



ANTH751

Methodology in Local and Community Studies

S1 Evening 2014

Anthropology

Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| <u>General Information</u> | 2 |
| <u>Learning Outcomes</u> | 2 |
| <u>Assessment Tasks</u> | 3 |
| <u>Delivery and Resources</u> | 13 |
| <u>Unit Schedule</u> | 13 |
| <u>Policies and Procedures</u> | 14 |

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

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W6A 714

Monday 4-6pm (or by appointment)

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Credit points

4

Prerequisites

Admission to MRes

Corequisites

Co-badged status

This unit is co-badged with ANTH 801

Unit description

This unit introduces methodological strategies used in community research. Quantitative strategies, such as questionnaire and survey methods, will be compared with qualitative ones, such as participant observation. The epistemological and ethical dimensions of methodology, and the effects of political imperatives on the conduct of research will be discussed. It includes four weeks of community-based research.

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

Understand the processes of a human research ethics application

Learn about current debates over human research ethics and informed consent

Develop skills in ethnographic writing and oral presentation

Design, implement, and write up their own research project

Reflect on the differences/similarities between applied and academic anthropology
Think about the selection of “informants” and field sites and how they shape both methodologies and research outcomes

Relate their experiences to some of the research problems and ethical dilemmas which emerge in key ethnographic texts.

Assessment Tasks

| Name | Weighting | Due |
|--|-----------|----------|
| <u>Class Participation</u> | 10% | Weekly |
| <u>Research Proposal</u> | 15% | April 7 |
| <u>Research Journal</u> | 10% | April 29 |
| <u>Research Paper</u> | 20% | May 19 |
| <u>Peer Review</u> | 15% | May 26 |
| <u>Revised Essay</u> | 30% | June 23 |

Class Participation

Due: **Weekly**

Weighting: **10%**

Seminar Preparation and Participation: 10%

Much of the work involved in exploring the material covered by this course is expected to take place during the seminars. This is where you will have the opportunity to discuss the ideas raised by the course material, films and readings. They allow the chance to express your own opinions and either confirm or challenge the main ideas of the material at hand.

Each week, all students should have read the required readings and be ready to discuss them. The readings are gathered from a wide range of disciplinary approaches - if you have any difficulty understanding these basic materials please let the course convenor know so they can be discussed in greater detail. These articles must be read carefully and it is expected that you will reflect a sound understanding of these approaches in the written work you submit.

A. Preparation - Weekly reading summaries

Due: Each Week

Seminar preparation involves a couple of hours of reading each week. To facilitate tutorial

discussion, you are required to submit a short typed summary of each of that week's readings (you often have to do two of them per week). This summary should be around 100-200 words each!

The format of each summary is quite specific and you must address the following criteria:

- Your summary must be **double-spaced** and in **12 point font**.
- **Stick to the word limits.** It is quite challenging to provide a meaningful summary of the reading in such a small word limit, but this will develop a really important set of skills that will make it easier to grasp some of the complex concepts in the course.
- **You must answer the following questions:**
 - i. **What is it about?** (write **one succinct sentence** capturing the reading's overall theme – **around 10-25 words**).
 - ii. **How do they do it?** (i.e. provide a brief description of methodology – **around 30-50 words** - how did the author get the information? How did they put together and present this information? Was it qualitative/quantitative/comparative, was it based on textual research/observation/participation etc?).
 - iii. **What does it mean?** (provide a brief comment on the significance of the reading – **around 50-100 words** – especially looking at its location within scholarly debate - What does this reading do differently or better/worse than other readings? How does it push our understanding of the subject further? What is the point of reading it?)

Specifically, the 'what does it mean' section gives you a window into more analytical thinking.

The point of the summary is not for me to check if you are getting the "right" answer. Rather, they are valuable tools in generating discussion so that together, as a tutorial group, we can work out what we think about the readings.

