

Folklore 502
FIELDWORK THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Wednesdays/ Some Fridays 1-4*
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Office hours: W 4-5 and by appt.

Introduction

This seminar in place-based ethnography provides an introduction to ethnographic fieldwork, with a focus on how the performance of folklore bears on the making of place. A place-based approach to ethnography is understood as a critical means of engaging with communities struggling toward alternatives to globalized economic development that is destructive of place. Choosing a setting in which to practice weekly field excursions throughout the semester, you will explore how people generate social space and humanize the physical environment through a variety of genres of stylized communication and performance.

Readings and discussion will proceed along two lines. One will introduce you to ethnographic methods and issues, while the other will consider theories and case studies of placemaking, with special, though not exclusive, attention to urban settings. For case studies we will turn to writers from the disciplines of folklore, performance studies, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, and journalism. Students will explore 1) how communities generate social space (place) and inhabit, celebrate, and critique it through various forms of social interaction and performance; 2) how to observe and document practices of placemaking through writing, still photography, and audio recording technologies; and 3) how to present ethnographic research in a way that is accessible, meaningful, and useful to communities for whom ethnography can make a difference.

In addition to doing the readings, participating in class discussions and attending guest-led workshops in writing, photography, sound recording, and archiving, work for the course will include selecting a field site in the Philadelphia area that you can visit at least three times weekly; writing up fieldnotes for each visit; documenting your site using technologies of tape recorder and still photography; observing and documenting a performance event at your site; developing an IRB protocol for your research, and archiving your field materials. The final product, due December 14, will be a descriptive essay about your site and the ethnographic questions it raises, concluding with a proposal for continuing fieldwork in this setting, due December 14. I will distribute guidelines for each assignment as we go. Due dates for other assignments are noted in the schedule of topics.

All required and recommended readings and dvds will be on overnight reserve in the Rosengarten Reading room, and readings (but not dvds) will also be on reserve in the

Folklore Archive. Full citations appear in the attached bibliography. Texts available for purchase at Penn Book Center, 130 S. 34th Street include:

Michael Agar, *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography*
Erika Brady, *A Spiral Way: How the Phonograph Changed Ethnography*
Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multi-Centered Society*
Mary Hufford, *Conserving Culture: A New Discourse on Heritage*

Schedule of Topics and Readings

September 7: (I am away this week: please pick up materials and assignment from Joyce Roselle in Logan 303)

September 14: People Studying People: The Object of Observation

Req: Watch “Kitchen Stories.” (two copies on reserve in Rosengarten; also available at Blockbuster’s Video) and review handout to prepare for discussion.

Agar, *The Professional Stranger*, pp. 1-72, and 113-131

Hufford, “Ethnography.” *World Encyclopedia of Folklore*

Noyes, “Folklore.” *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*

Simmel. “The Stranger.” In *Georg Simmel: On Individuality and Social Forms*, pp. 143-149.

Lippard, “All over the Place,” in *The Lure of the Local*, pp. 1-20

Rec: Bryman, “Introduction: A Review of Ethnography,” *Ethnography*, Vol. I, pp. ix-xxix.

September 21: Producing Locality: Commons, Enclosures, and Wild Space

Req: Watch Precious Places, from Scribe Video, on reserve

Appadurai, “The Production of Locality,” *Modernity at Large*, pp. 178-204.

Taylor, “Public Folklore, Nation-Building, and Regional Others.” *Indian Folklore Research Journal* 1(2):1-27.

Zeitlin, “Conserving Our Cities’ Endangered Spaces.” *Conserving Culture*, pp.

Lippard, “Around Here” in *The Lure of the Local*, pp. 21-61

Rec: Hynes, “Philadelphia: A City of Neighborhoods.” *A Patch of Eden*, pp. 71-116.

Cooper, *Subway Art*

Stewart, “Graffiti as Crime and as Art,” *Crimes of Writing*, pp. 206-234.

Assignment: Identify a site, or several, that interest you, and be prepared to discuss in class. Begin drafting an information sheet about your project that you can hand to people at your site.

September 28: Noticing Place: A Writing Workshop

Guest Speaker: Joanne Mulcahy, Northwest Writing Institute

Req: Agar, “Getting Started,” “Who Are You to Do This?” and “Beginning Fieldwork,” 73-166.

Spradley and McCurdy, “Cultural Scenes,” *The Cultural Experience*, pp. 21-37.
Stoller, “Introduction,” and “The Senses in Anthropology,” in *The Taste of Ethnographic Things*, pp. 3-11, and 125-56.

Rec: McDermott, “Space, Time, and Touch: The Philosophical Dimensions of Urban Consciousness.” *The Culture of Experience*, pp. 205-231

Assignment: Choose your fieldsite and visit it on at least three different occasions. Describe any “cultural scenes” you observe. Write up your notes and bring them to class.

