

# English 367.01

## The U.S. Experience: ETHNOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS IN AMERICAN LIFE

Summer Quarter 2007

Monday & Wednesday, 1:30-3:18, Denney Hall 209

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Office: Dulles Hall 308

Office Hours: Office Hours: After class & by appointment

"It diminishes the scholar's feel of mastery of his materials when he discovers that his most diligent recording can capture only the shadows" — Köngäs Maranda

### Overview

The goal of English 367 is to build on the skills you obtained in English 110 and to further improve your critical thinking and writing skills. In this class, we will look critically at ethnographies, representations of "real life" by people who have spent time with, observed, and talked to the "natives." At its most basic level, the point of ethnographic description is to convey some information about a group of people to those who do not necessarily know much about them. During the first part of the class, we will read several ethnographic descriptions of American life, paying attention to the ethnographers' stylistic choices (point of view) and content choices (who or what is chosen to represent the communities being described, who or what is excluded, their backgrounds and relationships to the communities) in order to understand both the value and the limits of the ethnographic endeavor. The second part of the class will focus on the authority this genre carries into non-academic domains of American life (medicine, travel magazines, museums, etc.), that is, how ethnographic descriptions are assumed to be true due to the fact that the ethnographer "was there" and "saw it with his own eyes." Looking at both written and visual texts from non-academic realms of life, we will pay attention to how our exploration of the limits of ethnographic representation changes the way we view these texts.

Throughout the quarter you will complete both formal and informal writing assignments, each designed to add skills to your writing toolbox and to develop your habits of revision and rewriting. In addition, you will be expected to participate fully in class discussion and in the oral presentation of your analytical responses to the readings and of your own written work. As a composition teacher, I believe it is important for writers to read other writers (both published writers and peers) and discuss their ideas with others orally to develop critical language and argument skills. Writing is "thinking on paper," so your reading and participating in class discussions *as well as* responding to classmates' writing (and, of course, doing your own writing!) will all contribute to your development as a writer. In addition to these broader writing skills, we will regularly address issues of writing—punctuation, sentence structure, style, documentation of sources, and overall essay structure—as necessary.

## Goals and Objectives for the General Education Curriculum

### *Writing and Related Skills*

#### Goals/Rationale:

Writing courses across the disciplines develop students' skills in writing, reading, critical thinking, and oral expression.

#### Learning Objectives:

1. Students apply basic skills in expository writing
2. Students demonstrate critical thinking through written and oral expression
3. Students retrieve and use written information analytically and effectively

### Required texts

- Course pack available for purchase at Grade A Notes, 22 E. 17th Ave.
- A grammar/usage handbook of your choice.

This course will also depend heavily on a Carmen Web site, which you can reach through <https://carmen.osu.edu/>. Please check right away to be sure that you can access this site and let me know if there are any problems.

### Assignments

#### **Writing Assignments**

There will be three major writing assignments throughout this quarter.

- Assignment 1: Playing with Points of View (4-5 pages)
- Assignment 2: Assignment 2: Critical Analysis of an Ethnography (4-5 pages)
- Assignment 3: Assignment 3: Rhetorical Uses and Misuses of Ethnographic Description (7-8 pages)

You will receive detailed instructions on each of the three major assignments.

#### **Drafts**

Writing is a *process and good writing takes time*. One major goal of this class will be the formation of habits of writing as a multiple-draft process. You will be required to bring multiple copies of the drafts of each of the three writing assignments to class on the date drafts are due, for peer response activities and to turn in to me, and to bring a second draft to class on the date indicated in the Daily Schedule for additional peer response. I will return drafts (ungraded) with comments about the kinds of major revisions that you will be expected to make before submitting your final paper. All drafts and peer feedback must be turned in with your final

papers. **Failure to submit a draft will result in the lowering of your final grade on that paper by one full letter grade.**

*Failure to submit a final paper on the day it is due will result in the lowering of your grade on that paper by one full letter grade per every day that the paper is late.*

### Informal writing

This course will involve extensive informal writing in order to practice the skills that we are working to develop. This writing will take place both during and outside of class.

1. You will be required to post a response on our course Carmen site (carmen.osu.edu) for **each of the readings indicated** in the Daily Schedule. You must post your response by **9 p.m. the night before the day of the class for which the reading is assigned**; you will be expected to read the responses posted by your classmates and come to class ready to participate in a discussion of the readings.
2. Additional informal homework and in-class writing assignments will be assigned throughout the quarter.

