

Advanced Topics in Research Methods, Methodologies, and Design: Field Study In Humanities Work

**INF 391F
27915**

Spring 2015
UTA 1.504
Tuesdays, 9 – 12 pm (noon)

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Office Hours: By appointment (or via e-mail)

I. Course Description

Who should take this course?

This course is designed for doctoral students in information studies and the humanities who want to gain the skills and knowledge for carrying out ethnographic research and for writing up their work for successful journal, conference, or monograph publication. The skills and knowledge that you will gain in this course are independent of discipline; however, a number of the readings that I employ to illustrate concepts and steps are drawn specifically from the fields of information studies and the humanities. I welcome all students who are eager to understand ethnography, who are willing to work hard to learn their craft, and who can work cooperatively in a group learning experience.

No prerequisites are required for this course.

Overview

In 2009, Christine Borgman asked “Where are the social studies of digital humanities?” More specifically, she inquired, “Why is no one following digital humanities scholars around to understand their practices, in the way that scientists have been studied for the last several decades?” Arguing that such research has significantly shaped scholarly infrastructure for the sciences as “a central component of cyberinfrastructure and eScience initiatives,” Borgman urged digital humanities to learn more about its own practices.

For this class, we will “follow around digital humanities scholars” from a range of backgrounds who function in a variety of roles within higher education, academic institutions. We will focus on “humanists” who are at work with the “digital” primarily because we are interested in the perspective of humanities scholars who find themselves working at the intersection of humanistic principles and the development of scholarly information infrastructures (defined by Borgman as “the technology, services, practices, and policy that support research in all disciplines”). While we understand that digital humanists do all kinds of work including administration, teaching, service, and writing (to name a few), this class will focus specifically on tasks and perspectives that are revealed in the process of project-based work. Digital humanities projects are often touted as the site of work that not only defines DH but also the site of work at which the development of information infrastructure has the most potential to be impacted by theoretical perspectives imbued in humanist critique and vice versa. Better articulating what kind of work infrastructure development entails is particularly illustrative for considering information work in digital humanities because it is a “research area where the interests of humanists, technology researchers, and others converge” (Friedlander).

Specifically, this class will consider two essential topics in our findings: (1) the nature of the “information” work that “digital” humanists do; and (2) how we go about observing and studying such work to better understand ourselves. We will employ mixed methods approaches including topic modeling five years of “Day of DH” data as a glance into how DHers in general describe their work, interviewing approximately digital humanists on their daily DH practices and the values they attribute to these practices as well as observing “digital humanists at work.”

Johanna Drucker reminds us that “humanistic theory provides ways of thinking differently, otherwise, specific to the problems and precepts of interpretative knowing—partial, situated, enunciative, subjective, and performative” and that digital humanities is defined by its “emphasis on making, connecting, interpreting, and collaborating” (Drucker 2012). She notes that “[o]ur challenge is to take up these theoretical principles and engage them in the production of methods, ways of doing our work” (Drucker 2012). This class will teach students how to provide a snapshot of these ways and how to consider how and if these theories and methods are reflected in the quotidian practices of the digital humanist.

II. Specific Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will:

- Design an Ethnographic Study
- Select Sites
- Negotiate Access
- Conduct Observations
- Conduct Semi-Structured Interviews
- Manage Data
- Code Fieldnotes and Transcripts
- Employ Qualitative Analysis Software
- Write Memos
- Uncover Themes
- Move from Description to Analysis
- Build Grounded Theory
- Manage Presence and Relationships
- Determine When to Leave the Field
- Speak to a Literature/Community
- Frame Your Study
- Ensure and Convey Rigor and Validity
- Write Up and Present Your Results

III. Format and Procedures

This is a seminar-style course, so attendance and participation in class are critical to individual success in this course and to the success of the course as a whole. Students should come to class prepared to participate in small group and class discussions, completing all required readings prior to class, and submitting assignments on time.