October 5: Fieldnotes and Background Research

Req: Sanjek, 1990. “A Vocabulary for Fieldnotes,” In *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology* pp. 92-121.

Barz, 1997. “Confronting the Fieldnote.” In *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*. pp. 45-62.

Birdwhistell, “Some Discussion of Ethnography, Theory, and Method,” in *About Bateson*, 103-141.

Rec: Emerson et al, 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*.

Assignment: Review your fieldnotes and annotate them to develop questions and interaction with “headnotes.” Formulate questions about your site that can be answered through archival and library research and develop a profile of your site to bring to Friday’s workshop.

Friday October 7: Resources for Place-Based Ethnography in Philadelphia Guest Speaker, Miriam Camitta

Assignment: Watch Crosstown, a film that Miriam Camitta produced about a Philadelphia community’s three decade long struggle against the proposed Crosstown Expressway, and make note of the kinds of resources used in the film that could be helpful to you in researching your site. Come with the list of resources you’ve identified for the Precious Places and Crosstown videos, and with questions about where to find information on your site.

October 12: Genres of Historical Discourse and the Performance of Place

Req: Briggs, 1988. “Historical Discourse.” *Competence in Performance: The Creativity of Tradition in Mexicano Verbal Art*. Pp. 59-99.

Jones. 1976. “Regionalization: A Rhetorical Strategy.” *Journal of the Folklore Institute*. 13: 105-120.

Lippard, 1997. “Manipulating Memory,” *The Lure of the Local* pp. 83-122.

Basso, “Wisdom Sits in Places.” In *Senses of Place*, pp. 53-90.

Rec: Bauman and Briggs, 1990. "Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life," in *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 19:59-88.

Carlson. 1996. "Performance and the Social Sciences." In *Performance: A Critical Introduction*, pp. 1-55.

Assignment: Identify at least three genres of vernacular historical discourse in *The Lure of the Local* and recall as many as you can from the Precious Places video. Begin talking with people at your site about the history of the place, if you have not already. What do you learn, and through what forms of historical discourse? Develop a list of potential performances at your site that you could study further, as well as a list of key consultants you would need to be able to work with. Refine your information sheet as needed and create release forms for photography and tape recordings. Bring these to class, along with your fieldnotes for this week.

For examples of release forms see:

<http://www.loc.gov/folklife/fieldwork/formsmenu.html>

October 19: No class – AFS meetings in Atlanta, Georgia

October 26 and 28: Ethnographic Photography Workshop with Richard Bell

Req: Cooper, "The Folklore Photograph." *Voices*, 26:1-4.

Lippard, "Out the Picture Window." *Lure of the Local*, pp. 178-192

Assignment: Develop a list of photographic images you would like to make to convey a sense of the place you have chosen to work in. Bring this with you to the workshop.

November 2: The Dialogue of Local with Larger Than Local: Critical Regionalism and the Ethnographic Interview

Req: Dirlik, "Place-Based Imagination: Globalism and the Politics of Place." In *Places and Politics in an Age of Globalization*, pp. 15-51.

Shuman, "Dismantling Local Culture." *Western Folklore* 52:345-364

Lippard, "Around Here," *The Lure of the Local*, pp. 61-82

Zukin, "Postmodern Urban Landscapes: Mapping Culture and Power." In *Modernity and Identity*, pp. 221-247.

Rec: Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance." In *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Post-Modern Culture*, pp. 16-30.

Tsing, Anna. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*

Assignment: Articulate an emerging cluster of larger research questions raised in this week's readings that may apply to your site, and develop a set of interview questions/topics designed to get at your research questions. Bring these to class, along with your fieldnotes for this week.

Some resources for developing your interview:

Agar, *The Professional Stranger*, pp. 168-220

Hunt, Marjorie. 2003. *The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution. Downloadable at:

http://www.folklife.si.edu/explore/Resources/InterviewGuide/InterviewGuide_home.html

November 9 (Friday) and 11: Audio Recording Workshop with Barry Dornfeld

Req: Brady, 1999. *A Spiral Way: How the Phonograph Changed Ethnography*, pp. 1-117

Schafer, R. Murray, 1993. "Introduction," "Listening" and "The

Acoustic Community," In *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Pp. 2-12, 205-225.

Rec: Bendix, Regina. 2000. "The Pleasures of the Ear: Toward an Ethnography of Listening." *Cultural Analysis*.

http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~caforum/volume1/vol1_article3.html

Assignment: Check the place-based workshop webpage for further listening and reading assignments: http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/center/placebased_workshops.html

Identify a cultural scene or performative event to record over the weekend and bring fieldnotes about its soundscape to the workshop.

