

Fall 2011
Ethnography and Black Communities (ANTH 897-056)
Thursdays, 2-4:45
Alumni 313-A

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This course will look at 20th and 21st century ethnographic studies of African American communities (and to a lesser extent, communities of the African diaspora) as conducted by anthropologists and academic researchers in other disciplines. This will include studies of urban neighborhoods as well as rural and suburban towns where black-identified populations reside in high concentration or have had significant influence. It will also include sites that are somehow "black-identified." In exploring these locales, the primary focus will be on major trends in past and current research as well as variation in ethnographic approaches to studying black communities. Texts to be explored will focus on the following topics relevant to black communities: social organization and everyday life; race, class and generational positionings; experiences with education; community and economic development; heritage projects and the role of history and memory in community identities; and transnational black communities.

Requirements:

1) Readings:

In most cases, this course requires reading at least one ethnography per week, sometimes two ethnographies, parts of two, or article readings. Where possible, I have interspersed dense and voluminous reading weeks with lighter reading weeks. Please do your best to complete all of the reading in time for class.

Books that we are reading in entirety or almost entirety are on sale at Student Stores and are noted with an asterisk on the syllabus. There are 11 such books. Article, book chapter and excerpted readings will be posted either on Blackboard (BB) or E-Reserves (ER) through the Undergrad Library, or they will be available as online readings.

2) Assignments:

a. Attendance & Class Participation (20%)

I expect that each student will attend class faithfully and arrive on time. As this is a graduate seminar, I also expect that students will participate actively in discussion of course materials and topics. Final course grades will be affected by poor attendance, habitual late arrivals, habitual early departures, or scant participation in discussion.

b. Weekly Discussion Questions and Responses (10%)

Each week two students are responsible for generating and initiating discussion of the week's readings. One student will provide at least two critical questions about the readings while another student will respond orally to those questions. The question writer should circulate the question by email to the entire class by no later than 9 AM on the day of the seminar. Depending on the size of the course

enrollment, each student will fulfill the role of question writer and respondent 1-2 times during the semester.

c. Paper Options (70%):

Students have two options for written assignments, which are the major assignments for this course. The two options are:

- i. Final paper: Students can write either one 20 page research paper or research proposal on a topic of his/her choice, as long as the topic concerns some aspect of ethnography of/and black communities. Thus the paper can be a proposal to study particular social phenomenon within black communities and should include an explanation of how ethnographic methods will be part of that study. Or, the paper can be an actual study of specific social phenomena within black communities, drawing on secondary or primary resources –especially ethnographic resources-- to inform the paper. A paper assessing ethnographic work on black communities (broadly or narrowly) is also acceptable. The final paper should also be organized around a particular argument. It is not permissible to turn in previously written research papers as the final paper. I also expect that you will incorporate course materials into your final paper or proposal. The final paper will be due on December 11th at 9 AM.
- ii. Three 7 page "critical assessment" papers: In lieu of a longer final paper, students may write three papers that critically assess material for three different weeks of course readings (for weeks where we have more than one reading, students can choose one reading or critically assess two or more readings for that week). These papers should be position papers and not book reviews. They should focus on a particular argument or point raised in the reading(s) and make a critical analysis of that argument. These papers will be due on: September 29th, November 3rd and December 11th. Papers are due at 9 AM.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Aug 25: Course Introduction

Aug 31: **Early Ethnographies of Black Communities: 1890s-1940s**

1. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (excerpts online)
<http://media.pfeiffer.edu/lridener/DSS/DuBois/pntoc.html>
2. Drake and Cayton, *Black Metropolis* (excerpts on BB)
3. Hurston, *Mules and Men*, pp. 16-56 (excerpts on BB)

Sep 08: **Interrogating Dynamics in the 1960s-1970s "Urban Ghetto"**

1. Stack, *All our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*.*
2. Hannerz, *Soulside: Inquiries into Ghetto Culture and Community**

Sep 15: **Intersections of Race, Class, Part I**

1. Jackson, *Harlemworld: Doing Race and Class in Contemporary Black America**

Sept 22: **Intersections of Race & Class, Part II**

1. Patillo, *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril Among the Black Middle Class**
2. Lacey, *Blue Chip Black: Race, Class and Status in the New Black Middle Class**

Sep 29: **Racial Solidarity/Organizing around Race and Community**

1. Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community**
2. Vargas, *Catching Hell in the City of Angels: Life and Meanings of Blackness in South Central Los Angeles* (excerpts)
3. Checker, *Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism and the Search for Justice in a Southern Town* (excerpts)

Oct 06: **Rural Contexts/Urban-Rural Connections**

1. Stack, *Call to Home: African Americans Reclaim the Rural South* *
2. Hill, *Culture of a Contemporary All-Negro Community* (to be confirmed)
3. Hill, "Cracker Culture"
Guest Speaker: Carol Stack (to be confirmed)

Oct 13: **Racial Identity Politics (When is a community a black community?)**

1. Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (excerpts)
2. Additional Readings TBA

October 20: Fall Break

Oct 27: **History/Heritage in Black Community Organization & Development** (continued)

1. Clarke, *Mapping Yoruba Networks: Power and Agency in the Making of Transnational Communities**
2. Boyd, *Jim Crow Nostalgia: Reconstructing Race in Bronzeville**

Nov 03: **Recent and Cutting Edge Work: Violence in Contemporary Black Communities**

1. Ralph, *You Never Hear About the Wheelchair*": *Violence and Mobility in a Westside Chicago Gang* (dissertation, available online only)

Nov 10: **Recent and Cutting Edge Work: Educational Experiences in Contemporary Black Communities**

1. Tyson, *Integration Interrupted: Tracking, Black Students and Acting White after Brown**
2. Willink, *Bringing Desegregation Home: Memories of the Struggle toward School Integration in Rural North Carolina* (excerpts)

Guest Speaker: Karolyn Tyson

Nov 17: Class canceled (AAA conference)

Nov 24: Thanksgiving

Dec 01: **Recent and Cutting Edge Work: Race, Place and the Black Diaspora**

1. Nassy-Brown, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool**

