

Geog 7102 – Field Methods: *Critical Research Strategies and Methods*, Spring 2019

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Office hours: by appointment

Canvas page: go to <https://carmen.osu.edu/>, login, select course (Geog 7102); click on **Modules** (left column) for syllabus and e-reserve reading

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

"Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted."

authorship commonly attributed to Albert Einstein, but also attributed to several others at earlier dates (<https://quoteinvestigator.com/2010/05/26/everything-counts-einstein/>)

"This here's a re-search laboratory. Re-search means look again, don't it? Means they're looking for something they found once and it got away somehow, and now they got to re-search for it? ... What is it they're trying to find again? Who lost what?"

Kurt Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle*

The first quote above urges critical analysis of what may not be observable easily, certainly not 'countable.' While recognizing the value of mixed methods, this course focuses on how to produce and interpret data that cannot be counted. Beyond the intriguing play on the word 'count' and the general message, the quote also is instructive about the lack of clarity regarding authorship, pointing to the scholarship required to appropriately source information. The number of people who made the point commonly attributed to Einstein also signals the importance of *context* because statements, actions and thoughts require critical situation. An immediate question is whether different people who made the same statement were aware that others made the same point. Very possibly they were not, which prompts other questions such as: why is Einstein commonly credited with a point previously made by others, why are others unheard, and how is the error of attributing the quote to Einstein sustained over time? Or, what might the different contexts in which the statement was made have in common?

The second quote above points to the etymology of 'research' and emphasizes the 're' in 'research'. The word emerged in the late 16th/early 17th centuries in French during the western European 'renaissance' as 'recercher' (later, 'rechercher' – look or search again). The referent of scientific inquiry at the time of the word's inception may well suggest that the 're' referred to the positivist tenet of replicability. Vonnegut's meaning is unclear, and centuries later in the context of new approaches to research, the 're' could be interpreted in any one of a number of ways. Some possible interpretations, issues this course will engage, include: the practice of returning to the context of study at different points in time to identify and incorporate into analysis changes that have occurred; or returning to the field to see again what you thought you saw previously, allowing for the possibility that your initial interpretation may have been flawed; or seeing the world in which you live and even yourself anew during and following your study.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

The course aims to prepare students for the production of empirically based research and engages critical research strategies and methods towards data collection and interpretation in and out of the field through the lens of poststructural and feminist epistemologies. Students embracing other perspectives are *welcome*, as is critical discussion of all subject matter. The course encompasses wide-ranging *methods* of data collection such as various approaches to interviews, different ways of thinking about and working

with focus groups, and more generally different ways of approaching the problem of representation. Disparate methods cohere in *strategies* of representation. The relationship between strategies and methods is well illustrated in one of the first readings for the semester, Laura Ellingson's book on 'crystallization.' Ellingson problematizes multiple methods and offers a poststructural and feminist alternative to 'triangulation;' whereas triangulation, using as a triangle as metaphor, makes use of different methods to discover Truth, crystallization, using as a crystal that refracts lights in multiple ways as metaphor, makes use of different methods to recognize multiple truths. This course is taught from the vantage point that wide-ranging methods are valuable but can leave a researcher wondering what to do in the absence of an overarching strategy that guides the relation among disparate pieces of information as well as a dynamic connection with research questions and conceptual framework. By 'dynamic' I mean that while having direction is always advisable, also advisable is openness to changing or modifying questions and possibly modifying, expanding, even changing one's conceptual framework as new information is integrated into the project.

Topics include: multiple methods and crystallization; connecting description with explanation; the IRB & its discontents; theories, methods & their relation; where in the hierarchy? standpoint theory, studying up, & the 'insurrection of subjugated knowledges; grounded theory & ascending analysis; complexities of interviewing; focus groups & power relations; positionality & its implications for research; photographs, archives & the production of the present; intersectionality & black feminism; activist research and PAR; the spatiality of political data & applications; netnography and the use of, and problems with, internet data.

