



ANTH324

Doing Ethnography

S1 Day 2019

Dept of Anthropology

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

Banu Senay

banu.senay@mq.edu.au

Payel Ray

payel.ray@mq.edu.au

Credit points

3

Prerequisites

(39cp at 100 level or above including (9cp from ANTH units including 3cp from ANTH units at 300 level)) or admission to GDipArts

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

What tools do cultural anthropologists use to observe humans and make sense of their actions in the world? This unit provides an introduction to the practical, methodological, and ethical dimensions of ethnographic research. As the primary goal of the unit is to teach students how to conduct ethnographic fieldwork, over the semester students engage in first-hand research projects where they regularly participate in and observe a cultural scene of their own choosing. Weekly meetings frame the fieldwork process as students learn anthropological research methods under the guidance of an experienced staff member, and then apply this knowledge to their ethnographic study. These meetings provide students an opportunity to share their fieldwork experiences with each other, discuss the methodological issues, and workshop concerns raised by their own studies. Simultaneously students will read several classic ethnographies to develop an understanding of the relationship between ethnographic research and ethnographic writing. The program culminates in a report (or mini ethnography) due at the close of the semester.

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 use of a variety of ethnographic research methods, including their strengths and the sorts of projects for which they might be most useful.

Practice doing ethnographic research

Gain familiarity with a variety of methodological techniques

Receive regular feedback and have opportunities to discuss what they have learned with peers and instructors.

Prepare a sample research proposal for a feasible participant-observation ethnographic study; for those students considering advanced academic study, this proposal might be a stepping-stone.

Acquire the knowledge and confidence to competently discuss and apply field research techniques and seek employment as a field researcher in a variety of occupational fields.

General Assessment Information

Late Submission Penalty

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, (a) a penalty for lateness will apply – two (2) marks out of 100 will be deducted per day for assignments submitted after the due date – and (b) no assignment will be accepted more than seven (7) days (incl. weekends) after the original submission deadline. No late submissions will be accepted for timed assessments – e.g. quizzes, online tests.

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Ethics quiz	0%	Yes	15 March
Seminar Preparation and Par	20%	Yes	Weekly
Research proposal/peer eval	20%	No	5 Apr/12 Apr
Ethnographic research journal	20%	No	17 May
Ethnographic Research Paper	30%	No	26 May
Oral presentation of research	10%	No	31 May / 7 June

Ethics quiz

Due: **15 March**

Weighting: **0%**

This is a hurdle assessment task (see [assessment policy](#) for more information on hurdle assessment tasks)

Weight: 0%, but it is a threshold requirement: you cannot proceed to do your ethnographic research project and paper until you complete ethics training.

Due: 15 March (Week 3)

Brief description: Students will take the online ethics module for social science research developed by Wynn, Mason, and Everett (http://www.mq.edu.au/ethics_training/) and the online quiz at the end of the module.

Details: Upon completion of the quiz, print the certificate of completion and **bring to class or e-mail it to the convenor**. The module takes about 3-4 hours to complete. Warning: start the quiz well in advance because if you fail any section of the quiz, it will not allow you to proceed to the next section of the quiz until 24 hours have passed, so it's not a good thing to do at the last minute.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand the use of a variety of ethnographic research methods, including their strengths and the sorts of projects for which they might be most useful.
- Prepare a sample research proposal for a feasible participant-observation ethnographic study; for those students considering advanced academic study, this proposal might be a stepping-stone.
- Acquire the knowledge and confidence to competently discuss and apply field research techniques and seek employment as a field researcher in a variety of occupational fields.

Seminar Preparation and Par

Due: **Weekly**

Weighting: **20%**

This is a hurdle assessment task (see [assessment policy](#) for more information on hurdle assessment tasks)

Due: weekly!

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.

1. Preparation - Weekly “Discussion Preparation Guide” (10%)

Seminar preparation involves a couple of hours of reading each week. To facilitate tutorial discussion, you are required to submit a short summary and analysis of each of that week’s readings (**you often have to do two of them per week**).

Brief Description: Each week, you must fill out a Discussion Preparation Guide and bring it to class. This will help prepare you to participate in seminar discussions.