To better understand how and why to conduct field work, you will carry out a group ethnography of digital humanists. Sites will be arranged by the students or in coordination with the instructor at the beginning of the semester. You will work with your fellow students to collect a corpus of data through observations and interviews of informants at these sites. Either individually or in small groups, you will analyze the data we collect through a theoretical lens of your choice. You will present your analysis verbally in class alone or, if you worked in a group to do analysis, with others. You will write a final paper on your own, even if you completed your analysis with a group. Your fieldwork and analysis will be guided by our reading of methods texts, stellar monographs of ethnographies, and journal articles that report interesting ethnographic research.

Grading

- **Grade breakdown**

Participation:	5%
Synthesis Posts:	10%
Field Documents (5 total, 10% each):	50%
Protocol and Two Pages of Text (2.5% each):	5%
Project Verbal Presentation	10%
Project Paper	20%
Total	100%
- **Grade calculations**

	B+	84-89	C+	69-73	
A	95-100	B	79-83	C	60-68
A-	90-94	B-	74-78	F	<60

Late Work Policy

Your classmates need your material done on time, and I see value in meeting deadlines as good preparation for being a researcher. Thus, you will lose a letter grade if your materials are not ready by class time on their due date. You will lose another half a grade per additional day late.

IV. Materials

Software

We will be using Dedoose software for analysis in this course. Dedoose is web-based. You can get a \$10.95/month license if you think you do not want to retain a copy for future use. It works for either PC or Mac users. See <http://www.dedoose.com/>.

Books (Required)

- Emerson, Robert M., Fretz, Rachel I., Shaw, Linda L. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- Liu, Alan. *The Laws of Cool: Knowledge Work and the Culture of Information*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Think: Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis*. Chicago ; London: University Of Chicago Press, 2012. Print.
- Hull, Matthew S. *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012. Print.
- Kelty, Christopher M. *Two Bits: The Cultural Significance of Free Software*. Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2008. Print.
- Weiss, Robert S. *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. The Free Press, New York, 1995.

Required Articles and Book Chapters (Required, available on Canvas)

- Adler, Patricia A., and Peter Adler. *Membership Roles in Field Research*. SAGE, 1987.
- Barley, Stephen R. 2006. "When I Write My Masterpiece: Thoughts on What Makes a Paper Interesting." *Academy of Management Journal*, 49(1): 16-20.
- Barley, Stephen R. 1990. "Images of Imaging: Notes on Doing Longitudinal Field Work." *Organization Science*, 1(3): 220-247.
- Becker, Howard S. 1996. "The Epistemology of Qualitative Research." In Robert M. Emerson (Ed.), *Contemporary Field Research: Perspectives and Formulations* (2nd ed.): 317-330. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Boudreau, Marie-Claude and Robey, Daniel. 2005. "Enacting Integrated Information Technology: A Human Agency Perspective." *Organization Science*, 16(1): 3-18.
- Borgman, Christine L. "The Digital Future Is Now: A Call to Action for the Humanities." *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 003.4 (2010): n. pag.
- Creswell, John W. and Miller, Dana L. 2000. "Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry." *Theory into Practice*, 39(3): 124-130.
- Drucker, Johanna. "Humanistic Theory and Digital Scholarship." In *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, edited by Matthew K. Gold. Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2012: 85 – 95.
- Emerson, Robert M., & Pollner, M. 2001. "Constructing Participant/Observation Relations." In Robert M. Emerson (Ed.), *Contemporary Field Research: Perspectives and Formulations* (2nd ed.): 239-259. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Fine, Gary Alan. 1993. "Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas in Field Research." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 22(3): 267-294.
- Given, Lisa M. and Leckie, Gloria J. 2003. "'Sweeping' the Library: Mapping the Social Activity Space of the Public Library." *Library & Information Science Research*, 25:365-385.
- Hannerz, Ulf. 2003. "Being There... and There... and There! Reflections on Multi-Site Ethnography." *Ethnography*, 4(2): 201-216.
- Hartel, Jenna and Thomson, Leslie. 2011. "Visual Approaches and Photography for the Study of Immediate Information Space." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 62(11): 2214-2224.
- Katz, J. 2001. "From How to Why: On Luminous Description and Causal Inference in Ethnography (Part 1)." *Ethnography*, 3(1): 63-90.
- Katz, J. 2002. "From How to Why: On Luminous Description and Causal Inference in Ethnography (Part 2)." *Ethnography*, 2(4), 443-473.
- Maxwell, Joseph A. 1992. "Understanding and Validity in Qualitative Research." *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(3): 279-300.
- Orlikowski, Wanda J. 1992. "The Duality of Technology: Rethinking the Concept of Technology in Organizations." *Organization Science*, 3(3): 398-427.

