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# The Digital and its Discontents-2017

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# About the course

## DT 303 Qualitative Methods II: Ethnographic Approaches

**Instructor:** Janaki Srinivasan

**TA:** Oindrila Matilal

**Class Meetings:** Monday 2-5 pm in Room 222

**Office Hours:** Tue 11.30am -12.30pm in Room 218

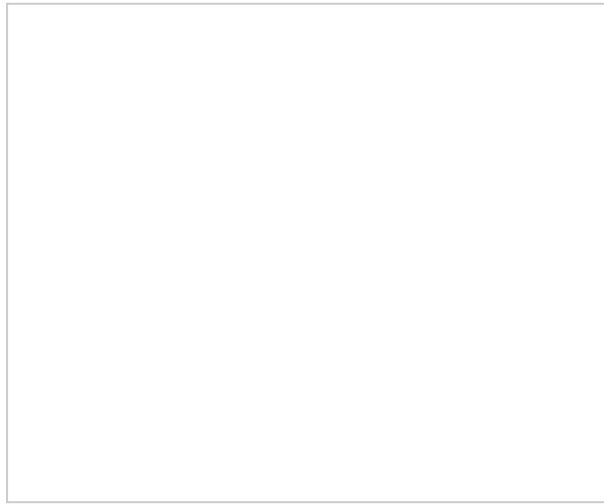
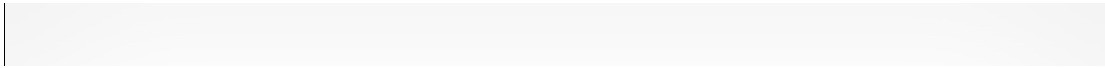
### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will help students think more deeply about their research design and process, and to structure those more effectively. With a focus on qualitative research methods, we will address how to craft a research question, match the question with the methods that best help answer that question, collect data using those methods and finally, marshal that data to draw conclusions. As a follow-up course to Qualitative Research Methods, this course will focus primarily on one specific approach to qualitative research: the ethnographic.

The course will help students understand the epistemological stances and research questions for which an ethnographic approach is best suited, as well the various ways in which this approach may be deployed (single site, multi-sited, relational comparison etc.). We will cover in detail the different methods of data collection associated with an ethnographic approach, particularly observation and interviews. We will also consider the advantages and costs of the ethnographic approach (relative to other approaches and methods), as well as the ethical concerns associated with research done using this approach.

By the end of the course, students will have built a mini research project from scratch, crafting a research question, identifying the appropriate methods to gather and analyse data to answer that question, the ethical concerns associated with their data collection and analysis, and finally, writing up their research.

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# Syllabus

## SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Monday, August 8, 2016: Introduction to Designing Social Science Research

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. "The Promise." In *Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp 3-24.

Creswell. 2003. **Chapter 1. A Framework for Design.** In *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage, pp. 3-26.

Monday, August 15, 2016: Holiday

## PART I. KNOWLEDGE CLAIMS

Monday, August 22, 2016: Paradigms in Social Science Research

Mills, C. Wright. 1959. “**The Bureaucratic Ethos.**” In *Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp.100-118.

Becker, Howard. 2007. “**Terrorized by the literature.**” In *Writing for Social Scientists. How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) University of Chicago Press, pp.135-149.

Becker, Howard. 1996. “**The Epistemology of Qualitative Research.**” In *Ethnography and Human Development*. Richard Jessor, Anne Colby and Richard Shweder (Eds.). University of Chicago Press, pp. 53-71.

### **Additional readings:**

Popper, Karl. 1991 [1934]. “**Falsificationism versus Conventionalism**” In *The Philosophy of Science*. Richard Boyd, Philip Gasper and J.D. Trout (Eds.). MIT Press, pp. 106-111.

Kuhn, Thomas. 1996. “**Introduction: A Role for History**” and “**Revolutions as Changes of World View.**” In *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). University of Chicago Press, pp. 1-10, 111-135.

