INF385T Ethnography and Socio-Technical Futures

28533
Fall 2022

CLASS MEETS: [3:30-6:30, Thursdays, GAR 2.128]

Instructor: Edgar Gómez-Cruz (please call me Edgar)
Office: UTA 5.336
Pronouns: he/him/his
Email: edgar.gomezcruz@ischool.utexas.edu
Phone: (512) 471-3821

Office hours: Tuesdays 10:00-12:00 and by appointment

TA: Stephanie Tomasky
Office:
Pronouns: he/him/his
Email: and by appointment
Phone:

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT
I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the Indigenous lands of Turtle Island, the ancestral name for what now is called North America. Moreover, I would like to acknowledge the Alabama-Coushatta, Caddo, Carrizo/Comanche, Comanche, Kickapoo, Lipan Apache, Tonkawa and Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo, and all the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories in Texas.

Course Description
Ethnographic research has been adapted and adopted by all types of academic disciplines and the industry. This class will introduce the basic elements of ethnographic thinking and doing for the study of sociotechnical systems. The course is grounded in interdisciplinary approaches, and inspired by anthropological thinking, but oriented to current developments such as design ethnography. The future has always been at the center of how we use and design technologies, and information systems. A common trope is to present a particular technology or system as a "revolution" or "the future of" something. This course will follow an ethnographic approach to interrogate sociotechnical imaginaries of the future with the aim of building a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable futures.
PRE-REQUISITES FOR THE COURSE
None

LEARNING OUTCOMES
• To learn the basics of ethnographic research and how it can be applied to information systems.
• To understand the connection between sociotechnical systems and social imaginaries of the future.
• To complete an ethnographic research project informing the design of a sociotechnical system.
• To learn how to engage ethnographically with issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice in the construction and development of sociotechnical systems.

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
Using someone else’s work in your own writing without giving proper credit is considered plagiarism, a serious form of academic dishonesty that can result in severe penalties. Copying someone else’s work, buying a paper, and submitting it as your own, copying and pasting text (even with changes), or borrowing images from an online source, are some examples of plagiarism. Even if you plagiarize accidentally, you can be held responsible and penalized. Learning to cite sources appropriately is an important part of becoming a professional. When you are unsure about citation, you are encouraged to ask your instructor (who is already an expert in the discipline) what is appropriate in the context of your assignment. Consultants at The University Writing Center can also help you determine whether you are citing sources correctly—and they have helpful guides online for using direct quotations and paraphrasing. Reviewing those skills will help you feel confident that you are handling sources professionally in your writing. You can read the University’s definition of plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty in Sec. 11–402 of the Student Conduct Code. For more information, visit the Dean of Students’ site.

How Will You Learn?

STATEMENT OF LEARNING SUCCESS
Your success in this class is important to me. We all learn differently, and everyone struggles sometimes. You are not, ever, the only one having difficulty! If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we will develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. I also encourage you to reach out to the student resources available through UT and I am happy to connect you with a person or Center if you would like.

TEACHING MODALITY INFORMATION
The class will be in-person. The class uses a seminar-based/Lab model and attendance is essential for the student’ success.
COMMUNICATION
The course Canvas site can be found at https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/1340683 Please email me through Canvas. You are responsible for ensuring that the primary email address you have recorded with the university is the one you will check for course communications because that is the email address that Canvas uses.