These little summaries also act as catalogues and mnemonic devices for students to organise all the information you acquire when you do readings for the course. **You do not need to write reams and reams of summaries**, but as long as you have a quick way of accessing the core content of each reading, you can always go to the original document if you want to look into it in more detail.

At the end of the course (because you have a heap of catalogued summaries) you can use these in your essays, including in other courses. With the focus more on analytical thinking, these little catalogues will help students move away from writing huge summary sections in their essays and to start dealing with information more thematically.

B. Participation – Weekly discussion groups

Each student should fully participate in class discussions and will take turns leading a discussion of the week's readings.

To generate discussion in class: students will spend 10 minutes at the beginning of each class just talking about their summaries with each other. This will hopefully help to wake you up, it breaks the ice, gets your mouths working and also gives you a little more confidence to talk in

class with the other students so that you can maximize your tute participation marks. The point of the tute summaries is that you also have a clear and concise bit of info that you can refer to in the class.

All students are expected to actively participate in class discussion. Your ability to do good social research (among living human beings!!) requires you to be able to actively engage in and lead discussions in a social setting. As such, each student will be expected to lead small discussion from week to week.

Each week, we will break up into smaller discussion groups for a portion of the class, and each person in those groups will take a turn being discussion leader. Discussion leaders follow the guide provided below for leading discussions. The responsibilities of being a discussion leader should rotate. The unit convenor will roam from group to group, listening and contributing to discussions.

Your research projects will also be incorporated into ongoing class discussion. Every week we'll have a quick debriefing where you will report on the progress of your research project and talk through any interesting findings, difficulties, or successes you're encountering. We will all learn from watching each other muddle through an ethnographic research project, from the planning to the implementation to writing up.

In your verbal contributions to class discussions, what I will be looking for is remarks that engage thoughtfully with the readings and with the theoretical issues raised by the methods you are trialling in your ongoing research projects. It is also important that you engage respectfully with your peers. Do not mock anyone's contributions in seminar. If you don't understand or agree with something someone says, ask them to clarify, or explain respectfully why you disagree. Everyone should feel free to speak up in class. Please do not drown out quieter voices, interrupt, or otherwise dominate seminar discussion.

If you are having trouble speaking up in class discussion, please come to speak with the unit convenor privately and together we can strategise ways to facilitate your contribution to the seminars.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the processes of a human research ethics application

Research Proposal

Due: **April 7**

Weighting: **15%**

1. **Research Proposal: 15% (1000-1200 words)**

Due: April 7

Research proposals will be original project designs for ethnographic research projects. Your research proposal should be a formal description of the ongoing project of ethnographic

description that you are engaged in for this class.

Undertake a literary search for your chosen topic. Identify a minimum of 6-8 academic texts of high quality, which all cover relevant aspects of the topic (the texts should be suitable for comparison).

Websites that are not explicitly part of the social science discourse do not count as references.

Wikipedia is NOT an appropriate source and may not be used!

The proposal should include the following sections:

Proposal title: provide a short descriptive title of no more than 20 words.

Abstract: This should be a short summary of the project, maximum 100 words.

Background: Discusses the academic literature to set up the research question. What other researchers have tackled this issue? What have they said about the topic? What are the points of difference between theorists? How is your project similar to, or different from, those of other researchers?

Aims: What will this research concretely demonstrate or accomplish?

Methods: This should include a detailed discussions of research methods, rationales for choice of methods, background readings on the research questions as they are relevant to methodology, and a plan for completion.

Significance: What is the significance of this project? What new insight will it shed on the research question?

Format: Please look up the essay writing guidelines on the Anthropology homepage for citation and referencing guidelines (you should use in-text citations and Harvard-style referencing). Make sure all pages are numbered, your student ID number and a word count appears on your proposal.

Please submit an electronic copy of the paper to the turnitin box in iLearn.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Learn about current debates over human research ethics and informed consent
- Develop skills in ethnographic writing and oral presentation
- Reflect on the differences/similarities between applied and academic anthropology
- Relate their experiences to some of the research problems and ethical dilemmas which emerge in key ethnographic texts.

