Sociology 410 Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research
Sociology 714 Ethnographic Research in the Social Sciences

Fall (September) 2010
Class meets Thursdays 2:30-5:30 in HH259 [or if it is available, in PAS 2030]
R. Prus   PAS 2055   519-4567 x32105
prus@uwaterloo.ca
Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30-4:00.

NOTE 1: Because this syllabus represents a study guide for the course, please bring this syllabus with you to class
NOTE 2: Please try to minimize the use of “Laptop computers” or other electronic devices during class. They can be distracting and interfere with our ability to interact with one another as a class. Thank you!

CONTENTS
*Outline of the Course   Page 1-4
*Central Themes /Issues / Concepts   4-5
*Assignments   6-12
   *GSP Paper 6-9
   *Field Research Project 9-12.
      Select One Field of Activity:
         Science and Technology
         Arts and Entertainment
         Religion and Spirituality
         Consumer Behaviour and Gambling
*Project Related Dates   12-13
*List of Ethnographies (from which to choose) 13-16
*Academic Offenses 16

Introduction
Every word, every sentence, every gesture or politeness, every work of art, and every historical action are only comprehensible because of a community which binds the expressor with the interpreter; every person lives, thinks, and acts constantly in the sphere of a community and only in such a sphere does he understand. (Dilthey {Ermarth, 1978:278})

(This perspective) raises the most serious question about the validity of most of the major approaches to the study and analysis of human group life that are followed today - approaches that treat social interaction as merely the medium through which determining factors produce behavior.... These approaches grossly ignore the fact that social interaction is a formative process in its own right.... In setting up studies of human group life and social action there is need to take social interaction seriously. It is necessary to view the given sphere of life under study as a moving process in which the participants are defining and interpreting each other's acts. It is important to see how this process of designation and interpretation is sustaining, undercutting, redirecting, and transforming the ways in which the participants are fitting together their lines of action. Such a necessary type of study cannot be done if it operates with the premise that group life is but the result of determining factors working through the interaction of people. Further, approaches organized on this latter premise are not equipped to study the process of social interaction. A different perspective, a different set of categories, and a different procedure of inquiry are necessary. (Blumer, 1969:52-53)

Are humans different from other objects of study? Does the study of human behaviour require a methodology different from those we use to study other objects? What sort of similarities and differences exist between the study of human behaviour and the study of other objects? What are the implications of these questions for people endeavouring to do "science" or "social science?"

Examining human behaviour as it is lived or "accomplished," this course examines issues such as these on route to developing a conceptual and methodological frame that is sensitive to the distinctive features of human activity.

Seven premises form the theoretical base of the course. These are: (1) the human world is symbolically understood, constructed and experienced; (2) the "world" can have multiple meanings to people, (3) people develop capacities for taking themselves into account in developing lines of action; (4) human group life is organized around the doing or accomplishing of activity; (5) people are able to influence (and resist) others, (6) people develop and attend to particularistic bonds or associations with others, and (7) group life has an emergent quality. Thus, we view group life as
intersubjective, (multi)perspectival, reflective, action-oriented, negotiable, relational, and processual.

While striving toward the development of (generic) concepts applicable across group settings, a central objective is that of grounding theory in the ongoing lived experiences of those whose lives we purport to study. Research of this sort has variously been designated as interactionist research, ethnographic inquiry, qualitative research, naturalistic inquiry, participant-observation, interpretive inquiry, grounded theory, Chicago school, subcultural tradition, and the reality construction or negotiated reality approach.

Additionally, strong affinities will be noted with what has also been termed social constructionism, dramaturgical approach, labeling theory, verstehen sociology, phenomenological social science, hermeneutics, existential sociology, ethnomethodology, and some varieties of "humanist" social science.

These preceding variants are mentioned not to confuse, mystify, or overwhelm anyone, but rather to indicate that despite some diversity of emphases within this realm, the issues we will be addressing in this course are germane to a great many "interpretive" approaches to the study of human behaviour.

This course has four major objectives: (1) to encourage a greater linkage of theory and method as this pertains to the study of humanly experienced life-worlds; (2) to foster grounding in the literature on ethnographic research; (3) to provide first-hand experience in data collection and analysis in field research, and (4) prepare people for future scholarship.

While considering a variety of qualitative methods techniques and "interpretive" approaches to the social sciences, the course is centrally guided by symbolic interactionist theory (Mead, Blumer). Focusing on Chicago-style or pragmatist ethnography, the emphasis primarily will be on interviewing and participant-observation as modes of data collection.

Core Texts

### Blumer, Herbert Symbolic Interactionism [HB*SI]. (especially pages 1-89)
"Sociological Implications of the Thought of George Herbert Mead." 61-77.
"Society as Symbolic Interaction." 78-89.

### Prus, Robert Subcultural Mosaics and Intersubjective Realities [SCM]
Ch 1: Studying the Human Condition: An Interactionist Approach to the Ethnographic Venture
Ch 2: Subcultural Mosaics and Intersubjective Realities: Acknowledging Ambiguity, Activity, and Accomplishment
Reformulating the Cultural Problematic
Attending to Subcultural Enterprises

**Ch 3: Subcultural Involvements** (developed around generic social processes; GSPs)
- Becoming Involved in Subcultural Enterprises
- Experiencing Subcultural Life-Worlds
- Forming and Coordinating Associations

**Optional** but useful for those who may desire (1) more historical background on the development of symbolic interaction and related approaches; (2) a fuller consideration of the debates in the social sciences; and (3) additional theoretical / conceptual framing.

