

Department of Sociology
University of Calgary

SOCI 715.06
Observation-Based Research
Fall 2017

Instructor: Dr. Liza McCoy

Office: SS 934

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Office hours: Wednesdays 1:00-3:00 pm; and by appointment

Course hours: Mondays, 12:00 - 2:40 pm, October 30 - December 4.

Course Description:

This practically-oriented course focuses on observation-based ethnographic research in naturally-occurring settings. The emphasis will be on observation that generates data in the form of field notes, although we will also consider the use of audio/video-recorded data and photographs, as well as the combination of observation and interviews. One focus of the course will be on practical techniques of observation and writing field notes; the other focus is on working analytically and writing with field note data.

Readings:

Paul Atkinson. *Thinking Ethnographically*. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2017).

Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

A collection of articles and book chapters available in D2L.

The schedule of classes and readings will be given in class.

Course Project:

This is a combination group/individual project designed to provide students with a small-scale opportunity for hands-on practice of the full research trajectory from observation in the field through to ethnographic writing.

Members of the class will organize themselves into two research teams. Each team will select an accessible public or semi-public setting (or category of setting) and identify some potential lines of analytic interest related to activities in the setting. Each member of the team will then carry out 3-4 sessions of observation in the setting. Team members may conduct their observations at the same time or at different times (and locations), according to their schedules, preferences and the team's research plan. Field notes are to be written after each session of observation and circulated within the team. Each student will submit her or his full set of field notes for assessment on or before December 4.

By the end of the research period, each team member will have a full set of all team members' field notes. The team will meet for preliminary analytic discussion of the data. At this point, the team project becomes an individual project. Each person, using the full set of field notes generated by their team, will write a 12-18 page (approx.) paper, analysing and discussing the data, in a preliminary way, reflecting her or his own particular interests in the material. This paper is due on December 19.

Seminar Participation:

A seminar is a collaborative undertaking that depends for its success on the contributions of its members. A good seminar is one that generates intellectually stimulating discussion in an atmosphere of mutual respect and goodwill. Each student will be expected to take responsibility to start the discussion on one of the readings over the six weeks of the course. As well, students will also be expected to report periodically on their field and field-note-writing experiences, and on the last day of class students will briefly present on the analytic work they are doing with their team's field note data.

Assessment:

Field notes, due by December 4	30%
Final paper, due December 19	70%

Final grade. The final grade for the course will represent the combined, weighted grades from the two assignments. Your final letter grade will be determined according to the following schedule:

Percentage Grade	Letter Grade
95-100	A+
90-94	A
85-89	A-
80-84	B+
75-79	B
70-74	B-
69 or less	F

Official Information

Handing in Papers, Assignments

1. The main Sociology Department office does not deal with any course-related matters. Please speak directly to your instructor.
2. **Protection of Privacy:** The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPP) legislation does not allow students to retrieve any course material from public places. Anything that requires handing back will be returned directly during class or office hours. If students are unable to pick up their assignments from the instructor, they provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.
3. Final grades are not posted by the Sociology Department. They are only available online.

Ethics Research

Students are advised that any research with human subjects – including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation – must have the approval of the Faculty Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

Academic Misconduct

Please refer to the website listed below for information on University of Calgary policies on Plagiarism/Cheating/Other Academic Misconduct:
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-5.html>

Deferrals

When possible, please provide advance notice if you are unable to write an exam or complete/turn-in assignments on time. All requests for deferral of a course component due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the health issue rather than after recovery. Deferrals will be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. Travel arrangements, misreading the syllabus, and scheduling conflicts with other classes or employment are not valid reasons for requesting a deferral. Deferrals will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

If you have missed a test for a legitimate reason, the instructor can require you to write a “make up” test as close in time to the original test as possible or can choose to transfer the percentage weight to another course component. If the instructor schedules a “make up” test for you, its date and location will be at the convenience of the Department of Sociology.

Deferred Final Exam Form: Please note that requests to defer a Registrar scheduled final exam are dealt with through the Registrar’s Office. Further information about deadlines, and where paperwork should be taken, is available on the form, which can be found at:
<https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/student-forms>

Deferred Term Work Form: Deferral of term work past the end of a term also requires a form to be filled out. It's available at

https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/files/registrar/deferred_termwork15_0.pdf

Once an extension date has been agreed between instructor and student, the form should be taken to the Faculty of Arts Program Information Centre (SS 110) for approval by an Associate Dean (Students).

Emergency Evacuations

In the case of fire or other emergency evacuation of this classroom, please proceed to the assembly point at the Professional Faculties Food Court. Please check these assembly point locations for all of your classes at: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>

Safewalk

The University of Calgary provides a "safe walk" service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the "Help" phones located around Campus.

Academic Accommodation

The student accommodation policy can be found at: ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy.

Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with

Disabilities: ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.

Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.