

Culture and Identity: Urban Ethnography in St. Louis
L98 AMCS 330D / L48 ANTHRO 331
American Culture Studies (Cross listed with Anthropology)
Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:30 – 4:00 PM
Office Hours: Mondays, 4:00 – 5:00PM (AMCS Wing of McMillan)
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COURSE OVERVIEW

How do we productively begin to observe and document the urban life around us? What possibilities arise from studying the city through ethnographic field methods? What are the political stakes of doing the crucial work of observation and documentation? These are the questions of urban ethnography, the deep study of urban life, environment, and culture. In this course, we begin with observation, learning tools to observe and document urban life. Readings cover ethnographic methods and also include classic and contemporary urban ethnographies that consider the city in conversation with issues of race, inequality, and identity such as poverty, segregation, processes of displacement, gentrification, neoliberalism, and cultural and expressive practices. The course also includes several fieldtrips to observe sites of culture in St. Louis such as Euclid Ave., Cherokee Street, the Missouri History Museum, and the MetroLink as well as the DUC and sites on campus. Throughout the course, students will practice ethnographic methods (including observation, writing field notes, conducting interviews, and documenting sights and sounds) to produce an ethnographic research project about a site of culture in St. Louis. The course fulfills the Fieldwork Requirement for American Culture Studies Majors.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- **Emerson, Robert M., Rachel L. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes: Second Edition*. University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- **Hansman, Bob. *Pruitt-Igoe*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2017.
- **Madison, D. Soyini. *Critical ethnography: method, ethics, and performance: Second Edition*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2012.
- **Ocejo, Richard E., ed. *Ethnography and the City: Readings on Doing Urban Fieldwork*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

All other texts available on Blackboard.

COURSE GOALS

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- **define course concepts including urban, ethnography, race, redlining, restrictive covenants, eminent domain, segregation, neoliberalism, gentrification, and displacement; and explain relationships among those concepts
- **develop and practice ethnographic skills of observation, writing field notes, conducting interviews, and documenting sights and sounds
- **identify methods within ethnographic texts
- **design and produce an ethnographic research project that produces new knowledge about a site of culture in St. Louis

ASSIGNMENTS

Short Assignments (15%). You will complete 15 short assignments (SA) across the semester, assessing your understanding of the material or practicing an ethnographic method. Outside of the SAs—many of which are discussion posts—you are always welcome to post thoughts and questions on the respective weekly discussion board on Blackboard.

Fieldnotes (35%) – You will turn in fieldnotes six times:

- *Fieldnotes Entry I: on 1/21 after observing a site of culture for at least 30 minutes (**2%**);
 - *Fieldnotes Entry II: on 2/9 after observing and documenting a ride on the MetroLink (**3%**);
 - *Fieldnotes Entry III: on 2/19, following practice in class and advice from *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, after taking jottings about the fieldtrip to Euclid Ave. and turning these jottings into fieldnotes of at least 1000 words in length (**10%**);
 - *Fieldnotes Entry IV: on 4/1, after observing a site of culture for your research project, and writing fieldnotes of at least 500 words in length (**5%**);
 - *Fieldnotes Entry V: on 4/15, after again observing a site of culture for your research project and writing fieldnotes of at least 1000 words in length (**10%**); and
 - *Final Fieldnotes Journal: on 4/30 with revised fieldnote entries I-V, and other ephemera (**5%**).
- Rubrics made available on Blackboard will outline details for these fieldnote entries.

Discussion of Urban Ethnographies (10%) -- During week eight, you will deliver a 5-minute in-class presentation about urban ethnography. Choose a text from Ocejo's *Ethnography and the City*, 87-193, 216-238. These include: Mitchell Duneier's *Sidewalk*; Peter Moskos's *Cop in the Hood: My Year Policing Baltimore's Eastern District*; David Grazian's *Blue Chicago: The Search for Authenticity in Urban Blues Clubs*; Jonathan Wynn's "Guiding Practices: Storytelling Tricks for Reproducing the Urban Landscape"; Lucia Trimbur's "'Tough Love': Mediation and Articulation in the Urban Boxing Gym"; Courtney Bender's *Heaven's Kitchen: Living Religion at God's Love We Deliver*; William Foote Whyte's *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of An Italian Slum*; Elliot Liebow's *Tally's Corner: The Study of Negro Streetcorner Men*; Carol Stack's *All Our Kin*; Sudhir Venkatesh's "'Doin' the Hustle': Constructing the Ethnographer in the American Ghetto"; Sherri Cavan's *Liquor License: An Ethnography of Bar Behavior*; Laud Humphreys's *Tea Room Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places*; Jeff Ferrell's *Crimes of Style: Urban Graffiti and the Politics of Criminality*; and Randol Contreras's "Damn Yo—Who's That Girl"

