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Field Research in the Local Community

Chicano/Latino Studies 195A

Course Description:

This course provides students the opportunity to engage in firsthand research in the local Orange County environment. Students will identify a research problem, conduct a literature review, develop questions and/or hypotheses, appropriate methods, and put it all into a proposal. Class assignments will focus on field methods, selecting informants, the politics of research, observational strategies, interviewing techniques and problems, systematic data collection, visual data, especially photography, and recording fieldnotes. Both qualitative, ethnographic research and survey methods will be examined. Students will implement their proposal and training in actual research. This course should be taken two quarters for maximum benefits.

Requirements:

All members of the class will be expected to participate actively and regularly in discussion. Students will turn in a copy of their READING NOTES for the week's readings at the beginning of each class. Late reading notes will not be accepted. Students will also be asked to complete a number of field exercises or PRACTICUMS. Grades will be based on both written work and oral contributions.

Required readings:

H. Russell Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology*, 3rd edition. Altamira Press.

James P. Spradley, *Participant Observation*, Wadsworth.

Articles handed out in class.

Research Projects:

Students can carry out a research project that they themselves define, or they can be part of a group project that the professor defines. Students can work individually or in small groups on particular research projects.

The class project will be "Ethnographies of Orange County." Students who choose to participate on this project will conduct "mini-ethnographies" of various sites in

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Orange County. A particular interest across the mini-ethnographies will be how the concept of "community" is understood in the many ethnic groups in Orange County.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: "The Field" in Fieldwork.

READ: *Research Methods in Anthropology*, chapters 2, 3
Participant Observation, chapters 1, 2, 3
article: "Tricking and Tripping: Fieldwork on prostitution in the era of AIDS"
article: "Crack in Spanish Harlem"
NOTE: articles provided in class

PRACTICUM: Read the newspaper and bring in local issues that may be of research interest. Bring in some possible research problems. These problems can come from current events, other classes and readings, theory. Also suggest how you would turn these research problems into actual research questions and/or hypotheses, and operationalize them. "Operationalize" is a term defined in the readings.

WEEK 3: Literature Review, Problems of "Site," and Research Design

READ: *Research Methods in Anthropology*, chapters 4, 5
Participant Observation, chapters 4

PRACTICUM: Come with a research problem and suggest what might be in the literature review, and offer some relevant citations. Think about a research site and, if possible, visit it. Sketch out what would be logical research design for your research problem.

WEEK 4: Methods: sampling, interviewing; structured interviews

READ: *Research Methods in Anthro*, chapter 6, pages 141-146; 160-162
chapter 8, pages 180-193;
chapter 9, pps.203-224 [stop at "Focus Groups";
230-end of chapter
chapter 10, pps. 254-263
chapter 11, pps. 280-287

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PRACTICUM: Discuss what sample you would chose for your research and why. Interview someone, perhaps a parent, about some activity that has changed dramatically. For example, how was shopping for clothes different when they were young? Did they have large malls? How have changes reflected both societal changes and changes in their own lives? Or, interview someone about changes in family life and gender roles over the years. Make sure to record your questions as well as responses. Observe how your questions might be challenged or transformed in the process of the interview. Think about the differences between a conversation and an interview.

WEEK 5: Participant Observation, unobtrusive measures

READ: *Research Methods in Anthropology*, chapters 13, 15
Participant Observation, pages 53-72:

PRACTICUM: Develop a set of questions that you might ask an informant on a topic that you might conduct research on. Develop a research question that you might examine using indirect, unobtrusive observation methods.

WEEK 6: Fieldnotes: collecting, recording, recording

READ: *Research Methods in Anthropology*, chapters 14, 17
Participant Observation, pages 73-84:

PRACTICUM: Conduct some observation of events at a "site" or "sites." For example, go sit in a convenient place at Fashion Island. Observe and write down your observations. Then go to downtown Santa Ana or Orange and do the same thing. Or some other site that would provide a nice contrast.

DUE: Proposal = 4-5 pages:

Problem
Literature review
questions or hypotheses
methods
analytic methods
possible findings
significance

WEEK 7: FIELDWORK

WEEK 8: FIELDWORK

WEEK 9: FIELDWORK

WEEK 10: FIELD REPORTS