

## EDU 737- Community-based ethnography: A research partnership with Melvindale High School

- INSTRUCTOR:** Michelle Bellino  
bellino@umich.edu  
4027 School of Education  
Office phone 734.647.9572
- CLASS MEETINGS:** Wednesdays 9AM-12PM at 2320 School of Education;  
Additional site visits at MHS
- OFFICE HOURS:** Sign up on my calendar [here](#). Please allow 24 hours notice for making and canceling appointments.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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How does one access, engage with, and document the lived experience of those in communities both familiar and unfamiliar? What can we learn about the culture of teaching and learning by examining everyday educational settings, institutions, and interactions with the tools of ethnographic methods?

Oriented around a semester-long applied research study in collaboration with Melvindale High School, this course offers an introduction to ethnographic research methods and community-engaged work. Students will practice and strengthen qualitative research skills, while exploring experiences of (im)migration, schooling, and belonging within and across borders. The format of the course is project-based, so that students have opportunities to practice carrying out research in an authentic educational setting. Students will conduct participant observation at MHS, documenting their research in fieldnotes, complete at least one formal interview, and reflect on their experiences and emergent findings in weekly memos and through discussion. During the course of this shared research project, students will build relationships with members of the field site, as well as develop research partnerships with one another. The assignments in the course are designed to guide students through multiple stages of the collaborative research process, at a fast pace. When students are not in “the field,” we will meet as a class in the context of a workshop model, discussing weekly readings and research experiences. We will also discuss how educational research fits within the field of im/migration policy, practice, and advocacy. The guiding inquiry question for our study is: How do we create schools that are welcoming and inclusive for newcomer students and families with diverse identities and experiences?

This course is designed primarily for graduate students interested in conducting educational research. It assumes that you have had some exposure to qualitative methods and elements of research design. Ethnographic research typically draws on sustained immersion in a particular context, often spanning months or years. Though you are only required to visit our collective “field” site and gather data several times throughout the semester, your work in the class will draw on ethnographic methods, immerse you in the ethnographic tradition, and prepare you for longer-term ethnographic research. Throughout the course, we will consider the ethics of conducting community-based research and the nature of methodological, ethical, and logistical decisions that emerge during stage of the research process, from site selection, data collection and analysis, to representation.

Data collected for this course are limited to course discussions and assignments. If you wish to draw on these data for any future projects, you may pursue IRB approval independently, as well as seek permission from the school site.

## **COURSE GOALS**

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University of Michigan School of Education’s mission is “to generate, study, and teach strategies, practices, and tools for addressing educational problems and to prepare practitioners, policy-makers, and researchers who can develop equitable and just educational opportunities.” In pursuit of our mission and vision, we place explicit value on:

- Promoting and embodying diversity, inclusion, justice, and equity;
- Working in local, national, and global contexts; and
- Engaging with and learning from communities and learners.

Our course goals reflect these shared values. In this class, we aim to:

- 1) To gain a sense of the overall process of conducting a community-based ethnographic research study.
- 2) To practice and improve our understanding of the key methodological tools of ethnography, particularly honing our ability to observe and document everyday interactions in naturalistic settings.
- 3) To think, speak, and write more clearly about the theoretical, methodological, and practical issues relevant to ethnographic research.
- 4) To recognize the ethical, social, and political dimensions relevant to collaborative research, and to reflect on one’s own identity, positionality, and ethical responsibility as an ethnographic researcher.

## **COURSE READINGS**

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Course readings will focus largely on processing and analyzing the collective dataset that we build over the semester. Additional readings include empirical and methodological texts, largely grounded in the ethnographic tradition. Empirical studies will serve as methodological models, with elements worthy of emulation and critique. All readings have been selected to align with the substantive inquiry guiding the collaborative process, allowing us to contextualize our findings in a body of educational research and policy aimed at understanding im/migrant students’ experiences with schooling, and school responses to im/migration.

We will draw on one *required* text:

- Emerson, R., Fretz, R., & Shaw, L. (2011). *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

## **ASSESSMENT**

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Assessment should be viewed as an integral part of the learning experience. During the course, there will be opportunities for formal and informal feedback, both from the instructor and fellow classmates.

### **FORMAL ASSESSMENT WILL BE WEIGHTED AS FOLLOWS:**

- Attendance and participation: 25%

- Fieldnotes and interview data: 25%
- Memos: 25%
- Final (collaborative) assignment: 25%

### **PREPARATION AND CLASS PARTICIPATION**

Class meetings will often take the form of a workshop, so that we can advance some aspect of the collective research process. Students are expected to come to class prepared and having read the assigned texts thoughtfully. You are encouraged to read with a lens towards empirical and methodological dimensions of the assigned texts, seeking connections to our collaborative inquiry where appropriate. Your readiness to seek and offer feedback among peers in workshops counts toward participation. For sessions at MHS, you are expected to arrive on time for scheduled visits and appointments, and prepared to document your time there. Please keep in mind that anytime you enter MHS, you are a representative of our class and research team, as well as the University of Michigan.

