

## SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION COMM 368 Spring 2014

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T/R 2:30PM – 3:45pm  
Corboy Law Center 304  
Office Hrs: T/R: 4-5 PM  
or by appointment.

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### Critical Ethnography

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**Prerequisites:** COMM 175 or 201 and Junior Status.

**Course Description:**

This course teaches the principles of participant-observation research as a critical practice to produce a 'thick description' of meanings, values, hierarchies of interests, power structures and ideals of a particular cultural group or community. Students will engage with a multitude of interdisciplinary toolsets that allow for communication with both rigor and empathy.

**Course Objectives:**

Throughout the semester, students will:

- 1) Build their skills and understanding for what is involved in ethnography as a method of social inquiry, meaning-making, and storytelling
- 2) Learn best practices for how to conduct ethnographic research and its procedures, deciding on a fieldsite, taking field notes, conducting interviews, examination of data and artifacts, and presenting research results to a public audience.
- 3) Gain a vocabulary for discussing ethics, bias, subjectivity, cultural norms, and notions of power.
- 4) Critically assess their own communication, thinking and writing as means of expression and persuasion.

**Course Readings:**

- Boellstorff, T., Nardi, B., Pearce, C., & Taylor, T. L. (2012). *Ethnography and virtual worlds: A handbook of method*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Stewart, A. (1998). *The ethnographer's method*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Wolf, M. (1992). *A thrice-told tale: Feminism, postmodernism, and ethnographic responsibility*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

**Course Organization:**

This course consists of a 1-hour and 15-minute class twice per week.

**Assignments and Grading:**

1. Autoethnography (10%)
2. Skills Exercises/Commentary (15%)
3. Prospectus (10%)
4. Ethnographic Project/Paper (20%)
5. Final Presentation (5%)

6. Midterm Exam (15%)
7. Take-home Exam (15%)
8. Participation (10%)

\*All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

\*All assignments must be submitted on time or marks will be deducted.

**Course Website:** <https://sakai.luc.edu/>

Our Sakai space is where we will post information on COMM 368 online. It will also act as a community space where you can share your own interests and draw the class's attention to items of interest. So, check it often for course updates and other information.

You are expected to ask questions and seek out information needed to fulfill the course requirements as an active learner. Additionally, seeking out technical skills to solve new media problems is a key element in this class (and a transferable skillset beyond our classroom). Depending on how you build your own responses to assignments, you may need to seek out more sophisticated technical skills. Your investment in your own learning outcomes will show.

### **Attendance/Participation**

This course covers a wide range of material and we have a lot of work to do together. First off (and so important), attendance is mandatory. Making it to class on time and being present for the lectures, assignments, and discussions is essential to your success in COMM 368 and a sign of mutual respect. Second, teamwork is a central aspect of our daily class life, so please come prepared to talk about the readings and issues of the day. Both the professor and your peers will be supporting and evaluating your participation throughout the semester. You are responsible to one another in fulfilling our shared course objectives that include in-depth participation and discussion grounded in the assigned material you will read before our class meetings.

Attendance counts. Documentation for university-authorized absences must be cleared with the professor in advance. It is your responsibility to ask classmates for announcements you may have missed by arriving late. In the case of severe illness, death in the family, or religious holiday, the professor will help you find ways to make up the work.

In the unfortunate event that you fall ill, especially with a contagious ailment, please aid in preventing the spread of infection by not coming to class. Rather, submit any documentation you are able to provide the professor when you are healthy and able to come to class.

### **Participation**

As mentioned above, it is crucial to make your voice heard in this course. There will be plenty of different settings (lecture, the discussions, your presentations, online) to contribute to our evolving discussion over the semester.

### **Deadlines**

Assignments are due on the dates indicated in the schedule below. It is the responsibility of the student to manage any scheduling conflicts with the course or missed time. I will not grant extensions except in the direst of circumstances and under no circumstances will I grant an extension within 24 hours of a due date. So please plan your semester ahead of time. As the old adage goes: *Plan your work. Then work your plan!* Missed deadlines will be assessed a deduction of one third of a letter grade per day (e.g. from A- to B+ for 1 day late). The prospectus and term paper are due at the beginning of class on their due dates. The penalty for lateness begins immediately after class on the due date. **All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.**

### **Student Meetings**

I have regular office hours on as indicated on the syllabus. Alternatively, you can make an appointment to meet at my office and reach me via email.