- Sargent, Carey. 2009. "Local Musicians Building Global Audiences." *Information, Communication, & Society*, 12(4): 469-487.
- Shankar, Kalpana. 2009. "Ambiguity and Legitimate Peripheral Participation in the Creation of Scientific Documents." *Journal of Documentation*, 66(1): 151-165.
- Snow, David A., Morill, Calvin and Anderson, Leon. 2003. "Elaborating Analytic Ethnography: Linking fieldwork and theory." *Ethnography* 4 (2): 181-200.
- Viseau, Ana, Clement, Andrew, Aspinall, Jane, and Kennedy, Tracy L.M. 2006. "The Interplay of Public and Private Spaces in Internet Access." *Information, Communication, & Society*, 9(5): 633-656.

Canvas

To supplement our in-class discussions we will use Canvas to distribute and share course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, and to submit assignments. You can find Canvas support at the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., so please plan accordingly.

IV. Tentative Course Schedule ***This syllabus represents current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity.*

Date	Topics and Readings	Fieldwork	Due
Week 1	Knowledge work in the humanities		
(1/20)	Becker, "Epistemology" Borgman Drucker Hayles, Ch. 1 Liu, "Introduction" and Part I (Chp 1).		
Week 2	Ethnographic Fieldwork		
(1/27)	Burawoy, Ch. 1 Breglia, "The 'Work' of Ethnographic Fieldwork" Emerson et al. Ch. 1-3 Fine, "Ten Lies of Ethnography" Forsythe "It's just a matter of Common Sense" Geertz Kelty, "Introduction"	Intro to site	Synthesis
Week 3	Observations and Interviews		
(2/3)	Adler "Membership Roles in Field Research" Burawoy, Ch. 14 "Teaching Participant Observation" Emerson et al. Ch. 4-5 Hartel & Thomson, "Visual Approaches" Latour Ch. 2 Weiss, Ch. 1 -2		Synthesis
Week 4	Research Design, Site Selection, Negotiating Access, and the IRB		
(2/10)	Burawoy Ch. 2 Hannerz, "Being There...and There" Hull, "Introduction" Kelty, Part I (Chps. 1-2) Star, "Ethnography of Infrastructure"	Conduct 1st obs	Synthesis
Week 5	Data Management		
(2/17)	Please read at least two sets of field notes other than your own. Emerson et al. Ch. 6 Weiss, Ch. 6 Corbin and Strauss, "Analyzing Data"	Conduct 2nd obs	1st notes
Week 6	Coding, Emic versus Etic Approaches, and Other Devices (I)		
(2/24)	Please read at least two sets of field notes other than	Code	2nd notes