Details: A sample Discussion Preparation Guide (DPG) is available on iLearn. As convenor, I’ll hand out a guide in the first week of class, and after that, you should print and fill one out each week. You will bring this to class and use it to inform class discussions. When you first come to class, you should show it to me so that I can see if it’s been completed. You can use it to take additional notes during the seminar discussion. At the end of the day, you will hand in your DPG to the unit convenor. They will be returned the following week in class.

The point of the DPG 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.

1. Participation – Weekly discussion (10%)

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 DPGs 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 participation marks. The point of the DPGs 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 facilitate and participate in discussion from week to week.

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.

Guidelines for discussion participation:

The kinds of contributions that are valued in seminar participation include:

- Initiating discussion

- Giving information
- Asking for information
- Raising questions
- Giving a restatement of another's contribution
- Asking for clarification
- Giving examples
- Encouraging others
- Relieving group tension

You will lose participation marks for:

- Expression of unsupported opinions. (Essentially, this means don't talk about things you don't know about – in particular, if you haven't done the readings, don't try to make up for this by pretending you have or making stuff up. You'll just lose points for this.)
- Taking discussion off the topic of the readings and the issues they raise.
- Attempts to dominate discussion. (If you find yourself talking more than others in the group, please hold back so others have the chance to join in the discussion.)
- Interrupting others who are speaking.
- Mockery of others.

Throughout discussion, students should jot down in their discussion guide ideas that were mentioned by others and struck them as useful.

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Research proposal/peer eval

Due: **5 Apr/12 Apr**

Weighting: **20%**

Brief Description: 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. You will use your proposal, plus the feedback you get on it, as the basis for crafting your ethnographic research paper.

Details: The ~1000-word 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 discussion of research methods, rationales for choice of methods, background readings on the research questions as they are relevant to methodology
- **Proposed timeline:** What is your plan for completion? Please carefully consider your timeline for fieldwork so that you can submit your ethnographic journal and research paper on time.
- **Significance:** What is the significance of this project? What new insight will it shed on the research question?
- **References:** See the essay writing guidelines on iLearn for citation and referencing guidelines (you should use in-text citations and Harvard-style referencing). References will not be included in the word count.

You will submit both electronically through Turnitin on a link available in iLearn, **and** bring 2 hard (paper) copies of your research proposal to seminar, so that your research proposals can be **peer-evaluated**. Each student will read 2 other research proposals, randomly distributed. **One week after proposals are submitted, students will return their comments** in class to the convenor, who will provide a grade. Your grade on this assignment will be based on a combination of the research proposal you submit (10%) AND the feedback you give to your peers (10%).

Comments on your peers' research proposals should focus on:

- Does the abstract do a good job of summarising the project?
- Does the background section show how the research project relates to an academic body of literature and what makes it distinctive compared to other researchers'

approaches to similar problems? Can you think of any theorists that might be relevant to the project that haven't been included?

- Are the aims clear?
- Does the methods section seem like it offers the best methodological solution for addressing the project aims?
- Is the significance of the research project clear?
- Is the research proposal well-written, clear and understandable for someone who doesn't specialise in this area of knowledge?
- Is the writing concise? Does it make the most of every one of those thousand words, or is there "fluff" that could be pared down?
- Are the references done correctly?

Try to give constructive criticism: don't just tell them what you think is *wrong*, but also what they could do to fix it, and be sure to provide positive feedback, too.

Length: Max two pages (use 1,5 line spacing) for reviewing each research proposal.

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Ethnographic research journal

Due: **17 May**

Weighting: **20%**

Brief description: From the third week of class (after you have completed the online ethics module and taken the quiz), you will be asked to keep a research journal that documents your own life ethnographically in a series of dated fieldnotes.

Details: This should be a participant-observation record of your research activity. 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 flash drive and submit along with any paper materials in one folder). These fieldnotes will form the basis of your mini-ethnography research paper.