(An early review of Kuhn) Shapere, Dudley. 2002 [1964]. “**The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.**” In *Philosophy of Science:*

*Contemporary Readings*. Yuri Balashov and Alex Rosenberg (eds.). Routledge, pp. 410-420.

Bloor, David. 2002 [1991]. “**The Strong Programme in the Sociology of Knowledge.**” In *Philosophy of Science: Contemporary Readings*. Yuri Balashov and Alex Rosenberg (eds.). Routledge, pp. 438-458.

Sayer, Andrew. 2000. “**Introducing Critical Realism.**” In *Realism and Social Science*. Sage, pp. 1-28.

Haraway, Donna. 1991. “**Situated Knowledges.**” In *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*. Routledge, Chapman and Hall, pp. 183-201.

**Monday, August 29, 2016: Explanation in Social Science Research .**

**For class discussion: Come prepared to discuss your research topic/ potential sites**

Bardhan, Pranab and Isha Ray. 2006. “**Methodological Approaches in Economics and Anthropology.**” Q Squared Working Paper 17. University of Toronto.

Ray, Isha.2006. “**Outcomes and Processes in Economics and Anthropology.**” *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, April.



Geertz, Clifford. 1973. “**Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture.**” In *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books, pp. 3-30

## Additional Readings

Little, Daniel. 1991. “**Introduction**” and “**Rational Choice Theory.**” In *Varieties of Social Explanation*. Westview Press, pp. 1-10, 39-66

Kincaid, Harold. 1994 [1990]. “**Defending Laws in Social Science.**” In *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*. Michael Martin & Lee McIntyre (Eds.). MIT Press, pp. 111-130.

Elster, Jon. 1994 [1985]. “**Functional Explanation in Social Science.**” In *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*. Michael Martin & Lee McIntyre (Eds.). MIT Press, pp. 403-414.

**Monday, September 5, 2016: Holiday**

**Assignment Due: *Framing a research question***

**Friday, September 9, 2016: Research Questions and Design**

Meyer, Robert and Ernest Greenwood. 1980. “**An Overview of the Research Design Process.**” and “**Conceptual Framework.**” In *Design of Social Policy Research*. Prentice Hall, pp. 67-76, 121-154.

Forcese, Dennis and Stephen Richter. 1973. “**Models, Hypothesis and Theory.**” In *Social Research Methods*. Prentice Hall, pp. 37-52.

Hackett Fischer, David. 1970. “**Fallacies of Question Framing.**” In *Historians’ Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought*. Harper Press, pp. 3-39.

## **Additional Readings**

Robert Adcock & David Collier. 2001. “**Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research.**” *American Political Science Review*, 95: 529 – 546

Reread Section “Further Thoughts” in Becker’s “The Epistemology of Qualitative Research.” pp.66-71.

## **PART II. TAKING AN ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH**

**Monday, September 12, 2016: A History of Ethnographic Fieldwork**

Sluka, Jeffrey A. and Antonius C.G.M. Robben. 2007. “**Fieldwork in Cultural Anthropology: An Introduction.**” In *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*. Antonius C.G.M. Robben and Jeffrey A. Sluka (Eds.). Blackwell, pp. 1-28.

Malinowski, Bronislaw. 2007 [1922]. “**Method and Scope of Anthropological Fieldwork.**” In *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*. Antonius C.G.M. Robben and Jeffrey A. Sluka (Eds.). Blackwell, pp. 46-57.

Geertz, C. 1972. “**Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight.**” *Daedalus* 101(1), 1-37.

## **Additional Readings**

Clair, Robin Patric. 2003. “**The Changing Story of Ethnography.**” In *Expressions of Ethnography: Novel Approaches to Qualitative Methods*. State University of New York Press, pp. 3-26.