Research Journal

Due: **April 29**

Weighting: **10%**

1. **Ethnographic Journal: 10%**

Due: April 28

Students will engage in a small-scale ethnographic research project over the course of the semester. Each student will keep a 'field journal' that documents your own life ethnographically in a series of dated fieldnotes. You should collate completed writing assignments, including observational logs, research diary entries, sketches, diagrams, and other useful data related to the on-going project.

You should begin this journal from week 2.

You are encouraged to treat the journal as a 'field diary,' and to write in it as often as possible (**a minimum of twice a week**).

Even before you have a research project, you should start writing your decision making process in the journal. The key is to get you into the habit of writing journal entries and field notes and to connect you with the reflexive process of fieldwork.

I will consult the field journal on one occasion (after semester break) to check on progress. Because there are 8 weeks between week 2 and when the journals are due for marking, I will expect **a minimum of 16 entries to pass**.

Details:

Obviously, you can't document your entire life in a journal, or you'd be writing all day. You will be picking a narrow area of your daily experience to focus on. Will it be your school life and encounters with other students? Encounters with teaching staff and uni bureaucracy? Will it be your work life? Will you document your personal grooming practices and aesthetic choices – how you dress, shop, style your hair, wear makeup? Will you document your experiences on public transportation? Will you document a particular sport or hobby – surfing, cricket, Second Life, World of Warcraft, canyoneering, hiking, snake wrangling? (I'm not encouraging snake wrangling, by the way.)

This should be a participant-observation record of your own experiences, but you should also document the advantages and disadvantages posed by the key method you'll be using: what can participant observation tell you that you can't discover from a quantitative survey? What can a quantitative survey or a formal interview tell you that you wouldn't find out through participant observation? You may also collect and index materials related to your project (texts, music, video, pop culture ephemera, etc). The research journal may be digital or paper in format, or both (if digital, please include materials on a CD and submit along with any paper materials in one folder). **These fieldnotes will form the basis of your "mini-ethnography"**.

From the beginning of this project, you will be expected to adhere to the highest ethical standards of research, data collection, and data storage.

Please see "Important Points to Remember Regarding Your Research Project" protocol at the end of this unit outline for more detailed guidelines on how to ethically approach this process of writing about your everyday interactions with others, and give everyone you wish to write about an information sheet (also at the end of this unit outline).

You will be assessed based on both frequency of journal entries (**you should make journal entries at least twice weekly**) and the thoughtfulness with which you analyse the experiences

documented. Several entries will be selected randomly to assess the journal, but the entire journal will not be read by the course convenor.

This is what I will be looking for in your journals:

You made the minimum number of journal entries (but please feel free to do more!).

I could identify a research methodology in your journal.

Your journal shows that you were engaging in participant observation.

You had some very descriptive entries.

You had some very thoughtful entries.

Your entries showed reflexive analysis.

You were aware of the strengths of your key method.

You were aware of the disadvantages of your key method.

I could see some recurring themes.

You adhered to the ethics guidelines.

Your journal was organised clearly.

You used additional materials that were relevant to your project.

You explained the relevance of the materials you used.

All of your journal materials should be placed in a **sealed** envelope (so that only the convenor will read them) and **submitted in class on the due date**.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the processes of a human research ethics application
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Research Paper

Due: **May 19**

Weighting: **20%**

1. **Research Paper (“Mini-Ethnography”): 20%** (2500 words)

Due: May 19

It should describe the goals of the project, the methods employed, and what you discovered during the course of your research.

Start early!

Select a topic that interests you (we will discuss the appropriateness of your projects throughout the course). Narrow it down so that it is suitable for a scholarly interrogation. Keep in mind that most students try too much in their research.