Prus, Robert *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research* [SI&ER]
- Ch 1: Studying Human Lived Experience
- Ch 2: Interpretive Roots
- Ch 3: Variants of the Interpretive Tradition
- Ch 4: The Ethnographic Research Tradition
- Ch 5: Generic Social Processes
- Ch 6: Experiencing Emotionality
- Ch 7: Betwixt Positivist Proclivities and Postmodernist Propensities
- Ch 8: Obdurate Reality and the Intersubjective Other (with Lorne Dawson)

**Optional** but recommended for more depth
- #Berger, Peter, and Thomas Luckmann *The Social Construction of Reality.*
- #Ermrath, Michael *Wilhelm Dilthey: The Critique of Historical Reason*
- #Goffman, Erving *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.*
- #Garfinkel, Harold *Studies in Ethnomethodology.*
- #Lofland, John *Doing Social Life*
- #Prus, Robert *Beyond the Power Mystique*
- #Mead, George Herbert *Mind, Self and Society*
- #Schutz, Alfred *Collected Papers I: the Problem of Social Reality.*
- *Collected Papers II: Studies in Social Theory*
- #Strauss, Anselm *Continual Permutations of Action*

### A Pragmatist Research Agenda

Envisioning human group life as pragmatically constituted by (contextualized) "activities in the making," the material outlined here from *Subcultural Mosaics and Intersubjective Realities* provides student researchers with a means of ethnographically accessing an extremely wide array of human involvements. The emphasis is on studying all manners of human knowing and acting as “something in the making.”

**Ch 4: Achieving Intersubjectivity, Managing Place and Space, and Maintaining Presence**

**Achieving Intersubjectivity**
- Developing Stocks of Knowledge
- Dealing With Objects
- *Managing Place and Space*
- Acknowledging the Physical Environment
- Obtaining and Maintaining Spaces and Accommodations
- Achieving Mobility and Transportation
- *Maintaining Presence*
- Locating and Consuming Foods
- Providing Person-Directed Services
- Obtaining Negotiables for Exchange

**Ch 5: Encountering the Other, Managing Morality, and Emphasizing Community Presence**

**Encountering the Interpersonal Other**
- Acknowledging Family Life
- Encountering the Broader Community
- Experiencing Intimacy and Sexuality
- Managing Intergroup Relations
- Venturing and Moving into New Communities
- Participating in Collective Events
- *Managing Morality*
- Participating in Religious and Cultic Movements
- Defining Propriety (and Deviance)
- Identifying and Regulating Deviance
- Getting Involved in Deviance
- *Emphasizing Community Presence*
- Implementing Political (Governmental) Forums
- Creating Military Agendas and Agencies
- Enhancing Communications (and Generating the Media)

**Ch 6: Acknowledging the Contextualized Self**

**Experiencing the Intersubjective Self**
- Attending to the Physical Self
- Developing an Ownership Self
- Appreciating the Proficient and Accomplished Self
- Attending to the Relational Self
- Invoking the Tactical Self
- Managing the Centralizing and Fragmented Self

### Methodological Practices

### Robert Prus, Mary Lorenz Dietz and William Shaffir... "Doing Ethnographic Research: Fieldwork as Practical Accomplishment" (Ch 7, *Subcultural Mosaics*)
Central Themes / Issues / Concepts
While a considerable amount of class time will be spent on discussions of people's GSP papers and Field Research Projects, we will also be attending to a number of other (related) themes in the course.

The following is a listing of the more central topics we will be considering along the way, so please be mindful of them as you are doing your reading and ask questions about these matters as we work our way through the term.

Further, since this course emphasizes the interlinkages of theory, methods, and research, we often can deal with issues as these occur to you than wait for the particular order presented herein.

While we will be following the overall flow of this outline as we work our way through successive classes, it is important to envision the classes as offering comparatively open forums in which we can address any variety of questions regarding the study of human lived experience (e.g., concepts, procedures, inquiry).

To help people locate materials pertaining to these topics, I have identified chapters in Subcultural Mosaics and Intersubjective Realities (SCM) and also in (optional) Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research (SI&ER) that most directly address these matters. Also, see the indices at the end of each book.

Since the statements in Herbert Blumer's (1969) Symbolic Interactionism (HB*SI) cut across most of these issues in an assortment of ways, Blumer's materials are not referenced as precisely.

