

THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Music 650/250

Field Methods in Ethnomusicology:

West Philadelphia Gospel Music—
Communities of Faith, Faith in Community

Fall Semester 2003

Thursday—2:00PM–5:00PM

Music Building 101

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30–4:00PM

Required Texts:

Lortat-Jacob, Bernard. *Sardinian Chronicles*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 2000 (1981).

Mapson, J. Wendell, Jr., *The Ministry of Music in the Black Church*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1984.

Music 250/650 bulkpack, available at Wharton Reprographics, basement of the Wharton School.

Course Description:

This course explores various methodological problems and theoretical constructs that confront us during the course of ethnomusicological fieldwork. How can we approach writing about our ethnographic work without silencing the voices of those who should be heard? In what ways might transcription and notation complicate power structures and reinforce our own musical values? What special challenges need to be negotiated in the process of documenting ethnographies on film? How do ethical and economic dilemmas inform our approach to making sound recordings? A series of readings in ethnomusicology and anthropology will suggest some answers to these questions—answers that will, in turn, be tested by means of several interconnected fieldwork projects focused on gospel music in West Philadelphia. Our readings and fieldwork experiences will shape our classroom discussions, leading not only to a better understanding of ethnomusicological methods, but also to a deeper appreciation of the “shadows” that we cast in the field.

Structure:

During the first few weeks of the semester, classes will follow a lecture and discussion format. These discussions will necessarily take as their point of departure the listed readings for the week. By week four, we will begin exploring research and representational methodologies ranging from photographic essays to interviews, from video and audio recordings to ethnographic writing. You will apply these methodologies in the field and, in so doing, acquire not only the technical but also the interpersonal skills required for successful fieldwork and, by extension, for sustainable community partnerships. By the end of the semester, each of you will have contributed a significant body of fieldwork to a collaborative research project that we will use to produce a CD-Rom documentary. This documentary will, in turn, serve as a first step toward creating an accessible, internet-based archive of West Philadelphia gospel music.

The Project:

The fieldwork component of the class is structured around a multi-dimensional research project. In addition to engaging in fieldwork with two local churches, you will spend time with a local gospel choir, and also work with your colleagues to trace the interconnections between the local gospel community and the national scene. This aspect of the project will include work with local gospel radio deejays, attendance at concerts, and internet/library research. Toward the end of the semester, you and your colleagues will combine your individual fieldwork projects into a larger ethnographic whole that will be published online and burned to CD-Rom. I should make it clear that this course will be time-intensive. You

will be expected to immerse yourself in the church community to which you are assigned, to work proactively toward filling any gaps in your knowledge of gospel music history, and to participate in the local scene as fully as possible. That said, I believe that you will find the class personally and academically richly rewarding.

Grading:

The final grade in this course will depend on several components—your class participation, (preparation for and participation in classroom discussions), the quality of your fieldwork projects, and your ability to interact with your colleagues and foster a collaborative research environment. The grading scale for the course is structured as follows: A+ (100-98); A (97-95); A- (94-92); B+ (91-89); B (88-86), etc...

<i>Fieldwork/Class Participation</i>	35%
<i>Individual Fieldwork Projects</i>	35%
<i>Collaborative Project</i>	30%

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Syllabus

Week #1—Invocations

9/4 – Introductions—Looking Ahead—Fieldwork Assignments

Week #2—*Shadows in the Field?*

9/11 – Historical perspectives—Intellectual Heritage—Theoretical Models

Readings in: *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music; Shadows in the Field; Culture and Truth*

Week #3—Ethnographies: From Travel Writing to the Problem of Representation I

9/18 – Historical Perspectives—Subjectivity and Power—Styles of Musical Ethnography

Readings in: *Writing Culture; Writing Diaspora; Sardinian Chronicles*

- Models: Sardinian Chronicles; Call to Home; Last Night’s Fun

Week #4—Ethnographies: From Travel Writing to the Problem of Representation II

9/25 – Presentations—Lab Instruction (Recording)

Project Due: Ethnography of a musical event

Week #5—Graceland Revisited: Some Reflections on the Ethics of Recording I

10/2 – Historical Perspectives—Preservation or Exploitation?