ASKING FOR HELP
You can reach out by email, call me, or come to my office hours. You can also request another time for a face-to-face or zoom meeting. I will try to accommodate as much as possible to your request.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION STATEMENT
My commitment is to foster a climate of inclusion, openness, and acceptance in this course. Students from all backgrounds and perspectives will be welcomed to this course and I will address students’ learning needs both in and out of class. The diversity of backgrounds and ideas is a strength and a resource that will enrichen and benefit the class. In the course I will foster a learning environment that will respect gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, immigration status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Every suggestion on how to improve the inclusivity in the class will be encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know if you would like me to use specific personal gender pronouns, or a particular name, when communicating with you (See NAMES AND PRONOUNS section below)

SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Please refer to SSD’s website for contact and more information: http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/. If you are already registered with SSD, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

Course Requirements and Grading

REQUIRED MATERIALS
See the Canvas page for an updated version of this list.
Textbooks
While this class doesn’t have a textbook, these books are a good consulting material (we will use some chapters, but you may be interested in reading them fully):

Bibliography
(These references could change or be updated during the term. See canvas for the most recent information)
Murphy, K. M., & Marcus, G. E. (2020). Epilogue: Ethnography and design, ethnography in design... ethnography by design. In Design Anthropology (pp. 251–268). Routledge.


**Videos/films/tv shows**

- A design fiction evening ([https://vimeo.com/84826827](https://vimeo.com/84826827))

**Podcasts**

- The Digital Human (BBC) ([https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01n7094](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01n7094))
- For the Wild ([https://forthewild.world/](https://forthewild.world/))
REQUIRED DEVICES

The class requires students to be able to write and submit work digitally, a computer is recommended. Also, to carry out fieldwork, an audio recording device is desired, and, depending on the data gathering process, a video or still photography could also be used. A smartphone could be more than enough for data gathering in the field.

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

Class attendance
I expect your attendance to class to be constant. Discussions, trainings and the Lab will be part of the sessions.

Class participation
For you to succeed in the class, you need to actively participate in the discussions and activities, both inside the classroom and outside (doing fieldwork). Participation is graded through the “Weekly project advancements” see ASSIGNMENTS below.

Behavior expectations
I am committed to create an inclusive, collegial, respectful, and professional environment for all the students to thrive and succeed in their projects. This requires everyone’s commitment to the same principles, particularly when discussing the ideas of someone else. Please adhere to these principles (see COURSE POLICIES AND DISCLOSURES section below)

ASSIGNMENTS

The following table represents how you will demonstrate your learning and how we will assess the degree to which you have done so.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Points Possible</th>
<th>Percent of Total Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Presentation of the project</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Weekly project advancements</td>
<td>100 (20 each x 5)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Final project and presentation</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LATE WORK AND MAKING UP MISSED WORK

Late work is accepted subject to a 5-point grade reduction for every 3 hours late. Submitting 24 hours later equals an automatic reduction of 40 points, EXCEPT for the weekly project advancements that can be presented up to 24 hours later than the weekly deadline. Any submission after that would be considered with the next week’s submission and will get a maximum of 10 points (out of 20).

ABSENCES
This is a seminar-based/Lab class. Your presence in the sessions is indispensable. While I will not use lack of attendance as a penalty for course grade, a session missed equals missing an important component/skill to be applied in your fieldwork. I strongly recommend that you take this into consideration.

**GRADE BREAKS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Cutoff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Course Outline**