The Interpretivist - Positivist Divide in the Social Sciences [Intersubjectivity, agency, activity, objects] (HB*SI; SCM 1,2; SI&ER: 1,7,8)

Acknowledging Pragmatist Roots: Revisiting the Early Greeks and Others [logos, pragma, praxis, polis] (class materials)
Flow of Western Social Thought (class materials)
Materialism, Idealism, Pragmatism
Religion, Philosophy, Poetics, Rhetoric, Politics, Ethnohistory, Interpersonal Relations

Intersubjectivity: Language, Knowing and Acting (HB*SI; SCM 2-6; SI&ER 1-8)
Language / Community / Subcultures
Wilhem Dilthey -- Verstehen / Hermeneutics
Emile Durkheim--Elementary Forms / Religious Life
C. H. Cooley / George H. Mead / Herbert Blumer
Attending to Human Lived Experience

The Cultural Problematic and Subcultural Mosaics (HB*SI; SCM 2-3)

Forms of Association (HB*SI; SCM: 3; SI/ER 2,5,6)
Dilthey / Simmel / Blumer / Generic social processes

Sympathetic Introspection / Ethnographic Inquiry
Cooley / Blumer (see HB*SI; SI/ER 2)
Participant observation
Achieving Intersubjectivity with the Other
Intimate familiarity
Respecting the Nature of the Human Group
Generic Processes

Variants of the Interpretive Paradigm (SI&ER 3)
(for general reference)
Herbert Blumer and Chicago-style Interactionism (HB*SI /SCM)
Manford Kuhn and Iowa School Interactionism
Erving Goffman and Dramaturgical Sociology
Labeling Theory -- Tannenbaum, Lemert, Becker, Goffman, Klapp
Alfred Schutz and Phenomenological Sociology
Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann and the Social Construction of Reality
Harold Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology
Sociology of Science -- Robert Merton / T.S. Kuhn / Karin Knorr-Cetina / Robert Campbell

The Ethnographic Enterprise in Historical Context
(SI&ER 4)
Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon
Ethnology / Anthropology
Chicago Style Ethnography
Thomas and Znaniecki / Park and Burgess
Student Ethnographies
Hughes and Blumer
The Contemporary Scene

Generic Social Processes (GSPs) -- Theory / methods / research (HB*SI; SCM 3; SI&ER 5,6)
Concepts / Processes / Parallels
Testing Concepts in Ethnographic Instances
Getting Involved in Subcultural Enterprises
Getting Started (Initial Involvements)
Sustaining and Intensifying Involvements
Being Disinvolved / Becoming Reinvolved
Experiencing Subcultural Life-Worlds
Acquiring Perspectives / Achieving Identity
Doing Activity / Developing Relationships
Experiencing Emotionality
Developing Communicative Fluency
Forming and Coordinating Associations
   Establishing Associations
   Objectifying Associations
   Encountering Outsiders
Participating in Collective Events
Engaging in Influence work (class)

Research Agendas for Social Scientists (HB*SI; SCM 4,5,6)

Doing Ethnography: Attending to Human Lived Experience (HB*SI; SCM 7,8; SI&ER 6;)
Assumptions
Methods Tactics
Dilemmas / Problems
Ethical Dimensions
Designing Projects
Making Contacts
Interacting with the Other Attending to the Self
Analyzing Ethnographic Data
Contextualizing Human Lived Experiences

Writing Ethnographic Statements

The Debates / Critiques
Structuralist - Interactionist Debates (HB*SI; SI&ER 1,7,8)
The Cultural Problematic (SCM 2)
Postmodernist - Interactionist Debates (SI&ER 1,7,8)

The Interactionist / Interpretivist Community
(SI&ER 2,3,4)
The Players / The Forums

The Literature - Sources and Resources (See references in SCM)
The Community of Scholars
The pragmatist / interactionist tradition
Ethnographic / qualitative inquiry
The constructionists / ethnomethodologists
The hermeneutic / interpretive emphasis
SSSI / Couch-Stone Symposium
SI&ER / Qualitative Analysis Meetings
ASA / CSA
Waterloo / McMaster / Carleton / UNB

Some Journals of Greater Relevance
Journal of Contemporary Ethnography
Qualitative Sociology
Qualitative Sociology Review
Social Psychology Quarterly
Symbolic Interaction
The American Sociologist

Some additional Reference Materials
(more detail in class)
Becker x Marihuana Users
Studying Ethnologs x J Contemp Ethnography
Memory x J Contemp Ethnography
Lucian on History x J Contemp Ethnography
Engaging Entertainment
Engaging Technology x Qual Soc Review
Myth of the Independent Variable x Am. Sociologist
Durkheim& Pragmatism x Am. Sociologist
Interview/Steve Kleinknecht x Qual Soc Review
Assignments
Since those taking this course may enter with diverse backgrounds and varying levels of familiarity with the sorts of conceptual frames and methodologies we will be considering, a first task is that of establishing a common conceptual and methodological base for the class as a unit. Consequently, all participants will be encouraged to familiarize themselves with materials focusing on social processes across a variety of substantive contexts (i.e., generic or transsituational social processes). Still, the projects to be developed for this course offer considerable opportunity for people to pursue a wider range of personal interests and we will attempt to build on these.

As we establish a working base vis-à-vis the theoretical foundations and methodological practices, a second objective will be that of having class members assume more active roles as research practitioners.

To this end, class members will be encouraged to question any and all aspects of the approach this course assumes and to share their projects and dilemmas these projects entail with others in the course. In this way, participants will develop skills at conceptualizing as well as conducting, analyzing, and assessing ethnographic research.

In addition to more routine class participation, students have two assignments each of which is designed to help people more fully appreciate the role of the researcher as ethnographer-analyst.

In assessing 400 and 700 level projects, it is expected that 700 level students will exhibit more depth and sophistication in both their GSP and ethnographic research projects. As well, 700 level students will be expected to participate more fully in class discussion and will be encouraged to assist 400 level students with their projects.

