

Ethnographic Approaches to Family Research

SYLLABUS

Research seminar

Holly Hargis

Université Grenoble Alpes, PACTE

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holly.hargis@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr

Course Description

The course introduces students to ethnographic methods and focuses on contemporary families in society. What is family and how can we study this institution scientifically? Students will learn how sociologists today study families in various ways. Students will become familiar with ethnographic research methods regarding differing topics within the family.

We have two main goals: familiarizing ourselves with ethnography in the social sciences and focusing on family research (empirical and theoretical).

Reading and analysing sociological research: what is ethnography?

Students will become familiar with efficiently reading sociological texts and will learn how to analyse ethnographic research articles. This part of the class introduces students to differing and recent ethnographic methods regarding the family and focuses on theoretical and empirical tools in the social sciences.

Initiation to ethnographic methods and family research

The second part of the course will introduce students to methodological reflexion regarding how to construct a small research project. Students will design a research question and will spend time outside of class, in groups, conducting ethnographic observations. This part of class will prepare students to write the final research report and is a hands-on approach to research methods in sociology and family research.

Calendar

1. Introduction and Organization

2. Participant observation and Ethnography

- To read before class: Chapter 1 “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture IN Geertz C., *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 1973
- One page maximum (Times New Roman, 12 point font, 1.5 spacing) summary of the text to hand in before class (a question guide will be provided)

3. Ethnography and Family Observations

- To read before class: Lareau A. and Rao AH., “Intensive Family Observations: A Methodological Guide”, *Sociological Methods & Research*, 2020.
 - One page maximum summary (Times New Roman, 12 point font, 1.5 spacing) to be handed in before class
- 4. Family Observations Case Study 1**
- To read before class: Lareau A., “Invisible Inequality: Social Class and Childrearing in Black Families and White Families”, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 67, No. 5, 2002
 - Class presentation, oral participation grade (everyone participates)
- 5. Family Famers Case Study 2**
- To read before class : Bessière C., “Female and male domestic partners in wine-grape farms (Cognac, France): conjugal asymmetry and gender discrimination in family businesses”, *The History of the Family*, 2014
 - Class presentation, oral participation grade (everyone participates)
- 6. Unemployed Mothers Case Study 3**
- To read before class: Rao AH., “From Professionals to Professional Mothers: How College-educated Married Mothers Experience Unemployment in the US”, *Work, Employment and Society*, 2019
 - Class presentation, oral participation grade (everyone participates)
- 7. Workshop**
- Fieldwork discussions
- 8. Workshop**
- Fieldwork discussions
 - Final report workshop
- 9. Workshop**
- Final reports due at the end of class.

Evaluations

All graded evaluations are underlined in the syllabus. **The final report (written in groups) represents 75% of the final grade.** Students are expected to participate in the workshops (points will be taken off of the final report grade if there is a lack of participation or implication). All other assignments (5 small assignments total not including the final report) represent 5% of the final grade for a total of 25%. See hand-outs for assignment and grading details.