Undertake a literary search for your chosen topic. Identify a minimum of 15 academic texts of high quality, from the social sciences and/or humanities (books, journal articles – the texts should be suitable for comparison).

Websites that are not explicitly part of the social science discourse do not count as references.

Wikipedia is NOT an appropriate source and may not be used!

Your paper must present your research in a way that maintains academic integrity whilst also engaging the reader with your ethnographic material. You must connect your material to larger processes, using sound theoretical foundations and consistent and measured analysis. However, there is no self evident logical progression between method and writing. The ethnographer's theoretical approach and stylistic writing decisions radically shape the presentation of ethnographic data.

During seminars, we will be discussing various stylistic choices in writing ethnography. How do they describe and analyse? How is description linked with method? What are the rhetorical techniques that they use to persuade the reader of the validity of their analysis or method? What political and ethical positions lie behind the writing decisions they make?

The paper should include the following information:

- Title: provide a short descriptive title of no more than 20 words.
- Abstract: This should be a short summary of the project, maximum 100 words.

- Discusses the academic literature to set up the research question. What other researchers have tackled this issue? What have they said about the topic? What are the points of difference between theorists? How is your project similar to, or different from, those of other researchers?
- Include a detailed discussions of research methods, rationales for choice of methods, background readings on the research questions as they are relevant to methodology.
- What did you discover?
- What is the significance of this project? What new insight will it shed on the research question?

When you are writing your paper, make sure the text engages with theory, theoretical concepts and demonstrates their application.

It is not enough to make statements. The student must present EVIDENCES (from empirical research drawn from your own research and of that presented in academic references). An author must always keep in mind that he/she has to convince the reader of his/her point of view: argue, show and prove.

Critically interrogate your assumptions. How did you arrive at them? Could there be other positions? Actively search other positions? Explain the different arguments and compare them. What do you conclude from the comparison?

You will get feedback on the quality of your paper. You will use this feedback to reflect on and then develop your revised submission.

20% of your final grade will be based on this research proposal. **DO NOT TREAT THIS AS A DRAFT PAPER!!!**

Submit a polished piece of work – the key is to get you connected with the academic process of review and revision. When academics submit to a journal, they do not send in an unfinished draft, but these manuscripts (no matter how good they are!!) still require revision based on the comments of the peer review process.

Make sure all pages are numbered, your student ID number and a word count appears on your paper, submit a hard copy in class on AND submit an electronic copy of the paper to

the turnitin box in iLearn.

IMPORTANT

Write your student number into the header of the pages. **Do NOT mention your name in the header.** Your name should appear ONLY on the assignment cover page. It is crucial for this exercise that peer-reviewing is anonymous.

On successful completion you will be able to:

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- Learn about current debates over human research ethics and informed consent
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Peer Review

Due: **May 26**

Weighting: **15%**

Peer Review (750 words) **due on May 26.** The peer review serves as feedback to students about their research papers. Students will use a feedback sheet provided to them electronically as doc-file (see at the end of this section). Students are asked to critically comment on the quality of the text and make suggestions for improvement/future directions.

The idea of the peer review is to help you to:

§ Engage with the work of others and learn to give constructive feedback.

§ Internalise marking criteria by applying them.

Bring a print out of your peer review to class. Submit it together with the hard copy of the paper you had to review AND submit an electronic copy of the review to the turnitin box in iLearn..

1. **Feedback Returned.** I will return the peer reviews along with my comments and suggestions for revision on **June 9.**

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Learn about current debates over human research ethics and informed consent
- Reflect on the differences/similarities between applied and academic anthropology
- Think about the selection of “informants” and field sites and how they shape both methodologies and research outcomes
- Relate their experiences to some of the research problems and ethical dilemmas which emerge in key ethnographic texts.

Revised Essay

Due: **June 23**

Weighting: **30%**

Revised Essay (4000 words) **due June 23**. An additional 30% of your final mark will be based on how you revise the paper. You will have two weeks to revise from the time I return your paper with the comments and suggestions from myself and the other students. You will develop research paper into a full essay, taking into consideration the comments made in the peer review and by their teacher.