November 16: Ethics in Fieldwork and Civic Professionalism

Req: Fluehr-Lobban, "Ethics," in *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, pp. 173-202.

Toelken, "From Entertainment to Realization in Navajo Fieldwork," in *The World Observed*, pp. 1-17.

Lippard, "Down to Earth: Land Use," *The Lure of the Local*, pp. 124-177

Camitta, "The Folklorist and the Highway: Theoretical and Practical Implications of the Vine Street Expressway Project." In *The Conservation of Culture: Folklorists and the Public Sector*, pp. 206-216.

King, "How the Archeologists Stole Culture: A Gap in American Environmental Impact Assessment Practice and How to Fill It." *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*. 18:117-133.

Reid and Taylor, "John Dewey's Aesthetic Ecology of Public Intelligence and the Grounding of Civic Environmentalism." *Ethics and Environment: Special Issue on Art*, 8 (1): 74-92.

Online Resources:

A Statement of Ethics for the American Folklore Society

<http://www.afsnet.org/aboutAFS/ethics.cfm>

Handbook on Ethical Issues in Anthropology

<http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/>

American Sociological Association statement of ethics:

<http://www.asanet.org/page.wv?section=Ethics&name=Ethics>

Assignment: In your fieldnotes for this week, incorporate reflections on ethical aspects of your fieldwork, related either to issues raised in the readings, or to issues that, in your

view, the readings neglect. Bring in several pages of transcription of your field recording from last week to share in class.

November 23: Backtalking the Logic of Fungibility: Place, Public Policy, and the Ethnographer

Req: Basso, "Stalking with Stories: Names, Places, and Moral Narratives Among the Western Apache." In *Text, Play, and Story: The Construction and Reconstruction of Self and Society*, pp. 19-79.

Hufford, "Weathering the Storm: Cultural Survival in an Appalachian Valley." In *An Appalachian Tragedy: Air Pollution and Tree Death in the Eastern Forests of North America*, pp. 147-159.

McDermott, "Deprivation and Celebration: Suggestions for An Aesthetic Ecology," *The Culture of Experience*, pp. 116-130.

From *Conserving Culture*: Denatale, "Federal and Neighborhood Notions of Place: Conflicts of Interest in Lowell, Massachusetts pp. 56-65; Low, "The Conservation of Place," pp. 66-77; Sommers et al, "Folklife Assessment in the Michigan Low-Level Radioactive Waste Siting Process," pp. 198-214.

Rec: Agar, "Ethnography in Context," *The Professional Stranger*, pp. 237-252.

November 30: Archiving Places: The Social Life of Ethnographic Materials

Guest Speaker: Catherine Kerst, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Req: Toelken, "The Yellowman Tapes, 1966-1997," *Journal of American Folklore* 111:381-91.

Brady, *A Spiral Way*, pp. 118-125.

Parsons, "What is an Ethnographic Collection?"

<http://www.loc.gov/folklife/ethno.html>

Review the American Folklore Society's working version of an ethnographic thesaurus at <http://www.etproject.org>

Assignment: Inventory your field collection so far and bring in the inventory, along with an example of each kind of material and format.

Dec. 7: Perils, Politics, and Poetics of Writing Ethnography

Req: Marcus, 1986. "Contemporary Problems of Writing Ethnography in the Modern World System," in *Writing Culture*, pp. 165-193.

Lassiter, "From 'Reading Over the Shoulders of Natives' to 'Reading Alongside Natives,' Literally: Toward A Collaborative and Reciprocal Ethnography." *Journal of Anthropological Research*. 57:137-49.

Bishop, Wendy. 1992. "I-Witnessing in Composition: Turning Ethnographic Data into Narratives." *Rhetoric Review* 11: 147-158.

Stewart, Kathleen. "Cultural Poesis: The Generativity of Emergent Things." *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, pp. 1015-1030.

<http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/center/stewart.html>

Dorst, John. "Moving Skin." (Handout)

Assignment: Be prepared to describe, discuss, and defend the politics and poetics of your approach to writing ethnography.

December 14: Presentations in class.

December 16: Due date for turning in finalized projects.

Folklore 502: FIELDWORK THEORY AND PRACTICE

Course Bibliography

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Zukin, Sharon. 1992. "Postmodern Urban Landscapes: Mapping Culture and Power." In *Modernity and Identity*, eds. Scott Lash and Jonathon Friedman. London: Blackwell, pp. 221-247.

Some online resources:

American Folklore Society: <http://afsnet.org/sitemap.cfm>

American Folklife Center: <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/>

American Anthropological Association: <http://www.aaanet.org/>