From the beginning of this project, you will be expected to adhere to the highest ethical standards of research, data collection, and data storage. Although you are essentially documenting your everyday life in writing and even though the unit convenor is the only person to whom you will submit your mini-ethnography, you still interact in your everyday life with lots of other people, and it's essential to protect their privacy, so you should not write about anyone else's private life without their explicit oral consent. Be mindful of the difference between public interactions and private conversations. It's one thing to describe how you interact with the salesperson in a shop when you're buying jeans, and it's another thing to write about a private conversation with a friend (whether that conversation takes place in person or on Facebook). Protect the identities and privacy of your informants by using pseudonyms in your fieldnotes, storing your data in a locked filing cabinet and/or in password-protected computer files, and, if necessary, changing identifying details in the final written mini-ethnography research paper. Do **not** document any illegal activity in your field notes or your final paper. Do **not** pressure anyone into participating in your research. Consult with the course convenor before you write about anyone who is in a relationship of social hierarchy with you (i.e. a child, employee, etc). *Document* your life, but do not *experiment* with it: do not indulge in idle social experiments on other people for the sake of your research! Above all, be respectful and kind in all that you do (and not *just* in your research!).

Please see "talking about your research project with your informants" protocol available on iLearn (under Additional Resources for Assessments) 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.

A minimum of 20 entries are expected to pass.

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. If there's are any particular entries that you do not want me to read, please mark this by noting "private" at the top of the entry next to the date, and I will not read it. You will receive a grade with a brief assessment of the overall journal, but

you will not be assessed on any particulars of the journal assignment (i.e. I will not be making notes in the margins!), because this project is primarily about writing for yourself, not about writing for the course convenor.

All of your journal materials should be placed in a **sealed** envelope (so that only the convenor will read them) and submitted to the convenor. If you have kept a digital journal, you can copy it onto a flash drive and submit that. Your journals will be returned to you in seminar the following week.

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Ethnographic Research Paper

Due: **26 May**

Weighting: **30%**

Brief Description: You will write an ethnographic research paper of approximately 2,500 words based on the data that you have collected in your ethnographic research journal. You are encouraged to model your ethnographic writing on the style of one of the ethnographic articles or ethnographies we have read over the semester, to learn anthropological writing conventions.

In addition to writing the mini-ethnography (2,500 words), you must also include an appendix (up to 500 words) detailing how you ensured ethical research practice. This appendix should outline the steps you took to ensure (a) informed consent, (b) informant privacy and confidentiality, and (c) secure data collection and storage. See “exceeding the word limit” (in “Penalties and special consideration”) on iLearn for details.

(Please see “talking about your research project with your informants” protocol available on iLearn for more detailed guidelines on what key areas of ethical research practice should be included in this appendix.)

You will be assessed based on a number of elements (see assessment rubric for details), but

what I will be principally looking for is clear writing, rigorous ethnographic analysis situated within a body of academic scholarship, creativity, and ethical research practice.

Please note that, in order to pass this unit, you **must submit a final paper** (“ethnographic research paper”). Failure to do so will result in a failing mark, regardless of your performance in other aspects of the unit.

On successful completion you will be able to:

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Oral presentation of research

Due: **31 May / 7 June**

Weighting: **10%**

Brief description: The last 2 weeks of class will be devoted to in-class presentations of your research projects this semester.

Details: You will have precisely 10 minutes to present and you will be strictly timed and cut off at 10 minutes, so please plan your presentation very carefully. The presentation should touch on the following: your area of interest, your research question, what research techniques you used and what kind of data you were and were *not* able to gather using the method of participant-observation. Please also discuss the stylistic approach you decided to take in writing up your research for your mini-ethnography and how your *methods* of ethnography connected (or disconnected!) with your *writing* of ethnography. You will be assessed based on how well you cover the above points and on your clarity of presentation.

In your presentation, it is imperative that you do not use the real names of your research informants or any identifying details. You will lose marks if there is any sign that you have failed to protect the confidentiality of your informants in this presentation.

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techniques and seek employment as a field researcher in a variety of occupational fields.

Delivery and Resources

iLearn will be used to support this Unit.

NB. but echo will not be used. If students miss a session it is their responsibility -- not the convenor's -- to ensure that they are up to date.