Readings in: *Ethnomusicology; Western Music and Its Others; Yearbook for Traditional Music; Public Culture Bulletin*

- Models: The Endangered Music Project; Smithsonian Folkways; Lomax and Herskovits recordings

Week #6—Graceland Revisited: Some Reflections on the Ethics of Recording II

10/9 – Presentations—Lab Instruction (Photography)

Project Due: Audio recording of a musical event

Week #7—Stories Pictures Tell: Photography as Ethnography I

10/16 – Historical Perspectives—Ways of Seeing—Doing Ethnographic Photography

Readings in: *Doing Visual Ethnography*; *Camera Lucida*

- Models: Church ad hoc;

Week #8—Stories Pictures Tell: Photography as Ethnography II

10/23 – Presentations—Lab Instruction (Video)

Project Due: Photographic essay of a musical event

Week #9—“Waiting for Harry”: Challenges and Opportunities in Visual Anthropology I

10/30 – Historical Perspectives—The Camera Creates

Readings in: *Picturing Culture*; *Representing Reality*; *Doing Visual Ethnography*

- Models: Waiting for Harry; Amir; Passing Girl: Riverside

Week #10—“Waiting for Harry”: Challenges and Opportunities in Visual Anthropology II

11/6 – Presentations—Lab Instruction (Internet publishing)

Project Due: Video recording of a musical event

Week #11—Oral Repertories, Texted Values: The Problem of Notation

11/13 – Historical Perspectives—Why Transcribe?—Alternatives to Standard Notational Practice

Week #12—Working Session

11/20 – Lab Time

Week #13—Working Session

11/27 – Lab Time

Week #14—FINAL PROJECT REVIEW/PARTY

12/4 – Group Presentation—Final Thoughts

Week #15—FINAL PROJECT REVIEW/PARTY

12/11 – Website Kickoff Party with Churches—Location and exact date/time TBA

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Bulkpack Reading List

1. Bohlman, Philip V. “Representation and Cultural Critique in the History of Ethnomusicology” 131–151, in *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music: Essays on the History of Ethnomusicology*. Edited by Bruno Nettl and Philip V. Bohlman. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.
2. Chow, Rey. “Where Have All the Natives Gone? 27–54, in *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.
3. Clifford, James. “Introduction: Partial Truths” 1–26, in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.
4. Feld, Steven. “A Sweet Lullaby for World Music” *Public Culture Bulletin* 12: 145–171, 2000.
5. _____. “The Poetics and Politics of Pygmy Pop” 254–279, in *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*. Edited by Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
6. Meintjes, Louise. “Paul Simon’s Graceland, South Africa, and the Mediation of Musical Meaning” *Ethnomusicology* 34/1: 37–73, 1990.

7. Nichols, Bill. "Axiographics: Ethical Space in Documentary Film" 76–103, in *Representing Reality*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.
8. Pink, Sarah. "Photography in Ethnographic Research" 49–76, in *Doing Visual Ethnography*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2001.
9. _____. "Video in Ethnographic Research" 77–93, in *Doing Visual Ethnography*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2001.
10. Rosaldo, Renato. "Introduction: Grief and a Headhunter's Rage" 1–21, in *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993.
11. Ruby, Jay. "Speaking for, Speaking about, Speaking with, or Speaking Alongside" 195–220, in *Picturing Culture: Explorations of Film and Anthropology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
12. Titon, Jeff Todd. "Knowing Fieldwork" 87–100, in *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*. Edited by Gregory F. Barz and Timothy J. Cooley. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
13. Zemp, Hugo. "The/An Ethnomusicologist and the Music Business" *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 28: 36–56, 1996.