

JHR 500 *Research Methods*

Arizona State University West
Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Office hours: Tuesdays 2-4 p.m. and by appointment

Time: Tuesdays, 6:05-8:55 p.m.

Classroom location: CLCC 104

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“(H)uman rights research goals are change-oriented and emancipatory. They aim to empower people to claim their rights, to disempower rights violators, and to bolster mechanisms for protecting rights.

Merging human rights and research goals requires a shift from seeing the purpose of research as uncovering existing ‘truth’ to seeing it as a social practice that generates and legitimates ‘truths.’ From this perspective, the inescapable value dimension of inquiry is not an impediment to be ignored or controlled, but an opportunity for researchers to participate more fully in ... social discourses.”

– Stanley Witkin (2000: 211)

“Change ... doesn’t start with the outcome known or guaranteed. But in many situations change can seem like the first green shoot that dares to poke its way out of stony soil. Then it’s up to us to nurture it. It may die out or it may thrive. Much worth emerges from the tending of it.”

– Dinyar Godrej (*New Internationalist*, May 2007)

“How do you empower an oppressed and impoverished people who are struggling against racism, militarism, terrorism, and sexism too? I mean, how do you do that? That’s the real question.”

– Kathleen Cleaver (2001: 124)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This seminar introduces key approaches to social justice and human rights-oriented social research, with an emphasis on qualitative, activist, and community-based methods of inquiry. We begin by examining the relationships between history, epistemology (theories about “knowledge”), and research practice (methods). We also focus on *doing research*: becoming familiar with activist research practices and developing your first-hand familiarity with key skills in social research. Moreover, each week we will read examples of research “with a methodological eye” in order to understand the *what*, *why*, and *how* questions that social researchers are posing as researchers and to explore debates about power, ethics, representation, writing, voice, and reflexivity. Our two broad goals are: (1) to understand the contributions of social justice research traditions – such as feminist, critical race, and community-based action research, critical ethnography, and visual social research, and, (2) to develop research skills that include designing a research study, posing questions, interviewing, conducting observations, writing ethnographically, and writing research proposals.

This seminar is both theoretical and practical in its orientation; we will engage with the ongoing dialectical tension between theory-generation and research praxis (data collection, analysis, and writing up). As such, this class will function, *in part*, as a research workshop. We will discuss course readings in connection with your own experiences “in the field”; these relationships – between what you are reading about on paper, and what you are doing “in the field” over the course of the semester – will form the basis of many of our class discussions.

REQUIRED READINGS:

May, Tim. 2001. *Social Research: Issues, Methods, and Process*, 3rd edition. Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Madison, D. Soyini. 2005. *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Hale, Charles R. (ed.). 2008. *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Bales, Kevin. 2004 [1999]. *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Carruyo, Light. 2008. *Producing Knowledge, Protecting Forests: Rural Encounters with Gender, Ecotourism, and International Aid in the Dominican Republic*. University Park: Penn State University Press.

Besteman, Catherine. 2008. *Transforming Cape Town*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Kincaid, Jamaica. 2000. *A Small Place*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Supplemental readings, which are marked on the syllabus as “(BB),” will be available through the course’s Blackboard website.

Optional/recommended reading:

Marshall, Paule. 1969. *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*. New York: Vintage.

IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT READINGS:

*****All supplemental readings will be available on reserve via Blackboard. I ask that you print all readings out and bring them to class with you on the day we are scheduled to discuss them.*****

PLEASE NOTE:

Students with documented disabilities have the right to access campus services; please visit the Disability Resource Center (DRC) if you are in need of such accommodation.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

In keeping with the norms of graduate seminars, *regular* attendance and *active, informed* participation are expected. Class sessions will typically center around a student-led discussion and overview of the reading materials *and* experiences in the field. At times, I will provide a brief and structured set of comments to situate and complement student-led discussions. At times, we will view films, listen to guest presentations, and conduct in-class activities dedicated to strengthening concrete research skills.

Throughout the semester, I will upload announcements, reading materials, and other useful items to the course Blackboard site. You are expected to visit the Blackboard site on a weekly basis.