A. The Generic Social Process Paper
B. The Ethnographic Research Project

A. The Generic Social Process (GSP) Paper....
(worth 30% of the final grade)

This project involves an examination of one of a set of generic social processes (GSPs) using published monographs as the data base for the analysis.

For this paper,

410 students will examine two book length ethnographies (monographs)
714 students will examine three book length ethnographies (monographs).

However, each monograph should be from a different substantive area (as in crime, religion, entertainment, education).

An extended listing of ethnographies is provided at the end of this syllabus. Focusing on one GSP, the goal is to address that particular "generic social process" (e.g., developing perspectives, achieving identity, accomplishing activity, developing relationships, etc.) using the ethnographic materials from these monographs as your instances for assessing these notions.

The goal is to arrive at a greater awareness of the strengths and limitations of generic social processes as this pertains to the ethnographic study of human enacted reality.

In order to deal with these materials in a more relaxed and productive fashion, people are advised to select their monographs very early in term.

Occasionally, people may be fortunate in being able to purchase these books new or used, but most likely they will have to seek these out in the library. Please take very good care of these documents. They are valuable and likely worth photocopying for your own future reference.

*Both the GSP material and the volumes you select are apt to be important sources for your research project, so people often gain two or more times over in developing the GSP statement.

If you would like to introduce additional ethnographies into your analysis, that is entirely satisfactory, but I would much rather have you know a fewer number of studies in greater detail than a larger number at a more superficial level.

***Please select and start reading your monographs as soon as possible.
Although this paper is due after the field research proposal, the better GSP papers are those that are begun early in term. Working on the GSP paper sooner will also contribute to a more adequate (conceptually and methodologically) informed research project proposal.

GSP Paper -- Instructions
While two (three for 714 students) ethnographic monographs will constitute the data base for this assignment, students may find it useful to locate their discussions of this or that GSP in a little broader frame. Not all monographs provide equally valuable discussions of particular GSPs.

**A list of ethnographic monographs can be found at the end of this syllabus. Other ethnographies may be considered, but these are subject to approval.**

(1) Assume (and illustrate) an interactionist analytical viewpoint
(2) Tell what GSPs are and how they pertain to theory, methods and research on human lived experience (i.e., the humanly known and engaged world)
(3) Tell which GSP (see chapter 3 in SCM) you are planning to discuss and show how it fits in with any others that form a set or sequence of activities pertinent to your inquiry.
(4) Provide a working definition of your GSP. Describe its essence and variations. Also, introduce any qualifications that you think are appropriate in helping us to understand your objectives. If subcomponents or contextual features are involved, do the same for these conceptual notions as well. That way we can obtain a stronger, clearer operational focus on your task at hand.
(5) After introducing the conceptual frame, briefly overview the monographs you have selected so that your readers would have a basic orientation to the studies with which you will be working.
(6) Having established this base, begin a more concerted analysis of your GSP, laying out the subcomponentstructual defining what each subprocess entails (i.e., your operational or working definition of this or that component). Then show where and how the things you have found in your monographs do and do not address these matters. 

Remember, the monographs you will be reviewing likely were not written specifically with your GSP in mind. Thus, expect to find that particular monographs are stronger and weaker in these respects and may deal with matters pertinent to your GSP in more detailed as well as very general terms.

(7) ***Develop your larger analysis around the GSP you selected rather than discussing one volume followed by another as units unto themselves.***

Deal with your GSP concepts and the studies that you have selected in an integrated, comparative manner. It is very important to maintain a comparative approach around each subprocess of the GSP you have selected.

(8) As you work your way through the GSP paper, attempt to assess (not prove!) the viability of the GSP you are examining. Indicate omissions, problems, or weaknesses pertaining the GSP you selected as well as any insights, confirmations, extensions and the like. How might one reformulate the GSP or parts thereof to make it more effective?

After examining each subprocess, tell what you have learned in more generic (abstract, analytic, comparative conceptual) terms. [That is the intellectual payoff.]

(9) Also indicate what you see as the shortcomings of the research monographs you are discussing when that seems appropriate. It would be helpful in these instances to indicate the sort of research or issues that you think could be pursued in these cases and how this might be accomplished.

(10) In concluding the paper, tell about your experiences in assembling this project. In what ways was it interesting, frustrating, enlightening, challenging? What have you learned about the ethnographic literature from this examination your particular GSP? How might one go about doing research on your GSP(s)? What issues should one pursue in this area? Try to develop this section as well.

(11) Please realize that you will be learning much more about GSPs and ethnographic research as you develop your analysis. Do not expect to know everything before your begin or even when you finish writing the GSP paper.

    Likewise, do not expect to write the perfect paper, but do try to develop the best paper that you sincerely are able to write. This is a learning experience, wherein one learns as one works with this material. The same concerns about “learning as you work with your subject matter” pertain to the research paper.
Formatting your GSP paper

Name:

Title: (something reasonably direct and informative)

Abstract: (probably written after you’ve done everything else) In about 100-150 words, overview your GSP project.

Introduction - Tell about the “what” and “how” of your paper. Introduce your approach, your GSP, and the monographs you have selected.

Theoretical Frame: Symbolic Interaction, but make this explicit – develop this as a conceptual base.