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## LECTURE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

(Subject to change if necessary)

TEM = The Ethnographer's Method

TTT = Thrice Told Tale

EAVW = Ethnography and Virtual Worlds

<b>Week 1: January 14, 16</b>
<b>Introduction to ethnography</b> Introductions, objectives, and directions
<b>Readings Tuesday:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ None. Students are to come to next lectures prepared with corresponding readings done.</li></ul>
<b>Readings Thursday:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ EAVW: 1-12</li><li>▪ TTT: 1-14</li></ul>
<b>Week 2: January 21, 23</b>
<b>Histories</b>
<b>Readings Tuesday:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ EAVW: 13 – 21</li><li>▪ TTT: 15 - 30</li></ul>
<b>Readings Thursday:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ EAVW: 22 – 28</li><li>▪ TTT: 31 - 49</li></ul>
<b>Week 3: January 28, 30</b>
<b>Myth and Meaning</b>
<b>Readings Tuesday:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ EAVW: 29 – 41</li><li>▪ TTT: 50 – 61</li></ul>
<b>Readings Thursday:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ EAVW: 41 – 51</li></ul>
<b>Assignment Due: Autoethnography. Refer to Assignment Spec sheet #1</b>
<b>Week 4: February 4, 6</b>
<b>Research Design and Preparation</b>
<b>Readings Tuesday:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ EAVW: 52 – 64</li><li>▪ TEM: 1 – 17</li></ul>
<b>Readings Thursday:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ TTT: 61 - 84</li></ul>
<b>Week 5: February 11, 13</b>
<b>Participant Observation</b>
<b>Readings Tuesday:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ EAVW: 65 – 81</li><li>▪ TTT: 84 - 92</li></ul>
<b>Readings Thursday:</b>

▪ EAVW: 82 – 91  
**Assignment Due: Skills Exercise. Refer to Assignment Spec sheet “Skills Exercise #1”)**

**Week 6:** February 18, 20  
**Interviewing**  
**Readings Tuesday:**  
▪ EAVW: 92 - 112  
**Readings Thursday:**  
▪ **MIDTERM EXAM**

**Week 7:** February 25, 27  
**Multiple Methods, Multiple Measures**  
**Readings Tuesday:**  
▪ EAVW: 113 - 128.  
▪ TEM 18 – 28  
**Readings Thursday:**  
**Assignment Due: Skills Exercise. Refer to Assignment Spec sheet “Skills Exercise #2”)**

**Week 8:** March 4, 6  
**SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES SCHEDULED**

**Week 9:** March 11, 13  
**Ethics**  
**Readings Tuesday:**  
▪ EAVW: 129 – 150  
▪ TEM: 29 – 37  
**Readings Thursday:**  
▪ EAVW: 151 - 158.  
▪ TEM: 38 – 46

**Week 10:** March 18, 20  
**Coding Field Data**  
**Readings Tuesday:**  
▪ EAVW: 159 – 167  
▪ TEM: 47 - 62  
**Readings Thursday:**  
**Assignment Due: Prospectus. Refer to Assignment Spec sheet “Prospectus”)**

**Week 11:** March 25, 27  
**Data Analysis**  
**Readings Tuesday:**  
▪ EAVW: 168 - 181  
**Readings Thursday:**  
▪ TEM: 61 - 67

<b>Week 12: April 1, 3</b>
<b>Writing up results</b>
<b>Readings Tuesday:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ EAVW: 182 - 195</li> </ul> <b>Readings Thursday:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ EAVW: 196 – 200</li> </ul> <b>Assignment Due: Skills Exercise. Refer to Assignment Spec sheet “Skills Exercise #3”)</b>

<b>Week 13: April 8, 10</b>
<b>Reflexivity</b>
<b>Readings Tuesday:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ TTT: 93 - 126</li> </ul> <b>Readings Thursday:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No Class Scheduled. Dr. Chee presenting work in Missouri.</li> </ul>

<b>Week 14: April 15, 17</b>
<b>Publishing Ethnographic Work</b>
<b>Readings Tuesday:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ TTT: 127 - 142</li> </ul> <b>Readings Thursday:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>TAKE HOME EXAM DUE</b></li> </ul>

<b>Week 15: April 22, 24</b>
<b>Final Presentations</b>
<b>FINAL PROJECT/PAPER DUE THURSDAY APRIL 24th at the BEGINNING OF CLASS.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Students will make their final presentations to the class this week, 5-minute Ignite-style</li> <li>▪ Term Project/Paper will be due at the beginning of class and submitted by paper and email to the professor.</li> </ul>

**Academic Integrity**

The School of Communication is committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and ethical support. The School expects that the grades in this course will bear some reasonable relation to established university-wide practices with respect to both levels and distributions of grades.

Please consult the Loyola School of Communication statement on “Academic Integrity” for information and guidelines.

<http://www.luc.edu/soc/Policy.shtml>

These policies, procedures and guidelines will be assiduously upheld. They protect your rights, as well as those of the faculty. It is particularly important that you be aware of and avoid plagiarism, cheating on exams, submitting a paper to more than one professor, or submitting a paper authored by anyone other than yourself. Violations of these principles will result in a failing grade in the course, and be reported to the proper university office. If you have any doubts about any of these practices, you must confer with the professor.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Any student that needs special accommodation during exams or class periods should provide documentation from Services for Students with Disabilities confidentially to the instructor. The instructor will accommodate that student's needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of the course content and processes. It is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.