ASSIGNMENTS 1 & 2 (10% EACH, 20% TOTAL):

Co-leading seminar discussions: As this is a graduate level seminar, your direction, commentary, and participation in class discussion are crucial for an exciting class that is both stimulating and relevant to your research interests and goals. Each participant is responsible for leading class discussion on two different seminar dates. *Student-led facilitations will take place in teams of two*, and I will ask you to sign up on a voluntary basis. The following are guidelines that you should follow carefully in order to receive full credit for this assignment:

- This is a research methods seminar; as such, your questions and presentation must focus on analyzing and raising questions about methodology – in relationship to the research topics addressed and the findings reported in research. That is, when you read examples of studies, do so not only with an interest in their findings, but also with *a methodological curiosity* about how authors arrived – through their theoretical positionings and research methods – at such conclusions, *and*, at how they *represented*, through writing, their respective studies.
- Develop and post on the course’s Blackboard site 4-5 analytical points, dilemmas, or questions you would like your peers to address in the class discussion no later than Monday at noon (12 p.m.) prior to the assigned Tuesday class. *These points and open-ended questions should be designed to promote discussion.*
- **Prior to class**, prepare a *brief* presentation (5-10 minutes max) using the following method: (1) Give a brief overview of the reading (1-2 sentences stating what the readings are about); (2) Present and facilitate an analytical discussion (clearly identify at least 3-4 main supporting points, themes, concepts, or arguments about methods and/or methodology that the reading addresses and/or inspires); (3) Third, evaluate the strengths and/or limitations of the readings and methodologies discussed, note how the week’s readings relate to other seminar articles and themes, and dilemmas/problems occurring in your own fieldwork. **It is very important that you NOT summarize the articles or read a long analysis of the article.**
- **In class**, *as a team of two*, present the main points of this brief presentation (10 minutes maximum) and use your analytical questions to open the forum for discussion. You are responsible for facilitating this discussion and summarizing its key points.
- You should post your summary points – “notes” – of our discussion on Blackboard by the Wednesday evening following our seminar meeting. These are brief summary

points that capture the main points of our discussion – including the comments of others. You can summarize by simply posting some bulleted points that direct us back to the overarching themes of our discussion.

- *It is helpful to the seminar for you to pass out a handout that briefly highlights your presentation points and questions.*

Your presentation will be graded on:

- 1) Clarity of presentation and thoughtful discussion of methodological concepts.
- 2) Concise and analytical discussion (in place of summary).
- 3) Quality of discussion questions and effective moderation of class discussion.
- 4) Appropriateness of handout.
- 5) Adequate summary of class discussion on the Blackboard summary post.

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DATA GATHERING ASSIGNMENTS:

This seminar requires the *practice* of human rights-oriented research methods; this means that you should select a research topic, site, and interviewees in order to carry out some preliminary research and practice the methods you are learning in the seminar. First, think about a research topic that intrigues you; this should be a topic on which you want to conduct some preliminary/exploratory research this semester. Second, determine the social spaces and interviewee samples that will provide initial data for this research. You will need to have regular access to the spaces (to complete ongoing ethnographic field observations) and to at least two interviewees (to carry out in-depth interviews) in order to complete the seminar assignments. *Assignments 3, 4, and 5, will directly contribute to your final assignment, the research proposal.*

ASSIGNMENT #3, DUE TUESDAY, 10/14 (15%):

Interviewing: Write an interview schedule (interview questions) and carry out two tape recorded, in-depth interviews (45-60 min. each) with two separate interviewees. Transcribe the interviews, *outline* emergent themes, significant information, and important quotes, and sketch the substantive narratives running through these interviews. This interview data will be used in the formulation of the “preliminary research” section of your final research proposal. *For this assignment, you will hand in the following: your interview guide, transcripts, and analytical outlines for each interview.* Note: if focus groups are more appropriate for your research topic, you may conduct two focus groups in place of two in-depth interviews; if oral history interviewing is more appropriate for your research topic, you may conduct one oral history interview (occurring in two, one-hour sessions, or three 40 min. sessions) in place of two in-depth interviews.

ASSIGNMENT #4, DUE TUESDAY, 10/28 (10%):

Autoethnographic/reflexive writing: Applying concepts of reflexivity and techniques of autoethnography, write a three-page paper narrating *your relationship* to the ethical, social, and political dimensions of your research project. In this paper, you will discuss your relationship to “the field,” to your interviewees, and to the topic of the project.

