennial challenges of fieldwork

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

Week 2 September 17th and 19th Finding a role and overcoming distrust

M. Glazer, *op. cit.*, chapters 2 and 3

Film: Maurice Godelier, "To Find the Baruya," film #3681-3682, Sept. 19th

Week 3 September 24th and 26th Reciprocity and other ethical issues

Glazer, *op. cit.*, Chapter 4

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

Film: "Papua New Guinea: Anthropology on Trial"

Week 4 October 1st and 3rd 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 October 8th and 10th Contemporary challenges in fieldwork: Inside and outside the law

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 2-3; Chapters 6-9; Chapter 14 (only pp. 119-126); Chapter 16-17; “A Note on Methodology,” pp. 232-241.

[Recommended: Judith Adler Hellman, *Mexican Lives*, (New York: The New Press, 1994), pp. 171-184, “Pedro P.”]

Week 6 October 15th and 17th 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.

Week 7 October 22nd and 24th Deeper into danger zones: Reliable sources?

Robert Gay, *Lucia: Testimonies of a Brazilian Drug Dealer’s Woman*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), pp. 1-87.

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

Week 8 October 29th and 31st

In class exam, October 29th

No class on the 31st because of Co-curricular Days

Week 9 November 5th and 7th Studies of NGO programs, aid policy and practice

David Mosse, *Cultivating Development: An Ethnography of Aid Policy and Practice*, (London: Pluto Press, 2005. (selected chapters)

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 10 November 12th and 14th The “split personality”: the personal and the professional in international development

D. Mosse, *op. cit.*. (selected chapters).

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.

Eric Anton Heuser, “Befriending the Field: Culture and friendships in development worlds,” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 33, Issue 8, 2012, pp.1423-1437.

Week 11 November 19th and 21st The international volunteer

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.

Week 12 November 26th and 28th Presentation of Fieldwork Essays

Week 13 December 3rd and 5th More Presentations, Summary and Review

After this outline was composed and posted to the web, the university belatedly noticed that it had scheduled “too many” Tuesday sessions in Fall Term and declared December 3rd to be a “study day.” Thus, we will meet on December 3rd, but attendance will be optional.