All instructions, assignments, readings, rubrics, and essential information will be on the Canvas website at [https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/1340683](https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/1340683). Check Canvas regularly. **Changes** to the schedule may be made at my discretion if circumstances require. I will announce any such changes in class and will also communicate them via a Canvas announcement. It is your responsibility to note these changes when announced, and I will do my best to ensure that you are notified of changes with as much advance notice as possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Class Topic</th>
<th>Out of Class Activities // Readings</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>18 august</td>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation of the class. Introduction to ethnography, to sociotechnical systems, and to futures</td>
<td>See Canvas for updates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>25 August</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sociotechnical imaginaries and make-believes</td>
<td>See Canvas for updates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>1 September</td>
<td></td>
<td>Speculative Futures</td>
<td>See Canvas for updates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>8 September</td>
<td></td>
<td>Diverse and inclusive futures</td>
<td>See Canvas for updates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>15 September</td>
<td></td>
<td>Design (+) ethnography</td>
<td>See Canvas for updates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Updates</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>22 September</td>
<td>EthnoLab I: Imagining ethnographic Futures</td>
<td>See Canvas for updates</td>
<td>Submission of research project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>29 September</td>
<td>EthnoLab II: The Field</td>
<td>See Canvas for updates</td>
<td>Weekly project advancement (point of entry to the field)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>6 October</td>
<td>EthnoLab III: Observing/Taking Notes</td>
<td>See Canvas for updates</td>
<td>Weekly project advancement (Introduction to setting(s)/group(s))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>13 October</td>
<td>EthnoLab IV: Ethnographic Interviews</td>
<td>See Canvas for updates</td>
<td>Weekly project advancement (key people/situations)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>20 October</td>
<td>EthnoLab V: Reflexivity</td>
<td>See Canvas for updates</td>
<td>Weekly project advancement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>27 October</td>
<td>EthnoLab VI: Analyzing ethnographic data I</td>
<td>See Canvas for updates</td>
<td>Weekly project advancement (Key findings)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3 November</td>
<td>EthnoLab VII: Analyzing ethnographic data II / Outputs I</td>
<td>See Canvas for updates</td>
<td>Weekly project advancement (key findings)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>10 November</td>
<td>EthnoLab VIII: Outputs II</td>
<td>See Canvas for updates</td>
<td>First draft</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>17 November</td>
<td>EthnoLab IX: Writing ethnographically</td>
<td>See Canvas for updates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>24 November</td>
<td>Fall Break (no classes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>1 December</td>
<td>EthnoLab X: Presentations</td>
<td>See Canvas for updates</td>
<td>Presentation of final projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course Policies and Disclosures

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY EXPECTATIONS

Students who violate University rules on academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at: [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct).
CONFIDENTIALITY OF CLASS RECORDINGS
Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

GETTING HELP WITH TECHNOLOGY
Students needing help with technology in this course should contact the ITS Service Desk

CONTENT WARNING
Our classroom provides an open space for the critical and civil exchange of ideas. Some readings and other content in this course will include topics that some students may find offensive and/or traumatizing. I'll aim to forewarn students about potentially disturbing content, and I ask all students to help to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity.

SHARING OF COURSE MATERIALS IS PROHIBITED
No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class without explicit, written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. The University is well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure of the course.

RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS
By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence as far in advance as possible of 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, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

NAMES AND PRONOUNS
Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. I will gladly honor your request to address you by your chosen name and by the gender pronouns you use. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student’s chosen (not legal) name if you have provided one. If you
wish to provide or update a chosen name, that can be done easily at this page, and you can add your pronouns to Canvas.

University Resources for Students

SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES (SSD)

[This required syllabus content is repeated from above. It may be included in either place, or both.]
The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Please refer to SSD’s website for contact and more information:
http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/. If you are already registered with SSD, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH CENTER (CMHC)

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. Know you are not alone. If you or anyone you know is experiencing symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression, academic concerns, loneliness, difficulty sleeping, or any other concern impacting your wellbeing – you are strongly encouraged to connect with CMHC. The Counseling and Mental Health Center provides a wide variety of mental health services to all UT students including crisis services, counseling services with immediate support and well-being resources. Additionally, CARE Counselors are located within the academic schools and colleges. These counselors get to know the concerns that are unique to their college’s students. For more information on CMHC, visit https://cmhc.utexas.edu or call 512-471-3515.

UNIVERSITY HEALTH SERVICES (UHS)

Your physical health and wellness are a priority. University Health Services is an on-campus high-quality medical facility providing care to all UT students. Services offered by UHS include general medicine, urgent care, a 24/7 nurse advice line, women’s health, sports medicine, physical therapy, lab and radiology services, COVID-19 testing and vaccinations and much more. For additional information, visit https://healthyhorns.utexas.edu or call 512-471-4955.