The presentation must:

- *tell us about the author (institution, discipline, other scholarship)
- *summarize the author's findings and articulate the significance of those findings;
- *identify what types of evidence (e.g. field observation, interviews, policy) the author analyzed;
- *situate a key concept in the text as articulated by the author and at least one other source (with MLA citations); and
- *pose at least two questions the book raised for your research topic/our class

Urban Ethnographic Research Design and Lay Summary (10%)

You will pick a topic to investigate through ethnographic observations, a visual and sonic ethnography, and an interview, among other methods. **Run your research topic by me no later than Friday, March 23.** Following lessons in class, you will write a Research Design Description (with research question, description of methods, ethics, research population) and Lay Summary (description of research for your subjects). A fuller rubric will be made available on Blackboard. **Due Sunday, March 25.**

Ethnographic Presentation (10%) – You will present your ethnographic research as a performance ethnography, a 5 minute presentation to the class on **Wednesday, April 18 or Monday, April 23.** We will prepare for this presentation through class activities and assignments.

Ethnographic Essay (20%) – You will write an ethnographic essay about your site of field study and your ethnographic performance. A rubric will be made available on Blackboard. **Drafts due Monday, May 7 at 11:59pm, final essays due Wednesday May 9 at 11:59pm.**

Class Participation (10%) – Our classroom functions as a studio space, a place to learn methods of observing and documenting urban culture. Much classroom time and energy will be devoted to practicing urban ethnographic methods. Attendance is mandatory – two or more unexcused absences (starting week three) will reduce your participation grade to 5%. Come to class ready to engage and explore, and practice documenting culture.

COURSE POLICIES AND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

Inclusive Learning Environment: The best learning environment—whether in the classroom, studio, laboratory, or fieldwork site—is one in which all members feel respected while being productively challenged. At Washington University in St. Louis, we are dedicated to fostering an inclusive atmosphere, in which all participants can contribute, explore, and challenge their own ideas as well as those of others. Every participant has an active responsibility to foster a climate of intellectual stimulation, openness, and respect for diverse perspectives, questions, personal backgrounds, abilities, and experiences, although instructors bear primary responsibility for its maintenance.

A range of resources is available to those who perceive a learning environment as lacking inclusivity, as defined in the preceding paragraph. If possible, we encourage students to speak directly with their instructor or TA about any suggestions or concerns they have regarding a particular instructional space or situation. Alternatively, students may bring concerns to another

trusted advisor or administrator (such as an academic advisor, mentor, department chair, or dean). All classroom participants—including faculty, staff, and students—who observe a bias incident affecting a student may also file a report (whether personally or anonymously) utilizing the online Bias Report and Support System.

Attendance Policy: As written above, attendance is mandatory – two or more unexcused absences (starting week three) will reduce your participation grade to 5%. Come to class ready to engage and explore, and practice documenting culture. If you know you are going to be absent, please email me as soon as possible.

File Naming Policy: Name all files sent via in email in the following format: “Last Name First Name – Assignment Title ” for example “Mahmoud Jasmine – Fieldnotes Entry I”

Penalties for Late Work and Requests for Extensions: Late Short Assignments receive half-credit. Other late work will be penalized a third of a letter grade (from A to A-, for example) for every 24 hours the assignment is late.

Requests for Instructor Feedback: The best writing comes from revision and I encourage you to submit drafts of your work. You may email drafts of your writing up to 24 hours before an assignment is due. Drafts received after this time may not receive a review from me.

Technologies Policies: The following technologies are highly suggested for this course: a portable notebook, a camera, and access to a computer with online cloud storage. In this course, you’ll be tasked with observation and taking notes about your observations. Some classes will begin with a question – you are welcome to write your answers on a laptop computer, or in a notebook. You should use a portable notebook for fieldwork observations, and anticipate using a camera for taking pictures of your written fieldnotes and of field sites.