## **Monday, September 19, 2016: Fieldwork Is Not What It Used To Be**

Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson. 1997. “**Discipline and Practice: ‘The Field’ as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology.**” In

*Anthropological Locations. Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science.*  
University of California Press, pp. 1-46.

Burawoy, Michael 1998. “**The Extended Case Method.**” *Sociological Theory* 16, 4-33.

Tacchi, Jo; Don Slater and Greg Hearn. 2003. “**Introduction.**” In *Ethnographic Action Research*. UNESCO, pp. 1-7.

Blomberg, Jeanette and Helena Karasti. 2012. “**Positioning Ethnography within Participatory Design.**” In *Handbook of Participatory Design*. J. Simonsen and Robertson, T. (Eds.) Routledge.

## **Additional Reading**

**(Pick one of the three themes below to read more on specific aspects of how the ethnographic approach has evolved)**

### On redefining the field/fieldwork/fieldworker

Marcus, George E. 1995. “**Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography.**” In *Ethnography Through Thick and Thin*. Princeton University Press, pp. 79-105.

Clifford, J. 1983." **On Ethnographic Authority.**" *Representations*, (2), 118-146.

Passaro, Joanne. 1997. "**You Can't Take the Subway to the Field!**" In *Anthropological Locations. Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*. University of California Press, 147-162.

Stacey, J. "**Can there be a Feminist Ethnography?**" In *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (Eds.). Routledge, pp.111-120.

### On linking ethnographic research to theory.

Burawoy, Michael. 1991. "**Reconstructing Social Theory.**" In *Ethnography Unbound. Power and Resistance in the Modern Metropolis*. Michael Burawoy et al. (Eds.). University of California Press, pp. 8-27.

Burawoy, Michael. 2000. "**Introduction**" In *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections and Imaginations in a Postmodern World*. Michael Burawoy et al. (Eds.). University of California Press, pp. 1-6, 24-35.

Charmaz, Kathy and Richard G. Mitchell. "**Grounded Theory in Ethnography.**" In *Handbook of Ethnography*. Paul Anthony Atkinson,

Sara Delamont, Amanda Coffey, John Lofland and Lyn H Lofland (Eds.)  
Sage, pp. 160-174

On combining ethnographic research with other methodologies

Kripa Ananthpur, Kabir Malik and Vijayendra Rao. 2014. “**The Anatomy of Failure: An Ethnography of a Randomized Trial to Deepen Democracy in Rural India.**” *World Bank Development Research Group Working Paper No. 6958.*

**Monday, September 26, 2016: An Ethnographic Approach for/with the Digital**

Burrell, Jenna. 2009. “**The Field Site as a Network: A Strategy for Locating Ethnographic Research.**” *Field Methods* 21(2), pp.181-199.

Blomberg, Jeanette and Helena Karasti. 2013. “**Reflections on 25 Years of Ethnography in CSCW.**” *Computer Supported Cooperative Work* 22, pp. 373–423.

Horst, Heather A. 2016. “**Being in Fieldwork: Collaboration, Digital Media, and Ethnographic Practice.**” In *eFieldnotes. The Makings of Anthropology in the Digital World*. Roger Sanjek and Susan W. Tratner (Eds.). University of Pennsylvania Press, pp.153-168.

Boellstorff, Tom; Bonnie Nardi; Celia Pearce and T. L. Taylor. 2012. “**Why this Handbook**” and “**Three Brief Histories.**” In *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method*. Princeton University Press, pp. 1-27.

***For class discussion: Come prepared to discuss a relevant ethnography that you have picked for reading***

**Assignment Due: *Crafting an ethnographic research design and identifying a relevant ethnography***

### **PART III. LEARNING BY READING AND DOING**

No time like midterm break to read a complete ethnography (or two!). We will all read one ethnography in common during the break and start to read (and reread in parallel through the rest of the semester) another ethnography that is relevant to your research project (picked in consultation with me). A list of possible choices are listed at the end of this syllabus.