SANGER LEARNING CENTER

Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center’s classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit https://ugs.utexas.edu/slc or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).”
STUDENT EMERGENCY SERVICES (SES)

Student Emergency Services in the Office of the Dean of Students helps students and their families during difficult or emergency situations. Assistance includes outreach, advocacy, intervention, support, and referrals to relevant campus and community resources. If you need to be absent from class due to a family emergency, medical or mental health concern, or academic difficulty due to crisis or an emergency situation, you can work with Student Emergency Services. SES will document your situation and notify your professors. Additional information is available at https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/ or by calling 512-471-5017.

Important Safety Information

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or professors, contact BCCAL (the Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line) at https://safety.utexas.edu/behavior-concerns-advice-line or by calling 512-232-5050. Confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible, however the university may be required to release some information to appropriate parties.

CLASSROOM SAFETY AND COVID-19

To help preserve our in-person learning environment, the university recommends the following.

- Adhere to university mask guidance. Masks are strongly recommended, but optional, inside university buildings for vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals, except when alone in a private office or single-occupant cubicle.
- Vaccinations are widely available, free and not billed to health insurance. The vaccine will help protect against the transmission of the virus to others and reduce serious symptoms in those who are vaccinated.
- Proactive Community Testing remains an important part of the university’s efforts to protect our community. Tests are fast and free.
- We encourage the use of the Protect Texas App each day prior to coming to campus.
- If you develop COVID-19 symptoms or feel sick, stay home and contact the University Health Services’ Nurse Advice Line at 512-475-6877. If you need to be absent from class, contact Student Emergency Services and they will notify your professors. In addition, to help understand what to do if you have been had close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19, see this University Health Services link.
- Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line (BCCAL) remains available as the primary tool to address questions or concerns from the university community about COVID-19.
- Students who test positive should contact BCCAL or self-report (if tested off campus) to University Health Services.
- Visit Protect Texas Together for more information.
CARRYING OF HANDGUNS ON CAMPUS

Texas' Open Carry law expressly prohibits a licensed to carry (LTC) holder from carrying a handgun openly on the campus of an institution of higher education such as UT Austin. Students in this class should be aware of the following university policies:

- Students in this class who hold a license to carry are asked to review the university policy regarding campus carry.
- Individuals who hold a license to carry are eligible to carry a concealed handgun on campus, including in most outdoor areas, buildings and spaces that are accessible to the public, and in classrooms.
- It is the responsibility of concealed-carry license holders to carry their handguns on or about their person at all times while on campus. Open carry is NOT permitted, meaning that a license holder may not carry a partially or wholly visible handgun on campus premises or on any university driveway, street, sidewalk or walkway, parking lot, parking garage, or other parking area.
- Per my right, I prohibit carrying of handguns in my personal office. Note that this information will also be conveyed to all students verbally during the first week of class. This written notice is intended to reinforce the verbal notification, and is not a “legally effective” means of notification in its own right.

TITLE IX DISCLOSURE

Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Senate Bill 212 requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, to report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one-on-one conversations) must be report it. If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email advocate@austin.utexas.edu. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/, contact the Title IX Office via email at titleix@austin.utexas.edu, or call 512-471-0419. Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Senate Bill 212, they are still mandatory reporters under Federal Title IX laws and are required to report a wide range of behaviors we refer to as sexual misconduct, including the types of sexual misconduct covered under Texas Senate Bill 212. The Title IX office has developed supportive ways to respond to a survivor and compiled campus resources to support survivors.

Faculty members and certain staff members are considered “Responsible Employees” or “Mandatory Reporters,” which means that they are required to report violations of Title IX to the Title IX Coordinator. I am a Responsible Employee and must report any Title IX-related incidents that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one-on-one. Before talking with me or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX-related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee. If you want to speak with someone for support
or remedies without making an official report to the university, email advocate@austin.utexas.edu. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit the Title IX Office or email titleix@austin.utexas.edu.

CAMPUS SAFETY

The following are recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767,

- Students should sign up for Campus Emergency Text Alerts at the page linked above.
- Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus must evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.
- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- For more information, please visit emergency preparedness.