ASSIGNMENT #5, DUE TUESDAY, 11/18 (15%):

Observational writing: Conduct ethnographic observation and field note documentation of your social sites. Observe and document for 30-60 minutes, once a week, for 5-8 weeks of the seminar. Keep a fieldnote journal, where you record each of these observational data entries. For the assignment you will submit, edit and synthesize the fieldnotes from your journal into a descriptive ethnographic narrative by creating “scenes on the page” of five pages long. *This writing exercise will contribute to the formulation of the “preliminary research” section of your final research proposal.*

FINAL “HYBRID” RESEARCH PROPOSAL, DUE TUESDAY, 12/9 (40%):

This “hybrid” research proposal, **15-20 pages in length**, combines the skills of *narrative, ethnographic writing* and those of *instrumental, proposal writing*. It should include the following elements:

- *Introduction* of the research topic, a reflexive/autoethnographic discussion of your relationship to the project, and discussion of the project’s relevance to issues of human rights and social justice.
- *Brief literature review* of existing empirical studies and theoretical perspectives that are relevant to the conceptualization of your project.
- *Preliminary research*: this will incorporate the ethnographic writing and interviewing you have done (see assignments 3 and 5), and will build a case for the more comprehensive/developed research project you are proposing to carry out.
- *Summary of the specific methods you will employ and your timeline for completion.*
- *Conclusion*: writing styles and decisions about this vary; yet you should include some (brief) discussion of the importance of this project, and for this class, its implications for the advancement of social justice and human rights.

READING AND DISCUSSION SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

TUESDAY, 8/26: INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE, GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER, SETTING RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

WEEK 2

TUESDAY, 9/2: PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL SCIENCE(?) RESEARCH AND ITS HISTORIES:
EXAMINING KEY SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

We’ll discuss:

- May, Chapter 1, “Perspectives on social science research”
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 1999. “Imperialism, History, Writing and Theory,” and “Research Through Imperial Eyes” pp. 19-57 in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books. **(BB)**
- Hale (ed.): Calhoun, Craig. “Foreword,” pp. xiii-xxvi.
- Hale, “Introduction,” pp. 1-28

WEEK 3

TUESDAY, 9/9: THEORY AND METHOD: EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIPS

We'll discuss:

- May, Chapter 2, "Social theory and social research"
- Madison, Chapter 1, "Introduction to Critical Ethnography: Theory and Method," pp. 1-16, and Chapter 3, "Three Stories: Case Studies in Critical Ethnography," pp. 43-78
- Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 1999. "Colonizing Knowledges" pp. 58-77 in *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books. **(BB)**
- Hale (ed.), Chapter 2: Nabudere, Dani Wadada. "Research, Activism, and Knowledge Production" pp. 62-87 in *Engaging Contradictions*.

WEEK 4

TUESDAY, 9/16: POWER, REPRESENTATION, ETHICS, AND POLITICS IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

We'll discuss:

- May, Chapter 3, "Values and ethics in the research process"
- Madison, Chapters 4-5, "Ethics" and "Methods and Ethics," pp. 79-129, and Chapter 6, "Methods and Application: Three Case Studies in Ethical Dilemmas," pp. 131-147
- Speed, Shannon. "Forged in Dialogue: Toward a Critically Engaged Activist Research," pp. 213-236 in *Engaging Contradictions*.
- Alcoff, Linda. 1991-1992. "The Problem of Speaking for Others." Available online at <<<http://www.alcoff.com/content/speaothers.html>>>.

WEEK 5

TUESDAY, 9/23: DESIGNING RESEARCH, CONCEPTUALIZING RESEARCH QUESTIONS

We'll discuss:

- Madison, Chapter 2, "Methods: 'Do I Really Need a Method?' A Method ... or Deep Hanging-Out"
- Maxwell, Joseph A. 2005. "Research Questions: What Do You Want to Understand?" pp. 65-78 in *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. **(BB)**
- Witkin, Stanley L. 2000. "An integrative human rights approach to social research." In Carole Truman, Donna M. Mertens, and Beth Humphries (eds.), *Research and Inequality*. London: University College London Press, pp. 205-219. **(BB)**
- Crang, Mike and Ian Cook. 2007. "Conceptualising the Subject" in *Doing Ethnographies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 7-16. **(BB)**

- Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy and Patricia Leavy. 2006. “The Research Process,” pp. 45-77 in *The Practice of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. **(BB – skim)**