	your own. Ethnography Examples: Orr, <i>Talking about Machines</i> “Introduction” and Chps. 1-2. Hull, Chps 1-3; Liu, Part II [Read this as a framing of ethnographies of work].		
Week 7	Coding, Emic versus Etic Approaches, Logs and Other Devices (II)		
(3/3)	Please read at least two sets of field notes other than your own. Ethnography Examples: Hull, Chps. 4-5 Liu, Part III [Glance through this section as a close reading of the documentation of the Internet] Hayles Chps. 2-3	Conduct 3rd obs; Code	
Week 8	Conducting Interviews		
(3/10)	Weiss, Ch. 3-5 Sargent, “Local Musicians” Ethnography Examples: Read this information studies paper with an eye towards how the authors wove their data into the narrative. LeMaistre, et. al “Role Reinvention”	Code Develop protocol	3rd notes
(3/17)	SPRING BREAK		
Week 9	Managing Presence, When to Leave the Field, and Relationship to Informants		
(3/24)	Emerson & Pollner, “Constructing...Relations” Barley, “Images of Imaging” Weiss, Ch. 6 “Analysis of Data” Corbin and Strauss, “Memos and Diagrams” Emerson, Ch. 6	Conduct 1st interview	Protocol in shared space
Week 10	Beyond Description: Drawing Themes, Writing Memos, and Building Grounded Theory		
(3/31)	Katz, “From How to Why,” parts 1 and 2 Ethnography Examples: Read these information studies papers with an eye towards how the authors developed and explained themes. Given and Leckie, “Sweeping the Library” Shankar, “Ambiguity”	Code, Write Memos; Conduct 2 nd Interview	1st interview
Week 11	Workshop: Reading Your Interviews		
(4/7)	Emerson et al. Ch. 7-8 Corbin and Strauss, “Writing Theses”	Investigate Background Lit, Code, Analyze	2nd interview
Week 12	Speaking to a Literature, Framing a Study		
(4/14)	Ethnography Examples: Read the following with an eye towards how the authors addressed and extended a body of literature. Orlikowski, “Duality of Technology” Boudreau & Robey, “Enacting Integrated” Hayles, Chp 4-8 Kelty, Part II (Chps. 3-7)	Investigate Background Lit, Code, Analyze	Synthesis
Week 13	Validity and Rigor [Workshop: Writing the Methods Section]		

(4/21)	Ethnography Example: Kely, Chps. 8-9 Liu, Part IV (Chps. 9-12) Creswell and Miller, "Determining Validity" Maxwell, "Understanding and Validity" Snow et al., "Elaborating Analytic Ethnography"	Write	Synthesis
Week 14	Workshop: Writing		
(4/28)	Marcus and Cushman "Ethnographies as Texts" Barley, "When I Write My Masterpiece"	Write	Two pages of text
Week 15	Challenges, Solutions, Conclusions		
(5/5)	Liu "Epilogue" Kely, "Conclusion" Hull, "Conclusion: Participatory Bureaucracy"	Write	Presentation
(5/10)	Final Paper Due		

V. Course Requirements

- **Class attendance and participation (5%)**

1. Because the vast majority of the learning in this class will occur within the classroom, you are required to attend class regularly. Absences will only be excused in situations following university policy (illness, religious holy days, participation in University activities at the request of university authorities, and compelling absences beyond your control) with proper documentation and timely notification (prior to class for non-emergencies). Excessive tardiness may be considered as an unexcused absence.
2. Class participation is a critical element of this course. The effectiveness of the course will be significantly impacted by the quality of your participation. Class participation is not merely attendance, but rather factors in your overall contributions to the collaborative learning environment, based on both the quantity and quality of your interactions in all aspects of the course. You should come to class prepared to discuss the required readings, as well as your perspectives on these readings. You should strive for balance in your contributions, and your participation will not be based on who speaks the loudest or the longest, but on consistent, quality participation.
3. Please note that regular attendance and active participation in each class session are critical for receiving a good grade in this course. For example, by actively participating in each class, you will receive a full letter grade higher than if you were to skip half of the classes or to be half-awake for all of the classes.
4. Religious Holy Days: By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

- **Synthesis Posts (5 @ 2% = 10%)**

There will be required readings each week. On five weeks over the semester (Weeks 2, 3, 4, 12, 13), students will be expected to read the material carefully and post a response to a class discussion question or his or her own discussion questions in Canvas by noon the day before class meets. The class discussion question will be posted no later than two weeks in advance of the due date. If the student is responding to his or her own question, the question should be stated explicitly at the top of the response. These response papers should touch on a majority of the readings for full credit and be approximately 1 page in length, single-spaced or longer. Students can post more than once. Students can ask questions about confusing parts or respond to another person's post (as long as it demonstrates that the student has completed the readings and is contributing his or her own synthesis). Synthesis and synergy across readings are keys to productive responses. These questions should demonstrate an understanding (even if that understanding is nascent) of the readings in the context of the proposed question. Posts should stimulate thoughtful class discussion.

- **Field Documents (5 @ 10% = 50%)**

Each student will complete three observations and two interviews, the completed notes of which he or she must deposit in the class database (or HU, for hermeneutic unit) on the dates indicated in the course schedule. We will determine the expected length of each observation and interview (in hours) as a class. I

place heavy weight in terms of grade on these documents because there is no such thing as a good study absent good data. Good documents will reflect your concerted effort to gather rich details and will follow all formats that we establish in class.

