Instructor Information

MinJeong Kim, Ph.D.
O’Leary 529
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978-934-4614
Office Hours T 12:00-3:00 & by appt.
Course location O’Leary 517
Class Time: M 4:00-6:30

Course Objectives:

This course provides an understanding of the basic theoretical information on the nature, principles, and process of ethnographic research in the field of education. Along with the theoretical foundation, this course will focus on the actual conduct of an ethnographic research project (sample fieldwork projects). It is not possible to complete an ethnographic study in a single semester, some aspect of a research project is expected, such as a pilot study, the development and testing of a technique or research instrument, or the analysis of previously collected ethnographic data. Students are expected to identify a focus for work by the end of February in order to begin their work in March.

By the end of the semester, students are expected to

- Describe where ethnography fits in the social and behavioral sciences and how it is related to the field of education
- Describe and discuss the main features of ethnographic research
- Discuss the relationship between theory and method in the ethnographic research process
- Identify and discuss major ethical issues associated with ethnographic research
- Describe major phases of the ethnographic process, including the pre-fieldwork phase, the fieldwork phase, and the post-fieldwork phase and discuss major issues and concerns associated with each phase
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of various techniques used to collect ethnographic information.
- Describe ways of managing data-storing, retrieving, coding, manipulating, analyzing – from specific perspectives (cognitive, behavioral, sociolinguistics, etc.)
Required Texts


Supplemental Readings


Recommended Readings


Course Requirements

Attendance (Fail/Pass)

Students are expected to arrive promptly for every class and to call or email me in the case of an emergency. Missing class or part of a class will affect your grade. Two or more absences may constitutes a failing grade.

Discussion Initiators/Class Participation (40 % - 20% each)

Students will be required to complete the assigned readings and be prepared to discuss the content in class. Each student will also select one of the course topics and be prepared
to make an in-class presentation focusing on the nature and substance of the assigned readings, the issues they raise, and their views of the issues. The presenter(s) will pose questions for class discussion and solicit the views of other class participants.

Sample fieldwork projects (60% - 20% each)

Students will be required to complete three sample fieldwork projects (field observation, genealogy, ethnographic interview, etc.) from a list provided of possibilities. Each fieldwork project will be limited to the use of a particular fieldwork technique. The purpose of these projects is to give the students practice in its use and to raise questions for discussion. A separate handout will be given to explain in detail the expectations for the sample projects. The projects are not intended to be employed for gathering enough data for a quarter research project.

Course Schedule

1-24    Introduction & Overview (Research Paradigms)

1-31    Research Design
        What is Ethnography            Spradley (participant) Part 1 Ch. 1 & 2, Spradley (interview) Ch. 1, 2 & 3.

       Culture & Research Cycle      Spradley (participant) Part 1 Ch. 3
                      Agar, Bruner articles

       Participant Observation  Spradley (participant) Part 2 Ch. 1 & 2 & 3
                             Sarroub article

       Descriptive Observation Spradley (participant) Part 2 Ch. 4 & 5
       Focused Observation        Spradley (participant) Part 2 Ch. 6 & 7

       Selected Observation  Spradley (participant) Part 2 Ch. 8 & 9, Spradley (interview) Part 2, Ch. 1, 2, 3
       Ethnographic Interview I

       Ethnographic Interview II Spradley (Participant) Part 2 Ch. 10 & 11
                        Spradley (Interview) Part 2, Ch. 4, 5, 6

** 1st sample field work due

3-28    Ethnographic Interview III Spradley (Interview) Part 2, Ch. 7, 8, 9

4-4     Data Analysis (example) Spradley Part 2 Ch. 11, Gee article

4-18    Data Analysis Synthesis Spradley Part 2, Ch. 10
** 2nd sample field work due Blackburn article

4-25 synthesis Smagorinsky article

5-2 Partnership and Ethics

5-9 Writing an ethnography Spradley (Participant) Part 2 Ch. 12

3rd sample field work due Spradley (Interview) Part 2. Ch. 12