[Describe your] Data Base
Provide more information on each of the monographs you have selected - provide an overview that is attentive to the theory and methods that inform these texts (and your subsequent analysis). Attend to authors / titles / major emphases of these books.

[Develop your] Analytic Emphases
Discuss GSPs / your GSP
Address the major divisions (subprocesses) of your GSP
Provide working definitions of each subcomponent
Address each subcomponent using your monographs
Indicate what you have been learning about each subprocess (i.e., assess what you have discovered and specify and qualifications and problematics that seem appropriate)

Be sure to organize your materials around your GSP (and subcomponents) not around the monographs

Conclusion
Summarize your materials relative to your GSP and the subcomponents you considered. Tell what you have learned. Discuss the potential, limitations, alternatives to your analysis, suggestions for subsequent inquiry and analysis. ALSO… talk about your experiences in developing this project.

[When discussing your GSP project in class, talk about your plans, interests, progress, dilemmas, challenges, etc..]

** Compare similarities/differences / Dialogue with the materials / Assess; do not simply illustrate

   Extend Conceptually if possible/ Consider Limitations / Suggestions for subsequent studies

Dilemmas / uncertainties:

Other: think process, activity, interpretation, interaction, influence and resistance

Please Read this before you write / submit your GSP paper

As a set of papers, I found the projects submitted were very interesting and worthwhile, especially when one considers the limited time frame with which you worked.

I realize that people often learn more from projects than their grades signify, but in arriving at a grade for each paper, I tried to be mindful of (a) the particular texts with which you were working, (b) the amount of work and thought that you put into the project, (c) the elaboration and depth developed within the statement, and (d) some sense of the sociological direction and insight that you achieved in developing this statement. As well, the matters of (e) clarity, communication, and comprehension inevitably entered into the overall score. You might also appreciate that it is in written assignments such as this that one can see how people's minds and sociological imaginations are taking shape. Clearly, there is a lot of potential in this class and I want to do as much as possible this term to help each of you achieve a more compelling level of scholarship.

While I have indicated provided more specific feedback on your papers, there are some things that have a more general relevance and I would just like to highlight these here.

First, I would encourage people to develop an introduction, a short statement at the beginning of the paper that sets the stage for the reader. Here, in a clear, direct, and focused manner, tell the reader what you intend to do in the paper and how you will go about doing this. Often, it is a good idea to write or rewrite your introduction after you have completed the rest of the paper. That way, you can be more certain that the reader will be prepared for the material that follows.

In that sense, clarity, purpose, and direction are much more consequential for statements in the social sciences than is creativity of expression. At least, without the former, the latter is of little value. So, try to explain your materials as precisely as you are able and try to develop connections or linkages between the various points you introduce as you work your way through the analysis. Often, this is best accomplished as you reread (rewrite) earlier text.

When developing your materials, be sure to define your concepts or your terms of reference as clearly as you can. This is so important! In addition to enabling the
reader to better anticipate and understand the material that you will be developing, these definitions also are very helpful in enabling you to focus your materials more precisely and more adequately develop your statement throughout.

In the case of the generic social process papers (as with your final paper), it also is important to develop your illustrations from your texts (and interviews) as fully as you are able. At the same time, the emphasis is on examining the process at hand, and learning as much as possible (through comparative analysis and specification) about the subthemes that may be involved therein.

This means using your material to develop contingencies or qualifications that address the particular conceptual insights you have gained from this investigation.

This is the intellectual payoff: to be able to specify in more generic or abstract conceptual terms, the things you have learned about this or that subtheme or subprocess.

Relatedly, this is something that I really would like to see people pursue in their subsequent projects. Likewise, this is one place that we move beyond the matter of “getting an education” and begin to contribute in more direct terms to the development of scholarship.

On a minor note overall, it is also important to avoid blending multiple processes together when pursuing your analysis. Otherwise, you are apt to lose more conceptual depth. Unless you pursue your analytic themes and subprocesses in more focused manners, you are apt to lose considerable conceptual depth.

Finally, as we go through projects of this sort and read the ethnographies more generally I would like you to be mindful of the things that you can learn about research more generally. This means attending to any aspect of the research process that could be done more effectively and more productively as well as acknowledging those things that are entirely worth pursuing in their present forms. Thus, as we work our way through the materials for any project, it is important to envision these things as lessons for the future.

B. FIELD RESEARCH PROJECT....

(Proposal – worth 10% of final grade
Completed paper – worth 60% of final grade

The major assignment for this course involves an ethnographic (interview and/or participant-observation) study of some aspect of human group life. The paper (and project more generally) is to reflect Chicago-style interactionist analysis.

Whereas the volume, Subcultural Mosaics provides students with hundreds of contextualized suggestions for pursuing field research as well as references to some of the literature most pertinent to ethnographic examinations of the human condition, people are to develop projects that focus on one of the following:

Engaging Science and Technology
Engaging Arts and Entertainment
Engaging Religion and Spirituality
Engaging Consumer Behaviour and Gambling

As suggested by the term "engaging," the emphasis on activity and interchange. Thus, it is important to focus on HOW people, as participants in the process, actively and interactively deal with matters pertaining to science, technology, the arts, entertainment, religion, spirituality, consumer behaviour or gambling.

Although these may denote different fields of involvement, we will be working with the same theoretical and methodological approach. Thus, we will have considerable coherence as a class as we connect with a more developed scholarly community.