We will all read:

Orr, Julian E. 1996. *Talking about Machines: An Ethnography of a Modern Job*. Collection on Technology and Work. ILR Press.

## Monday, October 17, 2016: An Ethnographic Approach at Work

Discuss Orr (1996).

Gans, Herbert. 1976. "The West End: An Urban Village" and "On the Methods Used in this Study" In *The Research Experience*. Patricia M. Golden (ed.). Northeastern, pp. 40 – 84

Lofland, John and Lyn Lofland. 2006. "Evaluating Data Sites," "Getting In," and "Getting Along" In *Analyzing Social Settings. A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Wadsworth, pp. 15-80.

Bauer, Martin W and Bas Aarts. 2000. "Corpus Construction: a Principle for Qualitative Data Collection" In *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound: A Practical Handbook for Social Research*. Martin Bauer and George Gaskell (Eds.). Sage, pp. 19-37.

**Assignment Due: Ethnography report**

## Monday, October 24, 2016: (Participant) Observation

Lofland, John and Lyn Lofland. 2006. "Logging data." In *Analyzing Social Settings. A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Wadsworth, pp. 81-98, 108-118.



Emerson, R.M.; R.I Fretz and L.L. Shaw. 1995. “**Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research,**” “**In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes**” and “**At the Desk, Creating Scenes on a Page**” In *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press, pp.1-88.

Boellstorff, Tom; Bonnie Nardi; Celia Pearce and T. L. Taylor. 2012. “**Participant Observation in Virtual Worlds.**” In *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method*. Princeton University Press, pp. 65-91.

Nardi, Bonni A. 2016. “**When Fieldnotes Seem to Write Themselves: Ethnography Online.**” In *eFieldnotes. The Makings of Anthropology in the Digital World*. Roger Sanjek and Susan W. Tratner (Eds.). University of Pennsylvania Press, pp.192-209.

**Discussion: Your field journals**

**Assignment Due: Fieldnotes from observation exercise**

**Monday, October 31, 2016: Holiday**

**Assignment Due: Analysis of interview 1 (notes taken by hand)**

**Friday, November 4, 2016: Interviewing**

Weiss, Robert S. 1994. “Introduction” “Preparation for Interviewing” and “Interviewing.” In *Learning from Strangers. The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Free Press, pp. 1-14, 39-120.

Anderson, K. and D. Jack. 1991. “Learning to Listen” In *Women’s Words*. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (Eds.) Routledge Chapman and Hall, pp. 11-26.

Lofland, John and Lyn Lofland. 2006. “Data Logging in Intensive Interviewing: Guides and Write-ups.” In *Analyzing Social Settings. A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Wadsworth, pp. 99-108.

Boellstorff, Tom; Bonnie Nardi; Celia Pearce and T. L. Taylor. 2012. “Interviews and Virtual Worlds Research.” In *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method*. Princeton University Press, pp. 92-112.

## Additional Readings

Kvale, S. 1996. “The Interview as Conversation” In *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Sage, pp.19-37.

Borland, K. 1991. “That’s Not What I Said.” In *Women’s Words*. Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai (Eds.) Routledge Chapman and Hall,

pp. 63-75.

Lakshmi, C.S. 2000. “Introduction” and “Dhondutai Kulkarni”. In *The Singer and the Song: Conversations with Women Musicians*. Kali for Women, pp. vii – xlvii and 103-126.

## Monday, November 7, 2016: Other Kinds of Data Collection Methods

Gaver, Bill; Tony Dunne and Elena Pacenti, 1999. “Cultural Probes” *Interactions* (Jan-Feb), 21-29.

Harper, Douglas. 2002. “Talking about Pictures: A Case for Photo Elicitation.” *Visual Studies* 17 (1), 13-26.

Tarlo, Emma. 2003. “Introduction.” In *Unsettling Memories. Narratives of the Emergency in Delhi*. Permanent Black, pp.1-20.

