

(CRN: 56408) SOCI 206, Spring, 2015: Video Ethnography
Carl Milofsky partnering with Brianna Derr, Video Production
Specialist (Library)

TR 2:30-3:52, ACWS 215

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Office Hours Wed 11:00-12:00 milofsky@bucknell.edu;

Course web: <http://videoethnography.blogs.bucknell.edu>

Common Learning Agenda Requirements Satisfied: SOSC.

College Core Curriculum Requirements Satisfied: SLSC

This course explores the nature of ethnographic research and does so with an emphasis on visual and contextual elements shape a sociological or anthropological understanding of a setting. We will examine specific aspects of the social work and different social mechanisms, seeking examples of these in our local world and carrying out exercises to develop video skills that help to portray social situations. The course will culminate with a video project put together by teams of students.

This course will teach specific video skills while it also will seek to develop an understanding of what ethnography means and skills at being in the field and observing analytically.

Access Statement Any student who may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss the specific needs. Please contact Heather Fowler, Director of the Office of Accessibility Resources at 570-577-1188 or hfoo7@bucknell.edu who will help coordinate reasonable accommodations for those students with documented disabilities.

SOCI 206 and the University and Departmental Curriculum.

This course fulfills the College Core Curriculum's Social Sciences requirement. The requirement encourages students: 1) to explore the complex interaction between individuals, social groups, social structures, history, and culture; and 2) to apply theoretical principles of social analysis to critically interpret society.

This course carries out these ideas by exploring the nature of diversity in the Central Pennsylvania environment. While Central Pennsylvania seems homogenous and small in scale to many, we will discover unique nuances and differences among the people of the area, between communities, and in different settings we uncover. Sociology learning goals emphasize the importance of applying sociological concepts and we will recognize the importance of social class and inequality, religious differences, the relationship between different kinds of local industrial history to the structure of contemporary communities, and ways that local institutions present themselves to the community and operate internally. Sociology learning goals also emphasize the importance of learning methodological techniques. This course will explore and develop qualitative methodological skills and ways of using qualitative methods to develop a research project set up as a video production.

By the end of the semester students will:

1. understand how to find settings that can be studied meaningfully using ethnographic techniques
2. understand what we mean by ethnographic research and how different aspects of social situations can be understood ethnographically.
3. learn and develop basic skills in handling video equipment, learn how to shoot film in a way that produces effective video sequences, and learn to do elementary video editing.
4. produce a substantial video project.

Students are encouraged to visit the Moodle site for the course, which provides a complete list of learning outcomes specific to the College Core Curriculum, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, and Bucknell University at large.

Important Information about Field Experiences

Students in this course must complete several short field assignments. You must be willing to leave campus to do this work and you must be mindful about the importance of protecting and respecting the safety and autonomy of people you observe and include in your film projects

Students who do not have a car, who are at least in their second year, and who have clear driving records should take Bucknell's driving test (\$25 fee). Then you may check out a university car. The tests will be given in the ELC Forum and notices about when they are given will be posted around campus. If you cannot get to your field site, you cannot complete your assignment.

If you have your own car and want to be reimbursed for gas, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology has the Meerwarth Fund, an undergraduate research grant program that will reimburse your costs. You must, however, submit a proposal to secure funding. To do this talk to Prof. Milofsky.

The Idea of the Course

Ethnography is a contact sport that you can only learn by doing it. Most of us are somewhat shy or uncomfortable when we ask strangers to allow us to observe them or to work in a setting they control. When you first start out as a field observer you may choose safe but not very interesting settings. As you observe more often and in more challenging settings it will seem less threatening to reach out and the ambiguity of being in a place that you do not understand will become less uncomfortable. Our plan is have you move from small, familiar, close to home settings to settings that are more unusual, more distant from Bucknell, and more challenging to interpret and understand. We will give you a series of exercises that combine social observation with a need to think about what aspects of a social scene can be captured and represented using visual tools like video.

While skills are important this class also is an exploration of Central Pennsylvania is a place made up of diverse settings, fascinating people, and challenging institutional dynamics. Students will work individually and in teams to select and capture aspects of what makes Central Pennsylvania engaging, striking, and diverse. We will all have individual projects but our goal is to create a class project that opens up Central Pennsylvania as a place to observe and experience.