****Relatedly, I will provide people with materials) that address these fields of inquiry in terms directly related to this course.

Although we can study virtually anything that people do in the way of meaningful activity, there is a very practical concern that the topics selected lend themselves to ready access to interview and/or participant observation data.

It also is worth observing that a number of projects developed from earlier versions of this course have served as the foundational core for undergraduate and graduate theses and publications as well as representing an invaluable experiential base (and stock of knowledge) in many other instances.

We will be discussing the field research projects throughout the term; indeed from day one, since the entire course deals with matters of theory, methods and research that are relevant to this project.

The research paper consists of two sub-assignments: a proposal and a completed research report.
Please notice that the first part of the research project is due PRIOR to the GSP paper. This is to enable people to complete the course within the present term.

*The proposal (worth 10% of the final grade) should (a) address the central assumptions of symbolic interaction, (b) focus on the concepts (and literature) central to this inquiry, (c) describe the context in which the study is to be located, and (d) outline your plans for data collection. It is the conceptual frame that situates the conceptual payoff for all research. That is why it is so important to be mindful of your premises and concepts throughout.

The proposal is due early in term but, this way, students have opportunities to obtain feedback on their ideas, make preliminary adjustments to their research proposals, and embark on research earlier in term.

Although the proposal is a more tentative and less informed statement than what people can produce later in term, most everyone finds that this is a very valuable experience for developing the final paper.

Ethics Materials. Since approval for conducting research with people is contingent on researchers respecting the guidelines of UW Office of Research Ethics, it is important that we attend to these matters as early in term as possible. Thanks to the thought, work, and resourcefulness of Dr. Susan Sykes and Julie Joza of the ORE, we presently are able to deal with these matters much more efficiently than ever has been the case in the past.

However, while we are to be highly mindful of people’s rights to privacy and voluntary participation in the research that we conduct in more general terms, it is essential that students in 410/714: (a) have their projects approved before starting their research projects; (b) work with an approved recruitment script; (c) provide prospective participants with an approved project information letter; (d) obtain explicit consent regarding participation from the people in their studies (as in an acknowledged consent form), and (e) provide participants with an approved appreciation / feedback letter.

Research is a privilege and it is essential that we respect these conditions in conducting our studies.

Because these projects (research and analysis) take some time to develop, it is extremely important that people submit their research proposals and ethics materials to me as early in the term as possible. Templates will be available to help make this process as smooth and clear as possible.

The completed research paper (worth 60% of the final grade) should display knowledge of ethnographic research methodology, indicate an ability to conduct field research in a careful, thorough manner, and exhibit explicit integration of this research with the interactionist literature (i.e., be theoretically grounded). See the instructions following.

The Ethnographic Research Project – Instructions

The research paper involves an interactionist analysis of some aspect of human group life. The actual setting selected for study is apt to reflect some combination of substantive interests, accessibility of participants, and theoretical concerns.

To this end, students are encouraged to entertain two (and hopefully more) potential research sites or projects and to attempt to envision how they might go about conducting an ethnographic inquiry in this or that setting. We can then consider the relative feasibility of doing research in particular settings and focusing on this or that set of conceptual issues.

***** Because they are intended to define a pragmatist research agenda, Chapters 4, 5, and 6 of Subcultural Mosaics provide wide ranges of suggestions (topics, subthemes) pertaining to community life.

***** Chapters 7 and 8 of Subcultural Mosaics deal with the matter of setting up, pursuing, and writing up ethnographic research projects.

In all cases, please be mindful of the following: (1) Discuss your ideas with me before embarking on your research project. It is often a good idea, too, when considering topics to list two, three, or more things that you might be interested in studying. That way, we may be more able to find something that is highly viable among the things you would like to study.
While we will be discussing these projects in class, I would like to help you develop a stronger, more manageable, and more relevant course project, as well as avoid needless pitfalls.

(2) Since group life consists of people doing activities in conjunction with one another, direct your paper to the analysis of some activity (or set of activities). Focus on HOW activities take place, and indicate the ways that the people involved do things.

Tell how people engage situations (their interests, definitions of the situation, approaches, activities) and how they accomplish (and negotiate) their activities in conjunction with others involved in the settings (their strategies, adjustments, redefinitions, etc.) under consideration.

An appreciation of activities, thus, means attending to the instances in which people do things; to all of the particular "here and nows" in which people find themselves.

(3) Select an activity/setting with which you have some personal familiarity and/or can easily access (and talk with) the people involved. If you do both, so much the better, as you can build on interview, participant-observation, and observation materials).

(4) Start as soon as possible. You needn't have a precise topic in mind to discuss a possible project. A good way to begin is simply to make a list of things that you might like to examine, possibly building on your own interests and activities.

As we consider different things, I will indicate which topics may be more advantageous to pursue and suggest ways in which particular topics may be more productively framed for research and analysis.

(5) The proposal should (a) address the central assumptions of symbolic interaction, (b) focus on the concepts (and literatures) central to this inquiry, (c) describe the context in which the study is to be located, and (d) outline your plans for data collection.

(6) Because this project is designed primarily as a course learning experience, your first and major sources of perspectives, concepts, parallel research findings and the like are your course reading materials.