Star, Susan Leigh. 199. “The Ethnography of Infrastructure.” *American Behavioral Scientist* 43(3), 377-391

Boellstorff, Tom; Bonnie Nardi; Celia Pearce and T. L. Taylor. 2012. “Other Data Collection Methods for Virtual Worlds Research.” In

*Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method*. Princeton University Press, pp. 113-128.

Also take a look at

On methods for ethnographers of the digital:

<http://ethnographymatters.net/methods/>

On doing an ethnography of future infrastructures:

<https://www.epicpeople.org/ethnographies-of-future-infrastructures/>

On using graphics as a method in ethnography:

<http://www.utpteachingculture.com/learning-graphic-novels-from-an-artists-perspective/>

**Assignment Due: *Analysis of interview 2 (recorded)***

**Monday, November 14, 2016: Analyzing Data**

Coffey, Amanda and Paul Atkinson. 1996. "Concepts and Coding." In *Making Sense of Qualitative Data. Complementary Research Strategies*. Sage, pp. 26-53.

Emerson, R.M.; R.I Fretz and L.L. Shaw. 1995. “**Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing.**” In *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press, pp.171-200.

Weiss, Robert S. 1994. “**Analysis of Data.**” In *Learning from Strangers. The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. Free Press, pp. 151-182.

Boellstorff, Tom; Bonnie Nardi; Celia Pearce and T. L. Taylor. 2012. “**Data Analysis**” In *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method*. Princeton University Press, pp. 159-182. **(Pay special attention to “Working with images, video, and textual data”)**

## **Additional Reading**

Agar, Michael. 1987. “**Transcript Handling: An Ethnographic Strategy.**” *Oral History Review* 15 (1), 209-219.

Kvale, Steiner and Jean Lave. 1995. “**What is anthropological research? An interview with Jean Lave by Steinar Kvale.**” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 8 (3). **(Read the whole, but pay particular attention to the parts on analysing notes)**

***For class discussion: Bring your fieldnotes and an interview transcript to class for analysis***

## **Monday, November 21, 2016: Writing Up**

Lofland, John and Lyn Lofland. 2006. “**Developing Analysis**” And “**Writing Analysis**.” In *Analyzing Social Settings. A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). Wadsworth, pp. 195-240.

Emerson, R.M.; R.I Fretz and L.L. Shaw. 1995. “**Writing an Ethnography**.” In *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press, pp.201-241.

Boellstorff, Tom; Bonnie Nardi; Celia Pearce and T. L. Taylor. 2012. “**Writing Up, Presenting, and Publishing, Ethnographic Fieldwork**.” In *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method*. Princeton University Press, pp. 182-195.

## **Friday, November 25, 2016: Ethics**

Thorne, Barrie. 1980. “**You Still Takin’ Notes?**” Fieldwork and Problems of Informed Consent.” *Social Problems* 27 (3), *Ethical Problems of Fieldwork*, 284-297

Boellstorff, Tom; Bonnie Nardi; Celia Pearce and T. L. Taylor. 2012. "Ethics." In *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method*. Princeton University Press, pp. 129-150.

Grimes, Justin M.; Kenneth; R. Fleischman and Paul T. Jaeger. 2009. "Virtual Guinea Pigs: Ethical implications of Human Subjects Research in Virtual Worlds." *International Journal of Internet Research Ethics* 2 (1), 38-56.

Also read about the Facebook emotional manipulation study controversy: <https://socialmediacollective.org/2014/08/19/msr-faculty-summit-2014-ethics-panel-recap/>

## Additional reading

Diane Wolf. "Situating Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork." In *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork*. Harper Collins, pp.1-55

Wilson, K. "Thinking about the ethics of fieldwork." In *Fieldwork in Developing Countries*. Stephen Devereux and John Hoddinott (Eds.) Lynne Rienner, pp. 179-199

**Monday, November 28, 2016: Wrap Up**

Burawoy, Michael. 1991. "Teaching Participant Observation." In *Ethnography Unbound. Power and Resistance in the Modern Metropolis*. Michael Burawoy et al. (Eds.). University of California Press, pp. 291-300.