### **DATA COLLECTION AND DOCUMENTATION**

Students are required to document three site visits to MHS as participant observers. During this time, you will record notes and later translate these observations into *fieldnotes*. We will discuss this practice of documentation and its role in ethnography throughout the course. You will also develop an interview protocol and later process your notes in the form of a transcript and interview profile. Ensure that these notes are accessible during class meetings. This is a collaborative process, so please be prepared for classmates to read and comment on your work. All work will be shared in our Google Drive folder.

### **MEMOS**

Memo writing is essential to qualitative work, and good practice for all research endeavors. Like fieldnotes, memos provide a narrative space to document the research process, while also exploring emergent questions and connecting ideas that motivate your ongoing analysis. The tone for memos is less formal than standard academic writing, though you are welcome to integrate literature in order to connect your ideas to other texts. Theoretically, these writing assignments comprise an ongoing conversation you are having with your *future self*, tracking your thinking process and research experience in the field. Some memo prompts will be more analytic in their scope, helping you focus on your emergent findings and sharpening your research inquiry. Others will be more methodological, inviting you to reflect on your experience as an ethnographic researcher, the nature of the data you have collected, and the representational choices you have made. Please be prepared for classmates to read and comment on your work.

*All written assignments should be submitted by the stated deadlines in order to be eligible for full credit.*

## **GENERAL ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS**

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Plagiarism is a serious offence. Ensure that all of your work is original and cited, where appropriate. Students are expected to abide by University of Michigan's policy regarding academic honesty.

### **Technology and Social Media Use**

We will use technology in many ways throughout the course, and you are welcome to bring your laptops, cellphones, and other devices to class. Please refrain from using these devices for non-course related pursuits during class sessions.

### **Mental Health and Wellbeing**

This course touches on issues and experiences with violence, trauma, and displacement. It is perfectly normal to feel angry and upset as you interact with texts and individuals whose lives . As a class, we will make an effort to check in about our emotional responses to these materials, while also pursuing analytic and practical connections. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support—*regardless of its connection to this class*—services are available. For help, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (734) 764-8312 and <https://caps.umich.edu/> during and after hours, on weekends and holidays or through its counselors physically located in schools on both North and Central Campus. For a more comprehensive listing of the broad range of mental health services available on campus, please visit: <http://umich.edu/~mhealth/>. The teaching team will treat any information that you share with us in as confidential a manner as possible.

### **Student Accommodations**

If you think you need an accommodation for a special need or disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; <https://ssd.umich.edu>) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. I will treat any information that you provide in as confidential a manner as possible.

### **Religious Observance Policy**

Although the University of Michigan, as an institution, does not observe religious holidays, it has long been the University's policy that every reasonable effort should be made to help students avoid negative academic consequences when their religious obligations conflict with academic requirements. Absence from classes or examinations for religious reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of absence. Students who expect to miss classes, examinations, or other assignments as a consequence of their religious observance shall be provided with a reasonable alternative opportunity to complete such academic responsibilities. Students must notify me at least two weeks in advance of needing accommodation so that we can plan alternative arrangements.

## **BACKGROUND CHECKS & MANDATORY TRAININGS**

If you are a non-SOE student or are a SOE student not enrolled in the Educational Studies program, you will need to have a background check as well as complete several mandatory trainings in order to do research in the school and work with young people. This is a university requirement.

To complete the background check, please contact Tom Drake ([tdrakejr@umich.edu](mailto:tdrakejr@umich.edu)).

To complete the blood borne pathogens training:

<http://www.gcntraining.com/user/login.cfm?c=0&rn=209>

Enter the following information:

Org ID: uofmtep

Preferred and Personal ID: uniqueness

Select the Educational Studies program.

To complete the other four trainings: Register on this website [<https://childrenoncampus.umich.edu/training/>] and take the trainings (1) recognition and prevention of child abuse and neglect; (2) code of conduct; (3) supervision, safety and security; and (4) medical issues. At the end of each, you should select to receive a PDF certificate. Please email these to the instructor.

## **TRANSPORTATION TO MHS**

We will discuss transportation as a class, once we have a sense of how many students are enrolled and who is eligible to drive. Options include mileage reimbursement or car rentals to allow for carpooling.

Effective January 2, 2019 the mileage reimbursement is 58 cents per mile. Estimation: ~ 69 miles RT = \$40.02 per trip. For reimbursement, students must complete, sign, and submit a TBHER form [<http://procurement.umich.edu/travel-expense/reporting-expenses/studentguest-expenses>].