The course fulfills the 'advanced methods' requirement for graduate students in Geography; all methods covered in the course are interdisciplinary and should be useful to students irrespective of discipline.

READING

With the exception of Ellingson's book, all other reading is in the form of articles and chapters of books, accessible as e-reserves on the course Canvas page under **Modules**. The bibliographic information for all reading is indicated on pp. 5-6 in alphabetical order. The e-reserves are listed under **Modules** by author and short title of each reading in the order in which you will read them.

Recommended reading (not required) on topics not covered in class is listed after the course bibliography.

COURSE STRATEGY & EVALUATION

Learning in this course occurs along several avenues: canvas posts (20%), participation/class discussion (10%); discussion leadership (20%); collaboration in a group field project & paper (35%); and presentation (15%).

Canvas posts: Students post a *brief* critical commentary on each reading for every class under **Discussions** on the course Canvas page (if 3 readings are assigned for 1 class, each student posts 3 brief commentaries in one post). The canvas posts are intended to (1) prompt students to think about the big points of each reading after having sifted through the details, (2) provide an avenue by which to learn from peers – read your peers' canvas posts! The posts will be due before class at a time to be determined by consensus in class; posting in advance of class provides time to read them prior to discussion. I will not read the posts after the deadline unless notified by a student that the post will be late and the time when it will be posted.

Participation/class discussion: Punctual and regular class attendance is mandatory because the synergy of class discussion will go beyond the reading and canvas posts. The course is a seminar, not a lecture class; preparedness and active participation in discussion are crucial.

Discussion leadership: While all students are expected to actively participate in class discussion, students will take turns leading class discussion. Leading discussion means providing a structure for discussion regarding points/issues/problems and their connections in the readings, while *opening* discussion to the class and providing space for points raised by other students that discussion leaders did not include. *Discussion leadership is about talking with, not to the class.* Discussion leaders should provide an outline (1 page maximum) of the main points; if making copies is a problem for any student, I will make the copies if I receive the outline as an email attachment no later than 30 minutes before class. Students are welcome to request particular classes to lead relative to their interests.

Collaboration in a group field project: Students work collaboratively on a field project to make use of the wide range of methods and strategies covered in course material to collect and interpret data. The collaborative, group nature of the projects ensures continual feedback on one's thoughts, approaches, and actions from research partners as well as the experience of partnership in the field experience and collaboration in data collection, interpretation, and presentation.

Prior to working on the group project, each student will complete the IRB training courses as an assignment for a class. Groundwork for the group project will occur on the 4th class. The group will develop a field project on a set of publishable issues that interest all students in the group – perhaps in the context of OSU to make field research as easy and accessible as possible, although students are welcome to pursue a different yet equally accessible context. The group will then submit a proposal to IRB in the 6th week using the exempt procedure, which is relatively quick; I will provide an example of a successful IRB proposal that students can follow. Time at the end of each class is reserved for discussion of progress and problems related to the group project.

Final paper for the group project: The group will co-author a paper on their collaborative project. I encourage students to think about this paper as a draft that can be revised and later submitted for publication – *not* as an exercise for a class. The paper can be short; consider targeting a journal such as *Area*, which publishes papers that are around 5000 words.

Presentations: Students will present (orally) an informal reflection in class on (a) their part of the collaborative project, and (b) their own research program as filtered through the issues discussed during the semester. Students preparing to submit a proposal for preliminary or later data collection could present the methods section of their proposal. Students at an earlier stage might present on how the methods and strategies covered in the course have prompted thoughts about how they will pursue their research. Students who may be engaged in purely theoretical research, perhaps taking this course to satisfy a methods requirement, could use the course to reflect on how their research raises questions for empirically-based research, and how they might approach such research at a later date.

MISCELLANEOUS REGULATIONS

- 1) **Academic Misconduct:** Please review OSU's statement on academic misconduct at: <https://oaa.osu.edu/academic-integrity-and-misconduct>
- 2) No extra credit will be given in this course.
- 3) Incompletes are *discouraged*. They are permitted under extenuating circumstances and with written documentation of plans for completion, with approval.