Some student projects require that Bucknell's Institutional Review Board examine and approve a project proposal describing the research and ways risks to human subjects will be protected. A description of this process is given in Chapter Eight of *The Field Notes Manual*, "Ethics, Risk, and Some Emotional Consequences of Field Research" which is available on the course Moodle site. Students engaging in research should take the on line protection of human subjects course and become certified through the CITI system available at: <https://www.citiprogram.org/Default.asp> . To learn about Bucknell's Institutional Review Board go to: <https://my.bucknell.edu/x56232.html>. To submit a proposal and initiate a review by Bucknell's IRB go to: <https://my.bucknell.edu/x56250.html>. Some students may also need to secure background checks in order to work in settings with children or protected populations. To learn about how to carry out background checks go to: <http://www.csiu.org/index.cfm?pageid=2375>.

Grading

This course is based mostly around viewing films with some readings and several short projects where you will have to go into the field to complete a specific task. Field work is personally challenging as is film making but it is essential that you complete each task fully and on time. For that reason, participation will be an important part of your grade. You must enter the results you produce for your exercise assignments as posting on a personal blog, which we will explain to you. There will be seven "exercises" set up as assignments and a final short film you must produce and present. Along with the film you'll be asked to create an explanatory poster and you will be asked to electronically hand in both the film and the text from the poster.

Here are components of grading:

Participation	10%
First exercise assignment (3 parts)	20%
Response to film writing (4 responses)	20%
Team projects	18%
Final film and poster	32%

The following book has been ordered and should appear in the bookstore but it will take a week or so after the beginning of classes:

Howard S. Becker, *Telling about Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2007). Paper edition, ISBN: 970226041261 (\$15.00).

You can buy the e-book version from Kindle immediately on the first day of classes for \$9.99.

Course Schedule

- 1 Jan 15 Th Explain the point of the class and discuss what we mean by ethnography and what we will be doing when we do ethnographic projects.
Give out and explain the first assignment

Show 45 minutes of *Dog Town and Z Boys*. Distribute viewing guide. Students must answer one question in writing and be prepared to discuss responses and hand them in at the end of the next class. What makes the film ethnographic?

****Writing**** The first writing assignment will be handed out in class but it also is available on Moodle.
- 2 Jan 20 Tu Discuss *Dog Town and Z Boys*. Introduce the semester class project: an ethnographic film on MG 101. What is MG 101? Why do a film? What will the product look like, what do we need to do, what is the schedule of planning, shooting, and editing?

Discuss whether this is a project students want to do. Time demands allow us to do only one project as a class. We considered another project but decided it requires more advanced planning than we have.

Discuss the first assignment which was handed out last class.

****Read**** Becker, Ch. 7, "Reality aesthetics."
- 3 Jan 22 Th View *Baraka* in class. Distribute discussion guide with "Bucknell Baraka" assignment. Students must complete one discussion question for next class.

****Read**** Becker, Ch. 1, "Telling about society."
- 4 Jan 27 Tu Extra class, 11:00 discuss class project and make a decision (we chose the Fire History Museum).
- 4 Jan 27 Tu Discuss *Baraka*. Discuss what it would mean to make a 1 minute "Bucknell Baraka" film. Distribute *Bucknell Baraka* assignment, **due February 12**.

Brianna Vixia camera training.
- 5 Jan 29 Th Tulu Bayar visits class. Discuss what it means to be visual and sociological at the same time.

