Addendum

Item 29a. NEW COURSE - Anthropology
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ANTH 161 Fieldwork Lab

Bulletin Description: A hands-on field course in ethnographic methods, the signature toolkit of cultural anthropology. Individual and collaborative small-scale projects. Students develop skills and experience in key strategies of "participant-observation"; research design; spatial, visual, and discourse analysis; formal and informal interviewing; fieldnote writing and coding; ethnographic writing. Fieldwork ethics, including IRB applications. Questions arising from the politics of difference, encounter, experience, and representation in relation to scholarly, community, and industry/client interests. Intensive but suitable for students at all levels.

Rationale: Faculty and students in Anthropology have long felt the need for a regular, focused course teaching ethnographic methods to our own majors. We also see this class as useful for other students around the university who want to learn a set of research skills that has been developed in unique ways within anthropology and that is increasingly in demand by employers in many fields. We are discussing the option of eventually making this a requirement for the major, so that all Anthropology majors take a class in both theory (as currently required) and methods. That longer discussion is ongoing, but in the meantime, we want to provide an opportunity for our majors to get credit toward their major for taking a methods class taught by our faculty.

Students in many Anthropology classes are given opportunities to pursue small-scale ethnographic research for assignments, and we have offered occasional service-learning courses that undertake community-based ethnographic research. However, most of these opportunities are limited in scope and do not constitute the central focus of the class. The only faculty member to have included more sustained methods training in her classes on a regular basis--Deborah Pacini Hernandez--is retiring this year. Given this change, we have been working toward regularizing a lab-style, methods-intensive course to fill the gap. Cathy Stanton offered a version of this prototype course in Spring 2014, and Stanton and Pacini-Hernandez co-taught a revised version of the class in Fall 2014. Based on those two semesters and our shared experience in other courses, we now developed a workable model for this very challenging and multi-faceted course, emphasizing the "workshop" approach and the adaptability of these open-ended research skills to many different situations and settings. In addition to serving our majors who are interested in undertaking fieldwork research as part of study abroad, capstone projects, or internships, the class should be of interest to students in many other departments and disciplines who wish to become familiar with anthropological approaches to qualitative fieldwork research.

Previous iterations: "Ethnographic Methods" (ANTH 0149-24) taught by Cathy Stanton in Spring 2014 and "Community-Based Research in Urban Borderzones" (also ANTH 0149-24) co-taught by Pacini-Hernandez and Stanton in Fall 2014.

Requirements Fulfilled: This class will count as one of the two upper-level seminar courses that Anthropology majors must take (but which are also open to other students).

Resource Requirements:

We envision that Cathy Stanton will teach the class annually in the immediate future, but other faculty may also teach or co-teach it, which will expand the range of sites and projects covered as well as exposing students to a range of approaches to doing anthropological fieldwork.

Depending on the research project and site in a given semester, a moderate level of funding (<$500) for transportation or off-campus meeting space or food may be required.

Potential Overlap/Conflicts: Cultural anthropology is very strongly identified with ethnographic methods, particularly "participant-observation" with its goal of building iterative, in-depth knowledge of how the people we study understand and experience their everyday worlds. There are areas of overlap with how other disciplines practice ethnography (discussed below), but our intense focus on meaning-making and other "intangibles" of cultural life places our research at the most qualitative end of the qualitative-quantitative spectrum.

Qualitative fieldwork methods are taught in a number of departments and programs around the university (Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning, American Studies, Community Health, Political Science, International Relations, Occupational Therapy). Each is inflected by distinct disciplinary goals and orientations that differ from the specific approach taken by anthropologists. The areas of overlap tend to be around general ethical issues arising from studying people in situ, as well as in the teaching of interviewing skills and the techniques of observation or participant-observation. The important differences are in anthropology's more widely varied toolkit (which often includes spatial/visual analysis and media/discourse analysis in addition to interviewing and participant-observation) and its emphasis on "reflexivity" and relationship-building (i.e. taking into consideration the researcher's own position in relation to the research site, a reflection of long debates within anthropology about the politics of representing others' worlds and worldviews). While other departments often use ethnographic fieldwork primarily as a means to an end (for example, planning for an urban space or developing a clinical protocol), for anthropologists, the ethnographic encounter itself assumes a more central role, and our conclusions are shaped by the contingencies of our field experiences rather than being guided by
predetermined goals. Another important difference is that in most cases (for example, INTR 91 and CH 30), other departments' qualitative methods classes afford little or no opportunity for students to undertake actual fieldwork, whereas ANTH 0161 is a hands-on class (truly an experience-based "lab") in which students learn and practice a range of methods and produce products relevant to a community partner.

The most similar class to ours is Sociology's Qualitative Methods class (SOC 102, currently being taught as "Qualitative Methods in Action"), a required course for Sociology majors. Although there is a good deal of similarity between the ways that anthropologists and sociologists approach ethnographic methods, there are also important distinctions here as well. While sociologists tend to emphasize the structural and often institutional underpinnings of human life (relating to the discipline's key object, "society"), anthropologists look more at "culture," understood to consist of shared ideas, values, and assumptions that motivate behavior and contribute to shared senses of identity. The concepts of culture and society have been intensively debated in these two disciplines over time, and neither is neat or self-evident, but in general, sociologists do tend to emphasize the structural and organizational while anthropologists tend to look more at the experiential and expressive. These differences have important implications in our respective uses of ethnographic methods, since accessing that experiential and expressive level often requires deeper immersion, the gathering of different kinds of evidence, and different modes of writing and representation.

As a core course for Sociology majors, SOC 102 has also typically been filled to capacity by those majors. In addition, it is now listed as one of the possible methods courses that IR majors from the Class of 2018 and later are required to take. We anticipate that this new demand for a qualitative methods class may create a potential pool of enrollees for our course, particularly among those IR students who are drawn to the more meaning-focused approach that Anthropology offers.

We have shared recent syllabi and the rationale for this proposal with colleagues from Sociology and have also communicated with those who teach the qualitative methods classes in UEP, Community Health, and American Studies, which are less similar than Sociology's but still with some areas of overlap.

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