~~Monday, December 5~~ Wednesday, December 7, 2016 (midnight) **NO further extensions possible, so please do not ask for any!**

Assignment Due: *Your mini ethnography*

Suggestions for ethnographies to read

Alač, Morana. 2011. *Handling Digital Brains. A Laboratory Study of Multimodal Semiotic Interaction in the Age of Computers*. MIT Press.

Boellstroff, Tom. 2015. *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). Princeton University Press. (Available in the IITB library)

Burrell, Jenna. 2012. *Invisible Users. Youth in the Internet Cafés of Urban Ghana*. MIT Press. (Available in the IITB library)

Hull, Mathew S. 2012. *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in urban Pakistan*. University of California Press.



(Available in the IIITB library)

Kumar, Richa. 2015. *Rethinking Revolutions: Soyabean, Choupals, and the Changing Countryside in Central India*. Oxford University Press.

(Available in the IIITB library)

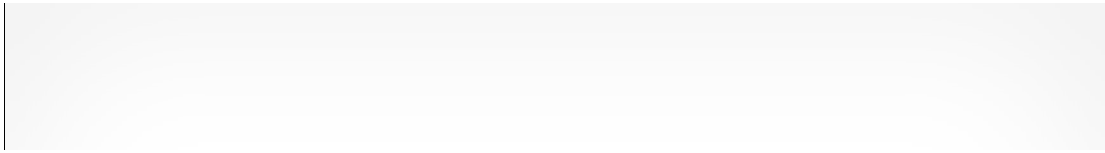
Malhotra, Paven. 2002. *From Hyderabad to 'Cyberabad': Technological Visions and the Everyday Bureaucracy*. Undergraduate Thesis. Harvard.

Takhteyev, Yuri. 2012. *Coding Places. A Global Ethnography of Software in Brazil*. MIT Press. (Available in the IIITB library)

Traweek, Sharon. 1992. *Beamtimes and Lifetimes. The World of High Energy Physicists*. Harvard University Press.

Willis, Paul. 1977. *Learning to Labour. How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*. Columbia University Press.

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# Resources

PBS Commanding Heights website :

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/commandingheights/>

Country Studies Website : <http://countrystudies.us/>

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# Assignments

## CLASS REQUIREMENTS & EVALUATION SCHEME

This is a seminar style class, and your participation will make or break the class! You will be expected to show up in class having done the readings assigned (if you are an MS/PhD student, this includes the 'Additional Readings'). Your participation grade will be based on the extent to which you engage with the material in our discussions in class and on the LMS (see 'Reading Response and class participation' below) – trust me, you will find it very hard to do either if you have not read the material for class.

### **Leading class: 10%**

Twice in the semester, you will be required to lead the seminar (in the first 15-20 minutes of class). In the weeks you choose to lead class, you will need to do both the mandatory and additional readings. You may choose how you lead the class: summarize and challenge the main

arguments of the readings for the week in a presentation; engage your classmates in an exercise based on the readings for the week or on their responses to those readings (see below); examine research reported in mainstream media along the dimension of method discussed in the readings for the week etc.

### **Reading responses and Class Participation: 10%**

You will be required to submit written responses to your readings every week other than the weeks you are leading class. In your response, you will engage with the primary argument of one of your readings for the week (no more than a page please). Post the mid-term, your fieldwork should guide your responses to readings. While each response will not be individually graded, your submissions are mandatory and will count towards class participation since they are expected to shape class discussions. Please submit your responses on the LMS as a blog by midnight the day prior to class (i.e. Sunday midnight) so that your classmates have a chance to read your responses.

