

ADVANCED FIELD WORK IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES [RLG 5038] RELIGIOUS ETHNOGRAPHY

Spring 2019

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Textbooks:

1. Hammersley, M & Atkinson P.
Ethnography: Principles in Practice.
[Most recent edition] Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group [most recent edition]

General Description of the Course

How do we study what religious persons and communities are doing and saying? What are the ethical issues that might arise in the course of doing such studies? How do we transform what we hear and observe in religious communities into texts through writing? What theoretical models inform the practice field research or arise from it.

The study of Religions is a deeply interdisciplinary field in which students must use Theories and methods drawn from many other disciplines in their understanding of the experiences, beliefs, and ritual forms of religious people. In this course we will learn to apply techniques used in ethnography to the study of lived religious experience. We will learn how to design research, participate in religious rituals for the purpose of observing and recording religious behavior, ask questions, write field notes, interpret and transform our primary field observations into ethnographic documents through the use of a variety of writing styles. We will also focus attention on theoretical questions and ethical issues that might arise in the course of doing research in religious communities and the appropriate ways of dealing with such issues. Although the course is designed to meet the academic needs of students interested in field research in religious communities students interested in field research in related disciplines will also benefit from taking it.

Course Objectives

Religious traditions are not only integral aspects of cultures. They are “subcultures” or “Worlds” themselves. The experiences of religious people can thus be studied through the use of ethnographic methods. At the end of this course students will

1. Be familiar with the practical skills they will require to successfully immerse in religious communities or “worlds” in order to understand the experiences of members from their own perspectives.
2. Students will also learn skills in writing and in appraising ethnographies on religious and other related human experiences

A note on Textbooks and essays

This course is about practical techniques and skills used in studying human communities and how they can be applied in the study of religious communities. The text and essays on which lectures and class discussions are based may not always necessarily linked with religious phenomena but a diverse range of human experiences and settings. I will expect students to glean from these readings insights they can apply in the study of religious phenomena.

Course Requirements

1. Class attendance and participation in class discussions
2. There will be one take home exam
3. Review of an Ethnography
4. Students will be expected to design, conduct and report on mini research Projects. The final reports will be presented in class at the end of the semester.

Grading and Evaluation:

The progress of students and their understanding of the course Material will be determined based on attendance and participation in class discussions, Tests, presentations based on projects and a final report.

Below are the percentage weights:

Attendance and Class participation/discussion -10%

Research Proposal:-10%

Bi weekly Research Reports: 10%

Review of Religious Ethnography-10

Take Home Exams: 20%

Final Research report/presentation: 40%

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

Week 1

[Jan 8]

Topic 1

Self-Introductions,

Description of course and course requirements and other Matters.

Week 2

[Jan 15]

Class lecture based on

Chapter 1 of prescribed textbook. [Ethnography]

What is ethnography?

What do ethnographers do, positivism and naturalism [theoretical underpinnings of the quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Weeks 3 and 4

[Jan 22 and 29]

Lecture Topic: “Designing research in Religious Studies”

Reading: Chapter 2 of prescribed text. [Ethnography]

Students present research proposals in class in week 4 [proposal should not be more than 3 pages double spaced]

Week 5

[Feb 5]

Lecture Topic: Access.

Reading: Chapter 3 of “Ethnography...”

From this week, students will be expected to begin fieldwork on their projects]

Reading for Class discussion:

Week 6 [Feb 12]

Lecture Topic: Field Relations

Reading: Chapter 4 of Text [Ethnography]

Student Presentation and class discussion based on Reading:

Week 7 [Feb 19]

Lecture Topic: Oral accounts and the role of interviewing

Chapter 5 of prescribed text. [Ethnography]

Student Presentation and class discussion based on Reading:

Week 8

Feb 26

Lecture Topic: Documents and other artefacts, real and virtual.

Recording and organizing data Chaps 6&7 of “Ethnography”

Student Presentation and class discussion based on Reading:

Week 9

March 5

Lecture Topic: Analyzing our observations, Chapter 8 of Text [Ethnography]

Student Presentation and class discussion based on Reading:

Week 10

[March 11—16th SPRING BREAK

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Week 11 [march 19]

Lecture Topic: Writing Ethnography

Reading: Chapter 9 of Text [Ethnography]

Student Presentation and class discussion based on Reading:

Week 12 [march 26]

Lecture Topic: Ethical issues

Reading: Chapt. 10 of Text [Ethnography]

Student Presentation and class discussion based on Reading:

Take Home exam based on Topics

Due date is April 8th

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Week 13

[April 2]

Topic Twelve:

Class Presentations

Week 14

[April 9] Topic Thirteen: Class Presentations on Findings from the Field

Week 15 [April 16]

Topic Fourteen

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REVIEW OF ETHNOGRAPHY-

TAKE HOME EXAM

There will be 2 exams.

Each exam will comprise 5 essay questions, out of which a student would

Be expected to answer 3. [Dates will be announced in class]

THE Mini RESEARCH PROJECT

Each student will design and implement a small field work project based on observation and interviewing. This project can be done individually or in a team with one or more partners. Students will submit a research proposal. In this proposal student must state the project's topic, provide a summary of what the project will entail and the research

questions. Topics are open but students must focus on a religious phenomenon, e.g. local constructions of religious identities [that is, a specific religious community], experiences and the life histories of particular individuals associated with specific religious communities, the life history and daily life of a key religious personality etc.

Bi weekly Submissions

Individual students or groups will keep a field note book during the course of the semester and samples of entries about their research projects, both as they are formulating them and as they are conducting the research will be submitted to the professor bi weekly for grading. This would include notes taken during field interviews, transcribed interviews [if any or simply summaries] data interpretations and analyses, and other relevant experiences. The final report will be presented in class at the end of the semester.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The professor reserves the right to amend this syllabus as determined by the demands of the course during the semester

GRADING SCALE

95-100 "
90-92 A-
88-89 B+
83-87 B
80-82 B.
78-79 C+
73-77 C
70-72 C-.
68-69 D+
63-67 D
60-62 D-