ADVANCED FIELD WORK IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES
REL: 5038 & 4937
Spring 2013
Instructor: Dr. Albert Kafui Wuaku
Phone: 305 348-0112
E-mail:wuakua@fiu.edu

Textbooks:
1. Hammersley, M & Atkinson P. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice.* Second Edition [or most recent].
Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2007.

Optional
2. Selected essays from the text Experiencing *Fieldwork: An insider view of Qualitative Research* by William B. Shaffir and Robert A. Stebbins Publisher: Sage Publications (2002)

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? 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 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 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. 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 will be based are not necessarily on religious phenomena but a diverse range of human experiences and settings. Students will be expected to glean from these readings insights that they can apply in the study of religious phenomena.

Course Requirements
1. Class attendance and participation
2. There will be two take home exams
3. Students will be expected to design, conduct and report on mini research projects.

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/presentations: 10%
Research Proposal: 10%
Bi weekly Research Reports: 30%
Take–Home: 20%
Final Research report/presentation: 30%

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

Week 1: [Jan 8]
Topic 1 Self Introductions, description of course and course requirements and other Matters. Class lecture based on Chapter 1 of prescribed textbook. What is ethnography? What do ethnographers do, positivism and naturalism [theoretical underpinnings of the quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Week 2 [Jan 15]
Topic 2 Designing research in Religious Studies-
Reading- Chapter 2 of prescribed text.

Week 3 and 4 [Jan 22 and Jan 29th]
Students present research proposals in class [proposal should not be more than 3 pages-double spaced]

Week 5 [Feb 5]
Topic 3- Access
Reading- Chapters 3 of text. "Sponsors, Gate Keepers, Members, and Friends" "managing a convincing Self –Presentation" in Shaffir and Stebbins. [From this week, students will be expected to begin fieldwork on their projects]

Week 6 [Feb 12]
Topic 4 Field Relations
Readings Chapter 4 of Text and
"Field workers Feelings: what we feel, Who we are, How we analyze" "Secrecy and Disclosure in Field work" "Leaving the Field", "Do we ever leave the field" in Shaffir and Stebbins

Week 7 [Feb 19]
Topic Seven: Oral accounts and the role of interviewing. Chapter 5 of prescribed text.

Questions for First Take home exam will be available on this date. Responses are due in two weeks. [March 5th].

Week 8 [Feb 26th]
Topic Eight: Documents and other artefacts, real and virtual. Recording and organizing data [Field notes]

Week 9 [march 5]
Topic Nine: Analyzing our observations –Chapter 8 of Text

Week 10 [march 12] - SPRING BREAK

Week 11 [march 19]
Topic Ten: Writing Ethnography
Reading: Chapter 9

Week 12 [march 26th]
Topic Eleven: Ethical issues-
Reading: Chapter 10 of Text
"Experiencing Research on New Religions and Cults: Practical and Ethical Considerations" in Shaffir and Stebbins.

Second Take Home exam based on Topics – 8, 9, &10-due date is April 9th.

Week 13[April 2 Topic Twelve: Class Presentations
Week 14[April 9] Topic Thirteen: Class Presentations
Week 15[April 16] Topic Fourteen: Class Presentations

TAKE-HOME EXAMS
There will be 2 exams. Each exam will comprise 4 essay questions, out of which a student would be expected to answer 2. Questions for the undergraduate take home exams will be different from those of the graduate exams. Page requirements for answers—not more than three pages per question for graduate students] Not more than two pages per question for undergrads.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT
Each student will design and implement a small fieldwork 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 topics, provide a summary of what the project will involve 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 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 "A"s are awarded for excellent to exceptional work, free of technical and stylistic errors, showing sustained thought and
90-92 A- engagement with the material on an impressive academic level.
88-89 B+ "Bs" are awarded for good to very good work, with some
83-87 B occasional errors, but nonetheless clearly indicating a good
80-82 B- grasp of the material and assigned task.
78-79 C+ "Cs" are awarded for average to above average work, meeting
73-77 C minimal standards but marked with errors and exposing gaps in
70-72 C- student performance and/or fulfillment of the assignment.
68-69 D+ "Ds" are awarded for barely passing to below average work,
63-67 D usually riddled with errors and seriously deficient in fulfilling
60-62 D- the assignment.
Below 60 F "Fs" are given for unacceptable work