Ethics/Violations of Academic Integrity: Ethical behavior is an essential component of learning and scholarship. Students are expected to understand, and adhere to, the University’s academic integrity policy: wustl.edu/policies/undergraduate-academic-integrity.html. Students who violate this policy will be referred to the Academic Integrity Policy Committee. Penalties for violating the policy will be determined by the Academic Integrity Policy committee, and can include failure of the assignment, failure of the course, suspension or expulsion from the University. If you have any doubts about what constitutes a violation of the Academic Integrity policy, or any other issue related to academic integrity, please ask your instructor.

Disability Resources: If you have a disability that requires an accommodation, please speak with instructor and consult the Disability Resource Center at Cornerstone (cornerstone.wustl.edu/). Cornerstone staff will determine appropriate accommodations and will work with your instructor to make sure these are available to you.

Writing Assistance: For additional help on your writing, consult the expert staff of The Writing Center (writingcenter.wustl.edu) in Olin Library (first floor). It can be enormously helpful to ask someone outside a course to read your essays and to provide feedback on strength of argument, clarity, organization, etc. The Engineering Communication Center

<http://engineering.wustl.edu/current-students/student-services/Pages/default.aspx> offers students in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences help with oral presentations, writing assignments, and other communications projects, as well as job-search documents such as resumes and cover letters.

Preferred Name Policy: The University's Preferred Name Policy, with additional resources and information, may be found here: registrar.wustl.edu/student-records/ssn-name-changes/preferred-name-policy/preferred-name-policy-student/.

Sexual Assault: The University is committed to offering reasonable academic accommodations to students who are victims of sexual assault. Students are eligible for accommodation regardless of whether they seek criminal or disciplinary action. Depending on the specific nature of the allegation, such measures may include but are not limited to: implementation of a no-contact order, course/classroom assignment changes, and other academic support services and accommodations. If you need to request such accommodations, please direct your request to Kim Webb (kim_webb@wustl.edu), Director of the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center. Ms. Webb is a confidential resource; however, requests for accommodations will be shared with the appropriate University administration and faculty. The University will maintain as confidential any accommodations or protective measures provided to an individual student so long as it does not impair the ability to provide such measures.

Sexual Assault Reporting: If a student comes to me to discuss or disclose an instance of sexual assault, sex discrimination, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking, or if I otherwise observe or become aware of such an allegation, I will keep the information as private as I can, but as a faculty member of Washington University, I am required to immediately report it to my Department Chair or Dean or directly to Ms. Jessica Kennedy, the University's Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to speak with the Title IX Coordinator directly, Ms. Kennedy can be reached at (314) 935-3118, jwkennedy@wustl.edu, or by visiting her office in the Women's Building. Additionally, you can report incidents or complaints to Tamara King, Associate Dean for Students and Director of Student Conduct, or by contacting WUPD at (314) 935-5555 or your local law enforcement agency. You can also speak confidentially and learn more about available resources at the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center by calling (314) 935-8761 or visiting the 4th floor of Seigle Hall.

Bias Reporting: The University has a process through which students, faculty, staff and community members who have experienced or witnessed incidents of bias, prejudice or discrimination against a student can report their experiences to the University's Bias Report and Support System (BRSS) team. See: brss.wustl.edu

Mental Health: Mental Health Services' professional staff members work with students to resolve personal and interpersonal difficulties, many of which can affect the academic experience. These include conflicts with or worry about friends or family, concerns about eating or drinking patterns, and feelings of anxiety and depression. See: shs.wustl.edu/MentalHealth

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: **Introducing Urban Ethnography**

Wednesday 1/17: Opening Class

Outside work: **Fieldnotes Entry 1 (sit in a public space for at least 30 minutes, observing and documenting what you see) due Saturday, 1/20, 5pm via email.*

Week 2: **Theorizing the city: place, space, and race**

Outside work: **SA1 Quote & Question – post on Blackboard in “Discussion” section an hour before either class*

Monday 1/22: **Fieldtrip 1 (on campus – SENSE: TOUCH)**

[B] Mitchell Duneier, Philip Kasinitz, Alexandra Murphy, “An Invitation to Urban Ethnography” in *The Urban Ethnography Reader*. Oxford University Press, 2014, 1-8.

[B] Setha Low, “The Anthropology of Cities: Imagining and Theorizing the City,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25 (1996): 383-409.

[B] Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City” and “Spatial Stories” in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendell. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984, 91-110, 115-130.