Make use of this base in all stages of your project: planning, developing your proposal, collecting data, analyzing, and writing final drafts.

As much as you can, show that you are striving to become familiar with all aspects of the course. Your paper will be graded accordingly.

(7) When doing field research, treat the people with whom you are working with the same degree of respect, confidentiality and consideration you would like if you were helping someone with their project. Do NOT use actual names of people or places in your written report.

(8) In writing your paper, draw comparisons (attending to similarities, differences, implications) with other research that examines activities or processes similar to those you studied. Are there any similarities, for example, between how people join cult "X" and how they become involved in saleswork or how they become involved in jogging?

You should not set out to "prove" anyone's theory, but you should evaluate your materials / findings relative to those of other researchers looking at activities that parallel your own in some way.

(9) Do not moralize, crusade, prescribe for your target population. Instead, tell what people do and how they work out activities with others.

Do NOT take sides or tell what people should or ought to do. Focus on what actually takes place.

If you would like to state your opinions on some point, do so on a separate page entitled "Opinions" and attach these to the last page of the project. These will be read but will not be graded. Be careful not to let your opinions color your analysis.

(10) This may seem like odd advice, but do not worry about trying to be brilliant at each point in the analysis. Instead, concentrate first on indicating the things you are finding and sorting these out. As you engage in comparisons (similarities, differences) both within your own study and parallel research in other settings, many worthwhile observations are apt to emerge. Build on these insights these comparisons offer and try to address them in conceptual terms.

(11) In concluding the paper, review your project, indicating what you learned about group life as a consequence of your investigation. Also comment on your experiences (difficulties, surprises, etc.) in developing this project. Any suggestions for future research?

(12) The SUBMITTED PAPER will likely be about 20-40 pages (remember, this includes quotations from your interviews /observations) in length and printed (please double-space your own analytic materials; extracts from interviews may be single-spaced). Also, please submit an electronic copy for my files as well as
a hard (printed) copy.

**Presenting your Field Research Project Proposal**

1-2 page Outline — single-spaced

Name:

**Title:** (something reasonably informative)

[Note: Project must be readily accessible for data collection]

**Abstract:** (probably written after you’ve done everything else)

In about 50-100 words, provide an overview of your project proposal.

**Introduction:** tell about the “what” and “how” of your project

Briefly discuss the context / and your modes / points of Access

**Theoretical Frame:** Symbolic Interaction... make this explicit. Also think process, activity, interpretation, interchange, influence and resistance – NOT factors, variables, or forces

**Methodology:** Interviewing, P-O, Observation – make this explicit

**Primary Emphases --- themes / concepts --- link to GSPs (particular GSP)

**Plans:** things to do / issues to pursue / materials to read /

**Dilemmas / uncertainties:**

**Documentation, Footnotes, Citations**

Document fully and completely. Plagiarism is not acceptable. Whenever use is made of an idea or information from a source, that source is to be cited.

A footnote (citation) style of the following sort is fairly common in the social sciences and students are asked to use it. "Ibids", "op cits" and the like are no longer used; instead the source is listed in the text of the paper as one discusses the material. Here are some examples:

Goffman (1963a) says ..... 
Another researcher (Becker, 1963:23-28) notes that ..... 

(For a quote)

Italicize and single space your material, placing the author's name, the year of publication and the relevant page in brackets following the quotation. (Henslin, 1968:81)

Using this format, the titles of books and articles and their sources of publications are listed only once, in the reference section (bibliography) that follows the text. See the examples following:

**REFERENCES**

(Note, order your entries by author, year, title, respectively)


**Project Related Dates**

Because we will be treating theory, methods, and research in more holistic and adjustable manners as we work our way through the course, I have not imposed a highly specific content time-frame.

We will covering a good bit of material (see the Central themes / Issues / Concepts listing on this page) but will do so in ways that reflect the developmental flow of the course and the nature of people’s projects as these are taking shape.

Relatedly, because of the more open, developmental flow of the course as well as the interconnections of our classes and your assignments, it is important not to miss any classes.
Unless otherwise indicated, we will use each class to discuss aspects of symbolic interactionist theory and related issues, ethnographic research, and your projects – i.e., theory, methods, and research. We will be following the overall flow suggested in the following section on central themes..... but because of the extended interlinkages of theory, methods, research, literature in SI, we can readily adjust to people’s more immediate questions and concerns as well.

Still, the following dates are relevant as people attempt to manage their schedules and attend to their assignments over the term.

**September 16: Overview / Orientation / Resources**

**September 23:** Discuss Research Projects & theory/ methods
Access Research Ethics Materials

**September 30:** Ethnographic Research Project outline
(1 page) is due today – Worth 10% of your final grade (please bring in enough copies for everyone in class) Discuss projects

**October 07:** GSP outline (1 page) due today (please bring in enough copies for everyone in class) Discuss projects

**October 14:** Submit Ethics Materials by Today at Latest
Discuss GSP projects & theory/ methods/ research

**October 21:** Discuss GSP projects & theory/ methods/ research

**October 28:** ***GSP Paper due Today (30% of final grade) & theory/ methods/ research

**November 04:** Theory/ methods/ research

**November 11:** Updated Ethnographic Research Project Outline
(please bring copies for everyone) Discuss Projects

**November 18:** Theory/ methods/ research

**November 25:** Last Ethnographic Research Project Outline
(please bring copies for everyone) Discuss Projects

**December 2:** [Extended Class – MiniConference]
Although sometimes approached with some trepidation, students generally have found these mini-conferences to be extremely worthwhile. As well, these presentations are very helpful for getting feedback on materials pertaining to their final papers.