### **Ethnography response: 15% (Midterm submission due Oct 17)**

You will need to submit a 5 page response (no more than 2000 words) to an ethnography you will all read as a class during your midterm

break. Your submission will summarize how the ethnography you read responds (or doesn't) to some of the critiques leveraged at the ethnographic approach (covered in previous weeks), and how it will shape your own ethnographic fieldwork in the next weeks (by pointing to literature, pre-empting unique challenges on the field or in your analysis, or in any other way you find useful).

The ethnography response should be submitted to janaki dot srinivasan at iitb dot ac dot in. Your submissions should be in pdf format, and named 'LastName-EthnographyResponse-2016'. The email subject line should read 'EthnographyResponse-AQM-2016'.

### **Research project: 65%**

This course will be organized around a mini research project involving the study of technology users. You will arrive at a topic and design a research study based on it. You will decide on research methods to use and why those methods fit your study. This will be followed by practical exercises where you will deploy these methods to gather data. Finally, you will analyse the data you have gathered using multiple methods to write a final paper.

Each of these components of the research process will be associated with an assignment that you may use to build your final paper. In

general, you will need to start planning out this schedule much ahead of the deadline since you need to complete and submit assignments based on your fieldwork by the deadline indicated below.

The various project components should be submitted to janaki dot srinivasan at iitb dot ac dot in. Your submissions should be in pdf format, and named 'LastName-AssignmentTitle-2016' (for eg., my submission for interview2 would be *Srinivasan-Interview2-2016.pdf*). The email subject line should read 'AssignmentTitle-AQM-2016'.

### **Framing a research question: 5% (Due Sep 5)**

Submit the research question that will direct your research project for this class. Make your question as broad or narrow as you wish at this stage – as long as it pertains to the site you have decided to study. Sub-questions are discouraged at this stage, but if you must have them, no more than three please! If (and only if) you have claims or hypotheses implicitly associated with your question, make them explicit in your submission (“I believe I will find that ...”).

The readings for this week, especially **Hackett Fisher's** – as well as prior readings for class on ontology and epistemology – should help you decide what makes for an acceptable, interesting and/or feasible



research question, and why an ethnographic approach will/won't help you answer it!

Needless to say, your question will evolve through the course of the class and your fieldwork – so don't worry about whether your question is the 'right' one to ask. That said, do think through your question and whether or not it will allow you to explore the key phenomena you are currently interested in.

### **Crafting an ethnographic research design: 10% (Due Sep 26)**

You now have a research question to work with. Your **ethnographic research design** will tell us what your "field" is (and what it is a case of, where relevant); whether it is single or multi-sited; what population you will be working with; how you will leverage different methods (mainly participant observation and interviews) towards answering your research question and what ethical issues you expect to encounter during your research. Please attempt this in a page or less (300-400 words).

Now **identify a relevant ethnography** on which you plan to draw for your project. Ideally, a comprehensive "literature review" would have informed your research question. Since the constraints of a class and a semester do not allow for that, this ethnography will act as your mini

literature review for the purposes of this project. Needless to say, you may read more to broaden your review! A few potential ethnographies are listed at the end of the syllabus.

- In identifying an ethnography, ensure that *it speaks to your research question*. Remember, this resonance may be for any of a variety of reasons: because the ethnography focuses on the same domain of activity as your research question, or it addresses the same geography, or it asks similar questions about technology, or its theoretical lens resembles your own and so forth.
- Also bear in mind that you will eventually want to *use the findings from your research project to build on the argument and insights of this ethnography*: so, pick an ethnography which has that potential!

Tell us what ethnography you picked and why (along the dimensions outlined above) in 100-200 words.

**Fieldnotes from observation exercise: 10% (Due Oct 24)**

For this assignment, you will submit two (single-spaced) pages (or about a half-hour's worth of observations) from your fieldnotes (fleshed out, not jottings), accompanied by a page of analysis.