Wednesday 1/24: [B] George Lipsitz, “Introduction: Race, Place, and Power,” Chapter 1: “The White Spatial Imaginary,” and Chapter 2: “The Black Spatial Imaginary” in *How Racism Takes Place*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011, 1-70.

Week 3: **Documenting St. Louis**

Outside work: **SA2 Quote & Question – post on Blackboard an hour before either class*

Monday 1/29: **Fieldtrip 2 (on campus – SENSE: SMELL)**

[B] Excerpts from Lee Rainwater, *Behind Ghetto Walls: Black Families in a Federal Slum*. Piscataway, NJ: Aldine Transaction, 1970.

[B] Jeannette Cooperman, “The story of segregation in St. Louis,” *St. Louis Magazine*, 17 October 2014.

Wednesday 1/31: **Hansman, Bob. *Pruitt-Igoe*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2017.

[B] Edward McPherson, “Open Ye Gates! Swing Wide Ye Portals,” Part 1 and Part 2, *The Paris Review*, 14 & 16 February 2014.

[WATCH IN CLASS] Excerpts from *Pruitt-Igoe Myth*

Week 4: Historiographies of Thick Description

Outside work: *SA3 Quote & Question – post on Blackboard an hour before either class

Monday 2/5: [B] Clifford Geertz, “Thick description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture” in *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays*. New York: Basic Books, 1973: 3-30.
[B] -- “Deep Play: notes on the Balinese Cockfight” 412-453.

Wednesday 2/7: **Fieldtrip 3 (MetroLink – SENSE: SOUND)**

[B] Mitchell Duneier, Philip Kasinitz, Alexandra Murphy. *The Urban Ethnography Reader*. Oxford University Press, 2014, 9-61.
(Part I: Finding Community in the Modern City with excerpts from Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*; W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro*; St. Clair Drake and Horace Clayton, *Lower Class: Sex and Family*; and Ulf Hannerz, *Soulside*)

Outside work: *Fieldnotes Entry II (ride the Metrolink for at least 30 minutes, observing and documenting what you hear) due Friday, 2/9 at 5pm via email.

Week 5: Observation and Writing Fieldnotes

Outside work: *SA4 Quote & Question – post on Blackboard an hour before either class

Monday 2/12: **Fieldtrip 4 (Euclid Ave – SENSE: SIGHT)**

**Emerson, et. al., xiii-43 (Preface to the First Edition; Chapter 1: “Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research”; and Chapter 2: “In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes,”) [B] Eds.

Wednesday 2/14: **Emerson, 45-127 (Chapter 3: “Writing Field Notes I: At the Desk Creating Scenes on the Page”; Chapter 4: “Writing Field Notes I: Multiple Purposes and Stylistic Options)

Outside work: *Fieldnotes Entry III (from walk on Euclid Ave.) due via email Sunday, 2/18 at 5pm

Week 6: The Politics of Place: Segregation, Poverty, Displacement, Eminent Domain, Gentrification, Neoliberalism

Outside work: *SA 5 Quote & Question – post on Blackboard an hour before either class

Monday 2/19: [B] J. Rosie Tighe and Joanna P. Ganning, “The divergent city: unequal and uneven development in St. Louis,” *Urban Geography*. 36.5 (2015): 654-673.

[B] George Lipsitz, "Space, Sports, and Spectatorship in St. Louis" in *How Racism Takes Place*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011, 73-94.

[B] Margaret Garb, "No Place Like Home: St. Louis' Eminent Domain History," *Center for Humanities at Washington University in St. Louis*, 22 September 2017.

Wednesday 2/21:

Fieldtrip 5 (Cherokee Street Food Tour – SENSE: TASTE)

**Ocejo, 1-40 ("Being There, Being Up Close" with excerpts from Herbert Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian Americans*; Phillipe Bourgois, *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*)

Week 7:

Methods and Research Design in Urban Ethnography

Outside work:

*SA 6 Quote & Question – post on Blackboard an hour before either class

Monday 2/26:

**Ocejo, 41-78 (Richard Lloyd, *Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Post-Industrial Neighborhood*; Mary Pattillo, *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City*; Gina Perez, *The Near Northwest Side Story*)
79-86 ("Being on the Job")
149-156 ("Crossing Boundaries")
209-215 ("Doing the Right Thing")

Wednesday 2/28:

**Madison 1-27, 77-93, 127-146 (Parts of Chapters 1-3 & 5)

Week 8:

Reading Urban Ethnographies

Monday 3/5:

*Discussion of Urban Ethnographies

Wednesday 3/7:

*Discussion of Urban Ethnographies

Week 9:

SPRING BREAK, NO CLASSES

Week 10:

Visual and Sonic Ethnography

Outside work:

*SA7 Quote & Question – post on Blackboard an hour before either class

Monday 3/19:

[B] France Winddance Twine, "Visual ethnography and racial theory: Family photographs as archives of interracial intimacies," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 29.3 (May 2006): 487-511.