****Read**** Becker, Ch. 11, "Visual sociology, documentary photography, and photojournalism"

- 6 Feb 3 Tu The auction experience. Discuss field notes writing. Talk about the Shamokin Fire History Museum, the need for a proposal, general orientation of our class project
- **Writing**** Discuss your first auction visit. Put your field notes on the class blog at:
<https://videoethnography.blogs.bucknell.edu/>
- **Read**** C. Milofsky and J.A. Schneider, "Writing interpretive field notes," Ch. 9 from *The Field Notes Manual. Doing Ethnography in Sociology and Anthropology* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University, unpublished manuscript, 2006) **and**
C. Milofsky, "Ethnography of a Hospital Emergency Room," Appendix C in *The Field Notes Manual. Doing Ethnography in Sociology and Anthropology* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University, unpublished manuscript, 2006)
- 7 Feb 5 Th Discuss and plan Fire History Museum film project.
- Discuss new syllabus
- Discuss layout and treatment
- Discuss scheduling for informal visits to Shamokin.
- Students must complete CITI certification.
- Outside of class, students come up with a list of activities and items that will involve costs. Begin writing the Meerwarth Proposal for the class.
- 8 Feb 10 Tu Class field visit to the Middleburg Livestock Auction.
- 9 Feb 12 Th Tom Grbenick
- Feb 15 Sun Meet with Shamokin Rescue Company leaders. Leave 10:30 am; return 3 pm.
- 10 Feb 17 Tu Interviewing. **Brianna** discusses video set ups for interviewing. **Carl** discusses sociological aspects of interviewing. We do student interviewing exercises Protecting human subjects and permission forms. CITI certification.
- 11 Feb 19 Th *Bucknell Baraka* assignment due to be shown in class.
- Discuss Auction Assignment #2. Place 4-5 photographs on the class blog so they can be shared, you can explain them, and we can talk about them.

Students go to lunch talk with Jonathon Gottschall, author of *The Storytelling Animal* and a contributor to Radio Lab. We'll want to attend his talk today at noon.

- 12 Feb 24 Tu Interview exercises due. View and discuss in class.
- 13 Feb 26 Th Field Day (interviewing auction interviews)
- 14 Mar 3 Tu Treatments (each student presents a treatment)
- 15 Mar 5 Th Students show their auction interviews to class.

Mar 10, Mar 12 Spring Break

- 16 Mar 17 Tu Community video. Brandn Green visits to explain the "40 Mile Project". Learn about the the film he is making with a student on the coal region women who are being beatified as saints. Interview set up practice; mock interview that's real with Father Marty.

****Read**** B. G. Anderson, "The anthropologist as listener and observer. A French farm village." Pp. 7-24 in *Around the World in Thirty Years* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press 2000).

- 17 Mar 19 Th Class resolution of treatment (students have done different treatmentys). What's our story? Show CARE Program video. Who are we interviewing. Who are the key players. Build interview questions for each person. Develop production schedule.

After this, we're in production!

- 18 Mar 24 Tu Finish discussion of class film treatment and produce a tight shooting schedule.

Alert students to *Titicut Follies* discussion questions (for March 31). Read through them before that class so you have them in mind as you watch the film.

- 19 Mar 26 Th **No class, shooting.** We will have created a tight, demanding filming schedule. Students will be scheduling and conducting those interviews when they can do so.

- 20 Mar 31 Tu Film viewing session: *Titicut Follies*, by Frederick Wiseman. Call # HV8742.U52 T59

For next class, respond to **one** discussion questions by posting on the Moodle Forum discussion board.

****Read** On Moodle** Frederick Wiseman, Privacy and Documentary Filmmaking." *Social Research* 68 (1): 41-47 (Spring 2001).

Thomas Szasz, “*The Titicut Follies: The forgotten case of psychiatric censorship.*” *History of Psychiatry* 18(1): 123-125.
Titicut Follies information (from New York University film archive)

****Read**** Becker, Ch ____ (chapter on *Titicut Follies*)

****Writing**** Respond to one *Titicut Follies* discussion question.

21 Apr 2 Th **No class, shooting.** We will have created a tight, demanding filming schedule. Students will be scheduling and conducting those interviews when they can do so.

22 Apr 7 Tu **Wrapping up production.**
 Film *Searching for Sugar Man*. Call # ML420.R637 S43 2013
****Writing**** Respond to one *Searching for Sugar Man* discussion question.

23 Apr 9 Th **Brianna:** Final Cut Pro training.

24 Apr 14 Tu **Class meets at 11:00-12:30!!!**
 Editing
Meet in Video Lab.

25 Apr 16 Th **Class meets at 11:00-12:30!!!**
 Polishing
Meet in Video Lab.

26 Apr 21 Tu View and discuss film in class, or set up Shamokin viewing.

27 Apr 24 Th 11:00 AM-1:00 PM, Conference space, first floor, Academic West.

Student film presentations at the social science students’ poster session. Video stations will be set up for students to show their films. One still image showing what the video is about and a small (18” XZ 24”) and poster giving a synopsis of the process of doing the film (showing the three assignments) and the ethnographic thinking behind the film.

28 Apr 28 Tu Course evaluation, last student film presentation. (Milofsky is likely not to be present because of a family health issue that will take him out of town. Last class.)