****Weekly attendance is compulsory****

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central \(https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central\)](https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

- [Academic Appeals Policy](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Academic Progression Policy](#)
- [Assessment Policy](#)
- [Fitness to Practice Procedure](#)
- [Grade Appeal Policy](#)
- [Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public](#)
- [Special Consideration Policy](#) (**Note:** *The Special Consideration Policy is effective from 4 December 2017 and replaces the Disruption to Studies Policy.*)

Undergraduate students seeking more policy resources can visit the [Student Policy Gateway \(https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway\)](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/study/student-policy-gateway). It is your one-stop-shop for the key policies you need to know about throughout your undergraduate student journey.

If you would like to see all the policies relevant to Learning and Teaching visit [Policy Central \(https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policy-central\)](https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/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/study/getting-started/student-conduct>

Results

Results published on platform other than [eStudent](#), (eg. iLearn, Coursera etc.) or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au or if you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

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

If you are a Global MBA student contact globalmba.support@mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

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

Graduate Capabilities

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand the use of a variety of ethnographic research methods, including their strengths and the sorts of projects for which they might be most useful.
- Gain familiarity with a variety of methodological techniques
- Prepare a sample research proposal for a feasible participant-observation ethnographic

study; for those students considering advanced academic study, this proposal might be a stepping-stone.

- Acquire the knowledge and confidence to competently discuss and apply field research techniques and seek employment as a field researcher in a variety of occupational fields.

Assessment tasks

- Ethnographic research journal
- Ethnographic Research Paper

Capable of Professional and Personal Judgement and Initiative

We want our graduates to have emotional intelligence and sound interpersonal skills and to demonstrate discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgement. They will exercise initiative as needed. They will be capable of risk assessment, and be able to handle ambiguity and complexity, enabling them to be adaptable in diverse and changing environments.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Practice doing ethnographic research
- Gain familiarity with a variety of methodological techniques
- Receive regular feedback and have opportunities to discuss what they have learned with peers and instructors.
- Prepare a sample research proposal for a feasible participant-observation ethnographic study; for those students considering advanced academic study, this proposal might be a stepping-stone.
- Acquire the knowledge and confidence to competently discuss and apply field research techniques and seek employment as a field researcher in a variety of occupational fields.

Assessment tasks

- Ethics quiz
- Seminar Preparation and Par
- Research proposal/peer eval
- Ethnographic research journal
- Ethnographic Research Paper

Commitment to Continuous Learning

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships

with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Gain familiarity with a variety of methodological techniques
- Receive regular feedback and have opportunities to discuss what they have learned with peers and instructors.
- Prepare a sample research proposal for a feasible participant-observation ethnographic study; for those students considering advanced academic study, this proposal might be a stepping-stone.
- Acquire the knowledge and confidence to competently discuss and apply field research techniques and seek employment as a field researcher in a variety of occupational fields.

Assessment tasks

- Seminar Preparation and Par
- Ethnographic research journal
- Ethnographic Research Paper

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

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- Ethics quiz
- Seminar Preparation and Par
- Research proposal/peer eval
- Ethnographic research journal
- Ethnographic Research Paper
- Oral presentation of research

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

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- Oral presentation of research

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

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- Ethnographic research journal
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- Oral presentation of research

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

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- Oral presentation of research

Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation's historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand the use of a variety of ethnographic research methods, including their strengths and the sorts of projects for which they might be most useful.
- Receive regular feedback and have opportunities to discuss what they have learned with peers and instructors.
- Prepare a sample research proposal for a feasible participant-observation ethnographic study; for those students considering advanced academic study, this proposal might be a stepping-stone.
- Acquire the knowledge and confidence to competently discuss and apply field research techniques and seek employment as a field researcher in a variety of occupational fields.

Assessment tasks

- Ethics quiz

- Ethnographic research journal
- Ethnographic Research Paper

Socially and Environmentally Active and Responsible

We want our graduates to be aware of and have respect for self and others; to be able to work with others as a leader and a team player; to have a sense of connectedness with others and country; and to have a sense of mutual obligation. Our graduates should be informed and active participants in moving society towards sustainability.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Practice doing ethnographic research
- Prepare a sample research proposal for a feasible participant-observation ethnographic study; for those students considering advanced academic study, this proposal might be a stepping-stone.
- Acquire the knowledge and confidence to competently discuss and apply field research techniques and seek employment as a field researcher in a variety of occupational fields.

Assessment tasks

- Ethics quiz
- Ethnographic research journal
- Ethnographic Research Paper