[B] Judah Schept, "(Un)seeing like a prison: Counter-visual ethnography of the carceral state," *Theoretical Criminology*. 18.2 (2014): 198-223.

- Wednesday 3/21: **Fieldtrip 6 (Missouri History Museum)**
 [B] Sarah Pink, “An urban tour: the sensory sociality of ethnographic place-making,” *Ethnography* 9.2 (2008): 175-198.
 [B] Elaine S. Charnov, “The Performative Visual Anthropology Films of Zora Neale Hurston,” *Film Criticism* 23.1 (1998): 38-47.
- Outside work:* *Research Design/Lay Summary due via email Sunday, 3/25 at 5pm*
- Week 11: Mapping, and Listening and Interviewing**
- Outside work:* *SA8 Quote & Question – post on Blackboard an hour before either class
- Monday 3/26: [B] Hal Foster, “Artist as Ethnographer” in *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996.
 [B] Chris Naffziger, “A Day in the Life of a Doomed St. Louis Neighborhood,” *St. Louis Magazine*, 16 June 2016.
 [WATCH IN CLASS] *Exodus* by Jun Bae
- Wednesday 3/28: **Madison, 27-50
 **Emerson, Chapter 5 (“Pursuing Members’ Meanings”)
- Outside work:* *SA9, SA10 Slideshow & soundscape (Blackboard) AND Fieldnotes Entry IV (email) due Sunday, 4/1 at 5pm
- Week 12: Critical Ethnography**
- Outside work:* *SA11 Quote & Question - post on Blackboard an hour before either class
- Monday 4/2: [B] E. Patrick Johnson, “Introduction: Opening and Interpreting Lives” in *Cultural Struggles: Performance, Ethnography, Praxis* by Dwight Conquergood. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013, 1-14.
 [B] Dwight Conquergood, “Performing Cultures: Ethnography, Epistemology, Ethics,” and “Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research,” in *Cultural Struggles: Performance, Ethnography, Praxis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013, 15-25, 32-46
- Wednesday 4/4: [B] Joni L. Jones, “Performance Ethnography: The Role of Embodiment in Cultural Authenticity.” *Theatre Topics* 12.1 (2002): 1-15.
 [B] Dwight Conquergood, “Performing as a Moral Act: Ethical Dimension of the Ethnography of Performance” and “Re-thinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics” and in *Cultural Struggles: Performance, Ethnography, Praxis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013, 65-103.

Outside work: *SA12&13: Interview transcription due Sunday, 4/8 at 11:59pm – email

Week 13: Writing Ethnography

Outside work: *SA14 Quote & Question - post on Blackboard an hour before either class

Monday 4/9: [B] George E. Marcus and Dick Cushman, “Ethnographies as Texts”
**Emerson, et. al., Chapters 6-8 (“Processing Fieldnotes” “Writing an Ethnography” and “Conclusion”)

Wednesday 4/11: **CLASS CANCELED**
**Madison, Chapters 7-8 (“Performance Ethnography”, “It’s Time to Write: Writing as Performance”)

Outside work: *Fieldnotes Entry V (at least 1000 words from site visit) due Sunday, 4/15 at 11:59pm

Week 14: Performance Ethnography

Outside work: *SA15 Quote & Question - post on Blackboard by Monday at 1:30pm

Monday 4/16: **Madison, Chapter 9 (“The Case Studies”)

Wednesday 4/18: *Ethnographic Presentations

Week 15: Urban Ethnography

Monday 4/23: *Ethnographic Presentations

Wednesday 4/25: Talk Back and Course Wrap Up

Outside work: *Final Fieldnotes (with all entries and revisions) due Monday, April 30 at 5pm.

Final Papers Due Wednesday, May 9 at 5pm.