Week	Date	Topic
WK 1	Jan 8	
<b>Readings:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thoroughly read the syllabus, noting deadlines and required school visits for research activities.</li> <li>Sarroub, Loukia K. (2002). <i>All American Yemeni girls: Being Muslim in a public school</i>. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press. Chapters 1-2, pp. 1-45. [<a href="https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/lib/umichigan/detail.action?docID=3442310">https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/lib/umichigan/detail.action?docID=3442310</a>]</li> </ul>		
<b>Work to be completed prior to this class:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete background check and mandatory trainings listed in above section, if relevant. (Note: All incoming SOE ES students should have these requirements in place.)</li> </ul>		
WK 2	Jan 15	
<b>Readings:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Erickson, F. (2006). Studying side by side: Collaborative action ethnography in educational research. In G.Spindler &amp; L. Hammond (Eds.), <i>Innovations in educational ethnography: Theory, methods, and results</i> (pp. 235-257). Mahwah, MJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.</li> <li>Lecompte, M.D. &amp; Schensul, J.J. (2010). <i>Designing and Conducting Ethnographic Research. Ethnographer's Toolkit</i>, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Lanham, MD: AltaMira. Chapter 1, "What is ethnography?" pp. 1-34; Chapter 2, "When, where, and by whom should ethnography be used?" pp. 35-53.</li> </ul>		
<b>Work to be completed prior to this class:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete PEERRS Training for only one module: "Human subjects research protections." [<a href="http://my.research.umich.edu/peerrs/">http://my.research.umich.edu/peerrs/</a>]</li> </ul>		
WK 3	Jan 22	
<b>Readings:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bajaj, M., &amp; Bartlett, L. (2017). Critical transnational curriculum for immigrant and refugee students. <i>Curriculum Inquiry</i>, 47(1), 25-35.</li> <li>Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. (2011). <i>Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1, "Fieldnotes in ethnographic research" 2 "In the field: Participating, observing, and jotting notes." (pp. 1-43).</li> </ul>		
<b>Work to be completed prior to this class:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Memo 1:</b> Write a 1-2 page single spaced memo in response to Bajaj &amp; Bartlett, 2017. <i>Consider:</i> What challenges and tensions do these authors choose as their starting point? What makes a school welcoming to newcomer students? How do we know if schools are preparing some/all students for transnational futures? How can schools demonstrate awareness of and care for students' complex identities, experiences, and future aspirations? What are the risks of doing and not doing this kind of work? What other texts, concepts, or experiences intersect with the ideas in this article?</li> <li>MHS's principal, Ryan Vranesich will be visiting the class. Come to class with a few questions planned.</li> <li>Draft an informational sheet to introduce the research team for Ryan Vranesich's review.</li> </ul>		
WK 4	Jan 29	Meet at MHS for data collection 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. (2011). <i>Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 3 "Writing fieldnotes I: At the desk, creating scenes on a page." (pp. 45-87).</li> </ul>		
<b>Work to be completed prior to this class:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalize the informational sheet to introduce the research team, and bring copies to MHS.</li> </ul>		
WK 5	Feb 5	
<b>Readings:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read all fieldnotes posted in Drive.</li> </ul>		
<b>Work to be completed prior to this class:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post fieldnotes documenting your first visit to MHS <i>by Sunday Feb 2, 12PM.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Memo 2: Reflecting on the experience of participant observation</b></p> <p><i>Part 1:</i> Consider how it felt to enter a space in the role of a researcher. How did you experience the task of participant observer? How do you think people in the site interpreted your role? What kind of relationships were you able to begin</p>		

forming, and what are the challenges that you might face in developing these relationships? Were there uncomfortable moments? If so, identify what felt uncomfortable.

*Part 2:* Look back at your fieldnotes and consider the way you documented your time in the field. What did you spend time noticing and noting? Was this time well spent? What did others notice that you didn't pick up on? Where were you most and least engaged? Where were you distracted, bogged down in detail that pulled you away from what interests you? Was your lens too narrowly focused on your research questions, too broad, or just right? Consider how you might adapt your technique.

~2 page single spaced memo

WK6	Feb 12	
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**Readings:**

- Gitlin, A., Buendía, E., Crosland, K., & Doubmia, F. (2003). The production of margin and center: Welcoming-unwelcoming of immigrant students. *American Educational Research Journal*, 40(1), 91-122.
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Teachers College Press. Technique isn't everything, but it is a lot (pp.78-94).
- Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The Ethnographic Interview*. NY: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston. Asking descriptive questions (pp. 78-91), Asking structural questions (pp. 120-131).