- **Protocol (2.5%)**

Before you conduct your interview, you need to create a protocol that will include the questions you intend to ask. Your classmates may desire that protocol; thus, you need to post it to Canvas by the date indicated in the schedule. Good protocols will be clear, well-conceived, and sufficient for the task.

- **Two Pages of Text (2.5%)**

For one of our writing exercises, you must bring to class a hard copy print out of the first two pages, and two pages only, of a paper that you wrote for some other class, either here or elsewhere. You gain full points for timely submission of a properly formatted copy (i.e., good = on time, exactly two pages, double-spaced, 1.25" margins).

- **Project Verbal Presentation (10%)**

You will analyze data for this class either individually or in small groups; your choice will define whether you give your talk alone or with a group. Pretend this talk is you (or your group) at a conference giving a talk on your paper. You will stand to give this talk; you may use PowerPoint. Good talks will make clear the literature to which you speak, your research question, your methods (only insofar as your analysis is distinct), your findings, and your conclusions. Good talks will intrigue the audience and convince them of your clarity of thought. Class size will determine talk length.

- **Project Paper (20%)**

You will write on your own (even if you did your analysis with a group) a paper on a topic of your choosing employing the ethnographic data that we collected in this class. You need not list limitations because we know what they are. You might wish to discuss areas for future research. You should list all references using a consistent and established format. Good papers will feature, at a minimum, the following clearly labeled sections (though you may use titles of your own creation): (1) introduction, (2) literature review, (3) methods (complete, this time), (4) findings, and (5) discussion. Good papers will be well-conceived and well-written, neither skimpy nor verbose. Ideally, you will write the entire paper well, but you should ensure that you craft the first two pages especially well. Include in them the "hook" that snares the reader by making clear why your paper is needed; also note in these two pages why the topic is important.

VI. Academic Integrity

University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code. [See the **UT Honor Code above.**] Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work, although collaboration is allowed and required in the project proposal, group report, group presentation, and some aspects of the lab preparation. However, each student is ultimately responsible for preparing their own one-page summary including their own unique outside readings.

The projects combine teamwork with individual accountability. For the project proposal, you will need to work with your team members. For the individual report, you will need to complete your own report without help from other students. For the final project and presentation, you will need to share your individual project results with your team members (after first submitting them to the instructor).

VII. Other University Notices and Policies

Use of E-mail for Official Correspondence

All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy. It is the student's responsibility to keep the University informed as to changes in his or her e-mail address. Students are

expected to check e-mail on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time-critical. It is recommended that e-mail be checked daily, but at a minimum, twice per week. The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your e-mail address are available at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/help/utmail/1564>.

Documented Disability Statement

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at (512) 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). Faculty are not required to provide accommodations without an official accommodation letter from SSD.

- Please notify me as quickly as possible if the material being presented in class is not accessible (e.g., instructional videos need captioning, course packets are not readable for proper alternative text conversion, etc.).
- Please notify me as early in the semester as possible if disability-related accommodations for field trips are required. Advanced notice will permit the arrangement of accommodations on the given day (e.g., transportation, site accessibility, etc.).
- Contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone) or reference SSD's website for more disability-related information:
http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/for_cstudents.php

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone your concerns about another individual's behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

Emergency Evacuation Policy

Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when you entered the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions or those of class instructors.

Do not re-enter a building unless you're given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

VIII. Acknowledgments

I owe many thanks to others for the formulation of this syllabus. First, it has been heavily influenced by Dr. Diane Bailey's Spring 2013 class 391E Advanced Topics in Information Studies: Ethnography as well as by the many conversations concerning studies of work that have been facilitated by the Information Work Research Group (funded by IMLS) at UT Austin. Thanks also to Johanna Drucker and Alan Liu and whose advice and research have been fundamental to its inspiration and its development. Finally, thank you to Daniel Carter, Julia Flanders, Matt Burton, Trevor Munoz, and Elli Mylonas for their collegiality in thinking through some of these topics in the context of Digital Humanities.