Ethnographic Research Papers due December 9-16 (Pick your day; 60% of final grade)

NOTE: There will be conference on Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research Qualitative Analysis Conference held at the WLU campus in Brantford in May 2011. Some of our students have presented papers at these conferences based on projects begun in this course. It is a wonderful opportunity to meet other ethnographers and students of the human condition as well as develop as a scholar. Think about this from the outset.

**Some Convenient Abbreviations**

CC (CCs) = career contingency(ies)
EDL = everyday life
ENOG = Ethnography
ER = ethnographic research
GSP(s) = generic social process(es)
HGL = human group life
HK&A = human knowing and acting
HLE = human lived experience
II (IIs) = initial involvement(s)
IM = impression management
IS (ISs)= intersubjectivity(ies)
ISR (ISRs) = intersubjective reality(ies)
P/S = presentation of self
SC / SCs = subculture / subcultures
SCM (SCMs)= subcultural mosaic(s)
SI = symbolic interaction

**ETHNOGRAPHIC MONOGRAPHS**

You may select studies for analysis from this list. This list is not comprehensive and other very good ethnographies exist (and hopefully will continue to be produced).

If you have other volumes you would like me to consider for this assignment, please bring them forward. However, I would caution you about using people's autobiographies, journalistic accounts, moralist or prescriptive statements, postmodernist materials, or (other) fictionalized renderings. Although these items can be interesting and instructive at times, they generally are of little value when compared with more sustained conventionalist ethnographies.

**The most valuable ethnographies** are those that provide direct, careful, sustained, open, in-depth accounts of people's experiences (and activities); statements that strive to sincerely present the viewpoints and practices of the people involved as they (the participants) know the life-worlds in which they find themselves. Studies of these sorts provide much
more material on which analysts (you in this case) may build.

Also do **NOT** assume that ethnographies written many years ago are any less valuable as a consequence. Insofar as particular studies depict people's lived experiences (and activities) in open, participant-based ways and present these in more extended detail, ethnographic studies have an enduring (substantive and conceptual / comparative) relevance for all manners of contemporary comprehensions of the human condition.

Still, as you examine the materials following, you will find considerable variation in depth and evenness. While it is easy to criticize authors for things they didn't do, it is very useful for readers to ask what they would do in similar situations so that they might more effectively develop studies of this sort on their own.

Albas, Daniel C. and Cheryl Mills Albas
1984 *Student Life and Exams*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall / Hunt.

Anderson, Nels

Bartell, Gilbert P.

Becker, Howard, Everett Hughes, Blanche Geer, and Anselm Strauss

Biernacki, Patrick

Blumer, Herbert

Blumer, Herbert and Hauser, Philip

Charmaz, Kathy

Counts, Dorothy Ayers and David R. Counts

Cressey, Paul

Davis, Fred
1963 *Passage through Crisis*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill.

Dietz, Mary Lorenz

Ditton, James

Edgerton, Robert

Ekins, Richard

Emerson, Robert

Evans, A. Donald and W.W. Falk
1986 *Learning to be Deaf*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Faulpel, Charles E.

Festinger, Leon, Henry Riecken, and Stanley Schacter

Fine, Gary Alan


Fishman, Laura T.
Gubrium, Jaber F.  

Haas, Jack and William Shaffir  

Hargreaves, David, Stephen Hestor, and Frank Melor  

Harrington, C. Lee, and Denise D. Bielby  

Heilman, Samuel S.  


Jacobs, Bruce  

Jorgensen, Danny  

Karp, David A.  
1996 *Speaking of Sadness: Depression, Disconnection and the Meanings of Illness.* Oxford University Press.

Karsh, Bernard  
1958 *Diary of a Strike.* Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press

Keiser, R. Lincoln  

Knorr-Cetina, Karin  

Lesieur, Henry  

Letkemann, Peter  

Lofland, John  

Prentice-Hall.

MacLeod, Bruce A.  

McMahon, Martha  

Mitchell, Richard G. Jr.  

Powell, Walter  

Prus, Robert  


Prus, Robert and Stylianos Irini  

Rock, Paul  

Ross, H. Lawrence  

Rubinstein, Jonathan  

Sanders, Clinton  
**DO NOT USE in 2010—Overdone**


Shaffir, Joseph and Peter Conrad  

Shaw, Clifford

Steffensmeier, Darrell J.

Sutherland, Edwin

Thrasher, Frederic M.

Van Zandt, David E.

Waller, Willard

Wiseman, Jacqueline

Thucydides [c460-400BCE]

Wolf, Daniel

*Note on Avoidance of Academic Offences:

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. [Check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.]

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity [check www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/] to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate Associate Dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71, Student Discipline, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm. For typical penalties check Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 (Student Petitions and Grievances) (other than a petition) or Policy 71 (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 (Student Appeals) www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm. When in doubt please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Note for students with disabilities  The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

Please take care to avoid academic offences.

Thank you for being a good citizen as well as a conscientious student! RP