SYLLABUS

Jan. 9 – organizational meeting; ‘situated knowledges’ and a feminist approach to objectivity
Reading: Haraway

Jan. 16: multiple methods and ‘crystallization’

Reading: Ellingson; Ettliger

Jan. 23: positionality, reflexivity

Reading: Crossa; Xiang; McSweeney; Nagar

Jan. 30: the IRB; group project workshop

Reading: Martin and Inwood; Dhanju & O’Reilly

Assignment: IRB training courses:

Responsible Conduct of Research: <http://orpp.osu.edu/irb/training-requirements/rcr/>

Human Subjects Protections: <http://orpp.osu.edu/irb/training-requirements/citi/>

View: exempt form, IRB <http://orpp.osu.edu/irb/investigator-guidance/exempt/>

view: (a) guidelines for writing a research protocol and (b) informed consent guidance

View: example of successful IRB proposal (tbd)

Feb. 6: complexities of interviewing

Reading: Valentine 1997; Brown and Durrheim; Evans & Jones; Cope; revisit Ellingson

Tuesday, February 12: submit proposal to IRB for group project

Feb. 13: focus groups & power relations

Reading: Hopkins; Hyams; Bosco and Herman

Feb. 20: using internet data; netnography

Reading: Hookaway; von Benzon; Modan; Metcalf and Crawford; Kulavuz-Onal & Vásquez; Roy et al.

Feb. 27: autoethnography and autonethnography

Reading: Butz & Besio; Fisher; Brown; Fraser

March 6: where in the hierarchy? – standpoint theory, studying up; grounded theory, ascending analysis

Reading: Harding; Ho; Charmaz; Foucault

March 13: archives, and production of the present

Reading: Cresswell; Hodder; Gibson; Hartman

March 20: intersectionality; black feminism

Reading: Valentine 2007; Luft; Patterson et al.

March 27: activist research and participatory action research (PAR)

Reading: Kindon et al.; Mistry et al.; Cahill; Gibson-Graham; Klodawsky

April 3: no class – AAG

April 10: spatiality of political data

Reading: Fraser and Weninger; Kesby; Walsh; Isoke

April 15: discussion, group project; presentations, individual projects

Monday, April 22 – paper due, group project

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Gibson-Graham, J.K. 2007. Cultivating subjects for a community economy. In *Politics and practice in economic geography*, eds. A. Tickell, E. Sheppard, J. Peck, and T. Barnes, pp. 106-117. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
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SOME RECOMMENDED (NOT REQUIRED) READING ON TOPICS OUTSIDE COURSE SYLLABUS, BY TOPIC (from Kendra McSweeney's 7102)

Questionnaires & surveys

- Carr-Hill, Roy A. 1984. [Radicalising survey methodology](#). *Quality and Quantity* 18: 275-292.
- Glass, M. 2015. [Enhancing field research methods with mobile survey technology](#). *J. of Geography in Higher Education* 39: 288-298.
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- Robbins, P. et al. 2009. [Conservation as It Is: Illicit Resource Use in a Wildlife Reserve in India](#). *Human Ecology* 37(5): 559-575.

Oral history

- Jessee, Erin. 2011. [The limits of oral history: ethics and methodology amid highly politicized research settings](#). *Oral History Review* 38: 287-307.
- Kerr, Daniel. 2016. [Allan Nevis is not my grandfather: the roots of radical oral history practice in the United States](#). *Oral History Review* 43: 367-391.

Interpreting landscape

- Birdsall, S. S. 2003. [Learning to see landscape through a flexible lens](#). *Journal of Geography* 102 (1):29-34.
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Visual methods

- Hall, T. 2009. ["The camera never lies? Photographic research methods in human geography"](#). *J. of Geography in Higher Education* 33: 453-462.
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