Your revised paper must present your research in a way that maintains academic integrity whilst also engaging the reader with your ethnographic material. You must connect your material to larger processes, using sound theoretical foundations and consistent and measured analysis. However, there is no self evident logical progression between method and writing. The ethnographer’s theoretical approach and stylistic writing decisions radically shape the presentation of ethnographic data.

During seminars, we will be discussing various stylistic choices in writing ethnography. How do they describe and analyse? How is description linked with method? What are the rhetorical techniques that they use to persuade the reader of the validity of their analysis or method? What political and ethical positions lie behind the writing decisions they make?

Your revised paper must include an **EPILOGUE** (200 to 500 words) reflecting on how you have **USED THE FEEDBACK** you received for your research paper to improve on the revised essay. How did you use the feedback to improve your academic writing?

In the final essay you should use 15 to 20 [SB1] academic references from the social sciences and/or humanities (books, journal articles). Websites that are not explicitly part of the social science discourse do not count as references. **Wikipedia is NOT an appropriate source and may not be used!**

Make sure all pages are numbered, your student ID number and a word count appears on your essay, and that you submit it through the Arts Faculty submission boxes in W6A AND submit an electronic copy of the paper to the turnitin box in iLearn.

Format: For all assignments, please see the writing guidelines on the Anthropology homepage for citation and referencing guidelines (**you should use in-text citations and Harvard-style referencing**).

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the processes of a human research ethics application
- Learn about current debates over human research ethics and informed consent
- Develop skills in ethnographic writing and oral presentation
- Reflect on the differences/similarities between applied and academic anthropology
- Think about the selection of “informants” and field sites and how they shape both methodologies and research outcomes
- Relate their experiences to some of the research problems and ethical dilemmas which emerge in key ethnographic texts.

Delivery and Resources

In order to become a competent ethnographer, one must develop technical, observational, and analytical skills as well as knowledge about ethnographies; in other words, one must *practice* ethnographic research in order to really understand how anthropologists create and use ethnographic knowledge. For this reason, the unit is a **workshop** taking the form of a **seminar** where we can get together and discuss others’, and your own, ethnographic practices. Even though the lecturer will deliver some material, the unit is emphatically **not a lecture course** because students necessarily must participate actively to develop their skills.

Unit Schedule

ABBREVIATED OUTLINE OF WEEKLY TOPICS (AND DUE DATES)

| Week | Date | Topic |
|--|--------|---|
| 1 | 3 Mar | Introduction: course overview and discussion of preliminaries |
| 2 | 10 Mar | Ethical codes and Ethical dilemmas in fieldwork |
| 3 | 17 Mar | Choosing a field site and developing research questions 17 Mar: Ethics Quiz certificates due in class |
| 4 | 24 Mar | Participant Observation and Taking Field Notes |
| 5 | 31 Mar | Unobtrusive Observation |
| 6 | 7 Apr | Interviewing 7 Sept: Research Proposals due |
| Mid-semester Recess (12 April – 20 April) | | |
| 7 | 28 Apr | From participant observation to participant listening 28 Apr: Ethnographic Journals Due |
| 8 | 5 May | Informants, hosts, and field relationships |
| 9 | 12 May | Biography and anthropological life history |

| | | |
|----|--------|--|
| 10 | 19 May | Writing Ethnography 19 May: Research Paper Due |
| 11 | 26 May | Ethnography and the politics of writing and representation 26 May: Peer Review of Research Paper Due |
| 12 | 2 Jun | Doing “applied” anthropology |
| 13 | 9 Jun | Project Reviews (peer review exercise) 9 June: Feedback on Research Paper and Peer Review Returned 23 June: Revised Research Paper Due |

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Grievance Management Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grievance_management/policy.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit <http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/>.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.