As you conduct your observation sessions, you will find yourself experimenting with different styles of jotting down notes and fleshing them out (inventing codes for quotes vs. paraphrasing; abbreviations for commonly encountered subjects, objects and actions; what you choose to describe or leave out; how you organize your observations and your analysis etc.) – for this assignment, we need just one such snippet and style! Your notes could be about your entry into the field, the establishment of rapport, a ‘routine’ day, or a ‘dramatic’ day. All I ask is that it involve a ‘thick’ description and analysis of your time in the field, and how these contribute to your research question and theme.

**Analysis of interview 1 (where you took notes taken by hand): 10%**  
(Due Oct 31)

For this assignment, you will submit two (single-spaced) pages (or about an half-hour’s worth of interviewing) of your interview transcript, accompanied by a page of analysis.

Your submission should include

- a brief description of your interviewee (gender, age, role at fieldsite), your rationale for interviewing them, where the

interview was conducted (can be masked, if required), and who else was present at the interview.

- your interview guide (*optional, but encouraged*). Note, this will likely be different in content and question sequence than what you eventually ended up asking the interviewee.
- two pages worth of the interview itself. This must include your questions (as asked in the field, rather than from your interview guide) and your interviewee's responses. You must also include interjections by people other than your interviewee where these took place.
- a page of analysis of the interview, including challenges faced in conducting the interview and writing it up (for eg., in going from handwritten/typed notes to fleshing out the transcript), and how your interviewee's responses contribute to your understanding of research question/theme.

Feel free to experiment with notations – how you include pauses, incomplete and trailing sentences, other actions around that appear to bear on the interviewee's answers, and verbal interjections by others – in your interview transcript.

**Analysis of interview 2 (which you recorded): 10% (Due Nov 7)**

Much like for the previous assignment, you will submit two (single-spaced) pages (or about an half-hour's worth of interviewing) of your interview transcript, accompanied by a page of analysis.

Once again, your submission should include

- a brief description of your interviewee (gender, age, role at fieldsite), your rationale for interviewing them, where the interview was conducted (can be masked, if required), and who else was present at the interview.
- your interview guide (*optional, but encouraged*). Note, this will likely be different in content and question sequence than what you eventually ended up asking the interviewee.
- two pages worth of the recorded interview itself. This must include your questions (as asked in the field, rather than from your interview guide) and your interviewee's responses. You must also include interjections by people other than your interviewee where these took place.
- a page of analysis of the interview, including challenges faced in conducting and writing up a recorded interview (vs. relying solely on handwritten notes) and how your interviewee's responses contribute to your understanding of research question/theme.

This time too, feel free to experiment with notations in your interview transcript.

**Writing up:** 20% (End Term submission due ~~Dec 5~~ Dec 7, Wednesday, midnight – absolutely NO extensions possible, so please do not ask for any)

For the concluding assignment, you will submit a ‘mini-ethnography’ of 5000-7500 words (or between 10-15 single-spaced pages). This ethnography will be a culmination (or a first step!) of the fieldwork project you have designed and undertaken over the course of this semester. It will provide you an opportunity to pull together your multiple data sources and research themes into one coherent whole.

While it is up to you how you structure your ethnography, I do expect it to consist of the following sections (in no particular order) at minimum

- Introduction (and argument!)
- Reflection on your fieldsite and methods
- Literature (at least the ethnography you picked)
- Themes from your research
- Conclusion (and contributions)

I will evaluate the ethnography for

- methodological rigor, reflexivity and the appropriateness of methods to the topic/question at hand
- a sound argument and your use of fieldwork data to substantiate that argument
- the novelty of its claims and how you engage with existing claims in your chosen domain of study
- clarity of writing

## **PLAGIARISM**

This class has a zero-tolerance policy towards plagiarism. Every time you plagiarize (even if you argue that it is merely quoting someone without citing them), and starting from the first such instance, you will receive a zero for that assignment. Please clear any citation queries you may have ahead of time.

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