**Work to be completed prior to this class:**

- **Memo 3:** Write a 1-2 page single spaced memo in response to Gitlin, Buendía, Crosland, & Doubmia, 2003. *Consider:* How do the authors' research methods and design align with the questions being asked? Where do you see the data? How do you know what is trustworthy? What questions are left unanswered about the research process? Do we see any indicators in our data of welcoming-unwelcoming at play? How might this and other concepts be relevant to our shared project?

WK 7	Feb 19	
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**Readings:**

- Campbell Galman, Sally. *Shane the lone ethnographer*. Chapter 7, "Taming Datasaurus Rex." pp. 100-116.
- Emerson, R., Fretz, R., & Shaw, L. (2011). *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 6, "Processing fieldnotes: Coding and memoing." pp. 171-199.

**Work to be completed prior to this class:**

- Post interview guide. At this point, make a plan to interview your participant in pairs before March 14.
- Take a first pass at coding your fieldnotes from site visit 1. Identify and define at least three codes.
- **Memo 4:** 1-page single spaced memo on what stands out to you about the data, after coding.

WK 8	Feb 26	
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**Readings:**

- Sugarman, Julie. (2017). *Beyond teaching English: Supporting high school completion by immigrant and refugee students*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.
- One additional reading from shared resource folder. We will decide how to approach this in class.
- Read narrative interview portrait samples (**mb handout**).

**Work to be completed prior to this class:**

- Write an annotation of your article for our shared annotated bibliography.
- **Memo 5:** Write a 1-2 page single spaced memo, considering potential areas of connection to current project. To what extent do ideas from this text shed light on our data? What ideas intersect with other texts we have read? To what extent do our data confirm, complicate, or challenge ideas represented in the text?

WK 9	Mar 4	No class- spring break
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WK 10	Mar 11	No class
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**Work to be completed during these weeks with no class outlined below.**

WK 11	Mar 18	
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**Readings:**

- Hamann, T., & Zuñiga, V. (2011). Schooling and the Everyday Ruptures Transnational Children Encounter in the United States and Mexico. In C. Coe, R. Reynolds, D. Boehm, J. M. Hess, & H. Rae-Espinoza (Eds.), *Everyday Ruptures: Children and Migration in Global Perspective* (pp. 141-160). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

**Work to be completed prior to this class:**

- Interview, Part 1: In pairs, carry out an interview using the protocol you co-designed. If you are able to audio record, complete a transcript and a narrative summary (shared). If you are unable to record, take good notes and please complete two narrative summaries separately. Transcript and summary should be preceded and followed by fieldnotes documenting/ contextualizing the conversation. Post interview data by Monday, March 16.
- Interview, Part 2: Individually or in pairs, try out a nonformal, unstructured interview. Try to pursue a dialogue and line of questioning for five minutes. Write up notes from this conversation. Notes should be preceded and followed by fieldnotes documenting/ contextualizing the conversation. Post interview data by Monday, March 16.
- **Memo 6:** Write a 1-page single spaced memo on you learned from the interview conversations that connects, extends, and challenges what we have seen thus far? What new questions have been raised for you?
- Optional memo: What did you learn about interviewing methods? What did you learn about yourself as an interviewer?
- Make plans for site visit 3 (interview or participant observation) and member check by March 30.

WK 12	Mar 25	
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**Readings:**

- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (1997). The art and science of portraiture. Chapter 6, “On emergent themes.” Pp. 182-240.
- Lawrence-Lightfoot, S. (1983). *The good high school: Portraits of character and culture*. New York: Basic Books. Excerpt from Chapter “On goodness in high schools,” pp. 309-316.

**Work to be completed prior to this class:**

- Finish coding interview data and post on Drive.
- Contribute new codes, questions, and edits to the shared codebook as they emerge.
- **Memo 7:** Write a 1-2 page single spaced memo. What themes are coming into focus? What story is emerging? What is important for MHS to know about our work? What data is needed support these claims? Consider *goodness* at MHS. What is healthy and strong here? What requires more attention and intention, in order to be strengthened? What do we not know enough about? What practical and conceptual recommendations can we offer, drawing on the literature? What questions do you have for community about how they hear this story?

WK 13	Apr 1	
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**Readings:**

- Reread the full dataset, including memos.

**Work to be completed prior to this class:**

- Post fieldnotes and/or interview data from site visit 3 by Monday, March 30.
- Come prepared for a working class, in which we will draft a presentation/ report for MHS of what we have learned.

WK 14	Apr 8	No class
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**Continue drafting presentation/ report for MHS.**

WK 15	Apr 15	Meet at MHS to share our work
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**Readings:**

- Figueroa, A.M. (2014). La carta de responsabilidad: The problem of departure. In D. Paris & M.T. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities* (pp. 129-146). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

**Work to be completed prior to this class:**

- Finalize all materials for dissemination/ presentation with MHS. Come prepared to share and discuss with the MHS community.