WEEK 6

TUESDAY, 9/30: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWING AND FOCUS GROUPS

We’ll discuss:

- May, Chapter 6: “Interviewing: methods and process”
- Madriz, Esther. 2003. “Focus Groups in Feminist Research.” In Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 363-388. **(BB)**
- Hale (ed.), Chapter 7: Martínez, Samuel, “Making Violence Visible: An Activist Anthropological Approach to Women’s Rights Investigation,” pp. 183-209.
- Hale (ed.), Chapter 9: Tang, Shirley Suet-ling, “Community-Centered Research as Knowledge/Capacity Building in Immigrant and Refugee Communities,” pp. 237-264.

WEEK 7

TUESDAY, 10/7: ORAL HISTORIES AND TESTIMONIES IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

We’ll discuss:

- Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy and Patricia Leavy. 2006. “Oral History: A Collaborative Method of (Auto)Biography Interview,” pp. 149-194 in *The Practice of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. **(BB)**
- Marchand, Marianne H. 1995. “Latin American Women Speak on Development: Are We Listening Yet?” In Marianne H. Marchand and Jane L. Parpart (eds.) *Feminism/Postmodernism/Development*. New York and London: Routledge, pp. 56-72. **(BB)**
- Smith, Sidonie. 2005. “Belated Narrating: ‘Grandmothers’ Telling Stories of Forced Sexual Servitude during World War II,” pp. 120-145 in Wendy S. Hesford and Wendy Kozol (eds.) *Just Advocacy? Women’s Human Rights, Transnational Feminisms, and the Politics of Representation*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. **(BB)**
- Navarrete, Maria with John Foran. 2003. “Maria’s Stories.” In Kum-Kum Bhavnani, John Foran, and Priya A. Kurian (eds.), *Feminist Futures: Re-imagining Women, Culture and Development*. London: Zed Books, pp. 22-30. **(BB)**

WEEK 8

TUESDAY, 10/14: CONDUCTING OBSERVATIONS, WRITING FIELDNOTES

We’ll discuss:

- May, Chapter 7, “Participant observation: perspectives and practice”
- Hale (ed.), Chapter 6: Vargas, João H. Costa, “Activist Scholarship: Limits and Possibilities in Times of Black Genocide,” pp. 164-182.
- Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. 1995. Chapters 3-4, “Writing Up Fieldnotes I: From Field to Desk,” and “Writing Up Fieldnotes II: Creating Scenes on the Page,” pp. 39-107 in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

WEEK 9

TUESDAY, 10/21: AUTOETHNOGRAPHY, REFLEXIVITY, AND NARRATION IN RESEARCH

We’ll discuss:

- Kincaid, *A Small Place* (entire)
- Gilmore, Leigh. 2005. “Autobiography’s Wounds,” pp. 99-119 in Wendy S. Hesford and Wendy Kozol (eds.) *Just Advocacy? Women’s Human Rights, Transnational Feminisms, and the Politics of Representation*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. **(BB)**
- Vidal-Ortiz, Salvador. 2004. “On Being a White Person of Color: Using Autoethnography to Understand Puerto Ricans’ Racialization.” *Qualitative Sociology* 27(2): 179-203. **(BB)**

WEEK 10

TUESDAY, 10/28: READING ETHNOGRAPHERS METHODOLOGICALLY I: COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES AND MULTI-SITED ETHNOGRAPHY

We’ll discuss:

- Bales (entire), **including, “Appendix I: A Note on Research Methods,” pp. 265-274.**
- Marcus, George. 1998 [1995]. “Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-sited Ethnography,” pp. 79-104 in *Ethnography Through Thick and Thin*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. **(BB – skim)**
- May, Chapter 9, “Comparative research: potential and problems” **(skim)**

WEEK 11

TUESDAY, 11/4: READING ETHNOGRAPHERS METHODOLOGICALLY II: RESEARCHING RURAL ENGAGEMENTS WITH “DEVELOPMENT” AND “AID”

We’ll discuss:

- Carruyo (entire)
- Burawoy, Michael. “The Extended Case Method.” Available online at <<<http://cue.berkeley.edu/ecm.pdf>>>. **(skim)**

WEEK 12

TUESDAY, 11/11: READING ETHNOGRAPHERS METHODOLOGICALLY III: TRACING THE CONTOURS OF GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING

We'll discuss:

- Besteman (entire)
- Howland, Todd. 2008. "How El Rescate, a Small Nongovernmental Organization, Contributed to the Transformation of the Human Rights Situation in El Salvador." *Human Rights Quarterly* 30 (3): 703-757. **(BB – skim)**

WEEK 13

TUESDAY, 11/18: WRITING OF TWO SORTS: WRITING ETHNOGRAPHICALLY, WRITING RESEARCH PROPOSALS

We'll discuss:

- Madison, Chapter 8, "It's Time to Write: Writing as Performance," pp. 181-200.
- Przeworski, Adam and Frank Salomon, "The Art of Writing Proposals: Some Candid Suggestions for Applicants to Social Science Research Council Competitions." Available at: <fellowships.ssrc.org/art_of_writing_proposals/>
- Lamott, Anne. 2007. "Shitty First Drafts," pp. 423-426 in *Fieldworking: Reading and Writing Research*, edited by B. S. Sunstein, and E. Chiseri-Strater. New York: Bedford's/St. Martin's Press. **(BB)**

WEEK 14

TUESDAY, 11/25: *NO CLASS MEETING – OAXACA TRIP WITH PROFESSOR MURPHY-ERFANI.*

Reading to take on your trip:

- May, Chapter 8, "Documentary research: excavations and evidence"
- Chavez, Leo. 2001. "Manufacturing Consensus on an Anti-Mexican Immigration Discourse," pp. 215-262, 311 in *Covering Immigration*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

WEEK 15

TUESDAY, 12/2: FILMMAKING AND VISUAL SOCIAL RESEARCH

We'll discuss:

- Crang, Mike and Ian Cook. 2007. "Filmic Approaches" in *Doing Ethnographies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp. 104-128. **(BB)**
- Bhavnani, Kum-Kum. 2008. "Shifting Passions, Changing Genres." *Feminism & Psychology* 18: 21-34. **(BB)**
- Gil-García, Oscar. 2008. "Visual Technology Culture and Gender in Remaking the Globalized Representation of Forced Migration." Working paper available online at <<www.critical-sociology.org>>.

- Useful websites on human rights, film- and video-making:
 <<<http://www.humanrightsproject.org/>>>, << <http://hub.witness.org/>>>

WEEK 16

TUESDAY, 12/9: CONCLUSIONS, NEW QUESTIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

We'll discuss:

- Hale (ed.), Chapter 13: Pulido, Laura, "FAQs: Frequently (Un)Asked Questions About Being a Scholar Activist," pp. 341-365.
- Hale (ed.), Chapter 3: Lipsitz, George, "Breaking the Chains and Steering the Ship: How Activism Can Help Change Teaching and Scholarship," pp. 88-111.
- Moncada, Alberto and Judith Blau. 2006. "Human Rights and the Roles of Social Scientists." *Societies Without Borders* 1 (1): 113-122. **(BB)**

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A BRIEF NOTE ON MY PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING:

I concur with bell hooks that education is the "practice of freedom," as it contains the potential to change all involved in it, and thereby to contribute, however indirectly, to social change in the world beyond the classroom.

A major goal of this course is to create a community of learners in our classroom. In forming this environment, students should be prepared to be **active** in class. We will spend most of our classroom time together **talking with each other**. Listening to each other, and learning to give constructive feedback will allow our community to flourish, and will give each of us individually new perspectives on our own writing, researching, and thinking processes.

It is the responsibility of each of us – students and the professor – to transform this space into an ideal place for insightful engagement and learning. While many university classes are heavily lecture-based, this course will instead take an "**active learning**" approach.

What is "active learning"?

Active learning models are based on the assumption that students learn best by "doing."

"To learn something well, it helps to hear it, see it, ask questions about it, and discuss it with others. Above all, students need to 'do it' – figure things out by themselves, come up with examples, try out skills, and do assignments that depend on the knowledge they already have or must acquire."

-- Mel Silberman, *Active Learning*, pg. ix.

Know this: your learning is extremely important to me. I welcome your feedback and remind you that I, too, am on a lifetime journey of learning. I hope we can learn from and

challenge each other. I ask a lot of each of you, yet I also hope you receive a great deal in return from the course, your peers, and me.