ETHNOGRAPHY (Fall 2010)
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Thursdays 3 PM-6 PM
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This course has four major objectives:

- to become familiar with some examples of classic and contemporary ethnographic writing.
- to acquaint students with the methodological tenets of ethnography
- to consider theoretical and epistemological issues in ethnographic research
- to put some data production techniques (observant participation and in-depth interviews) into practice

Throughout the semester will we read ethnographies that study poverty and/or marginality in the Americas. We will submit these works to a generative reading, that is, we will take the analytic, epistemological, and methodological tools these ethnographies provide to think about our own research objects.

Since learning to do ethnography is essentially a practical task, a craft that must be learned in practice, as part of the requirements students will be asked to develop a research project and conduct preliminary observations, write fieldnotes, and conduct interviews. The project should be located at a site where poor, marginal, or otherwise destitute populations/groups/individuals live or hang out (welfare offices, homeless shelters, parking lots where day laborers wait for work, soup kitchens, trailer parks, etc.). The final product should be a first draft of a research project that uses ethnography as a major data-production technique. Warning: if you are not willing to conduct observations and/or interviews, do not take this class.

Grading: Half of your course grade comes from a book review essay (8 pages maximum) based on three recent ethnographic texts of your choosing (for samples of book review essays, please peruse recent issues of Contemporary Sociology). You will also have to present two sets of fieldnotes and full transcriptions of two in-depth interviews (50% of your grade).
Required books


Readings mark with (*) are accessible on blackboard.

Schedule

- **August 26: Presentation of seminar.**
- **September 2: On Theory and Ethnography**

* Jorge Luis Borges. “Funes, his Memory.”
* Edgard Allan Poe. “A Descent into the Maëlstrom.”

Recommended:

* *The Craft of Inquiry* by Robert Alford (Oxford University Press, 1998) [Introduction, Chapters 1-3, 5].
➢ **September 9: What do Cases do?**


**Recommended:**

➢ **September 16: A Classic on Social Suffering**


➢ **September 23: Discussion of student projects: Site and general topic**

ONE PAGE ABSTRACT OF YOUR PROJECT DUE ON SEPTEMBER 21ST

➢ **September 30: Fieldnotes**


**Recommended:**

➢ **October 14: Interviews**


**Recommended:**
- **October 28: Gender and Risk**


- **November 11: Incarceration/Socialization**


- **November 18: Political Ethnography**


- **December 2: Destitution**


**December 9 and December 16: WORKSHOP: Discussion of Students’ Fieldnotes, Interviews, and Projects**