### Discussion Leading

Each of you will be responsible for leading one class discussion on a course reading with two other classmates. Your group must plan ahead to coordinate your presentation, and each of you must have a "speaking role" in the discussion. You should come prepared with a typed-up summary of the article (no longer than 1 page double spaced) as well as discussion points and questions in order to facilitate class discussion about the day's reading and related (relevant) issues. Class members should be able to consider you the resident "expert" for that day. The bulk of your time (about 30 minutes or so) should be devoted to the leading of class discussion rather than a "presentation." You must also do additional (although not extensive) research on the topic of the day's readings in order to add supplementary ideas, texts, and viewpoints to the discussion. For example, you may choose to bring in a news article from that's week's *New York Times* that either reinforces or contradicts the ideas presented in the reading for the day, or you may choose to bring in biographical information on the ethnographer whose work we are reading (in order to explore how his or her life history may impact the choices made in his or her writing). You are expected to incorporate one outside source into your discussion. Appropriate outside sources will vary depending on what we are reading for the day, but feel free to be creative. Remember that you are turning in your summary and notes, so be sure to include citations for any outside sources you use. I strongly encourage your group to go over your ideas with me before the day you lead discussion.

### Participation

Critical thinking and writing skills are most successfully developed through the sharing of ideas through both oral and written means. Therefore, a major requirement of this course is that you come to each class ready to discuss the readings and written assignments with an open mind and a desire to engage with the class.

## Evaluation

Writing Project 1:

Writing Project 2:

Writing Project 3:

Informal writing:

Group leading:

Participation:

15%

20%

20%

15%

15%

15%

## Course Policies

**I will not accept papers or drafts via email.**

**Standard Format:** double-spaced, 12-point font, standard 1-inch margins; your name, my name (Sheila Bock), the class (English 367.01), and the date should appear in the upper left corner of the first page; pages should be stapled and numbered; paper should have a title. **Papers that do not follow this format will not be accepted.**

**Attendance** is important to the success of this class and to your development as a writer. Therefore, ***each unexcused absence after two*** will result in the lowering of your final grade by a third of a grade. Excused absences, such those for documented illness, family tragedy, religious observance, or travel for inter-collegiate athletics, will not affect your grade if you bring me written documentation the next class. **It is program policy that five unexcused absences will automatically result in failure for the course.**

**Tardiness** is disruptive to the classroom environment, and prevents you from fully participating and assimilating the information and materials discussed in class. Excessive tardiness will lower your participation grade.

**Plagiarism** is the unauthorized use of the words or ideas of another person. It is a serious academic offense that can result in referral to the Committee on Academic Misconduct and failure for the course. Please remember that at no point during the writing process should the work of others be presented as your own.

**Class Cancellation Policy:** In the unlikely event due to emergency, I will contact you via email and request that a note on department letterhead be placed on the door. In addition, I will contact you as soon as possible following the cancellation to let you know what will be expected of you for our next class meeting.

## Resources

The Ombudsman of the Writing Programs, Dr. Matthew Cariello, mediates conflicts between teachers and students in 110 and 367. You can contact him at 292-5778 or Email [cariello.1@osu.edu](mailto:cariello.1@osu.edu). Summer 2007 office hours in Denney 533 are by appointment only. All conversations with the Ombudsman are strictly confidential.

The OSU **Writing Center** consultants hold one-to-one writing tutorials with any member of the OSU community

- At Mendenhall Laboratory (Monday-Friday 9:30-5:30)
- At Younkin Success Center (Monday-Thursday 5:30-7:30)
- On Carmen (via the chat system)

In addition, you can

- Have face-to-face tutorials recorded to CDs
- Schedule appointments online

Please visit <http://cstw.osu.edu> to make an appointment or have an online tutorial.

**The Office for Disability Services**, located in 150 Pomerene Hall offers services for students with documented disabilities. Contact the ODS at 2-3307.

**Additional Resources** for this course are available on our Carmen site at: <http://carmen.osu.edu>.

## Daily Schedule

### Monday, June 18

Introduction to the course, in-class writing exercise  
Sign up for group presentations

### Wednesday, June 20

▶ "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema," Horace Miner  
<http://oak.cats.ohiou.edu/~thompsoc/Body.html>

*Assignment due:* Bring in 2 copies of your ethnographic description of the first day of class. In-class writing

Introduce Assignment 1

### Monday, June 25

▶ "Mama Day," Gloria Naylor

*Assignment due:* Respond to reading on Carmen by 9 p.m. the night before class

Discussion of Drafting/Writing Processes

### Wednesday, June 27

▶ Selections from *My Freshman Year: What a Professor Learned by Becoming a Student*, Rebekah

*Nathan*

*Assignment due:* Respond to reading on Carmen by 9 p.m. the night before class

**Monday, July 2**

**DRAFT of Assignment 1 due in class; Bring two copies**

No reading due

Peer work on drafts

**Wednesday, July 4**

**NO CLASS**

**HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY!**

**Monday, July 9**

**Student Conferences**

**Wednesday, July 11**

**Writing Assignment 1 due in class**

► Selections from *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache*, Keith H. Basso

*Assignment due:* Respond to reading on Carmen by 9 p.m. the night before class

Introduction to Assignment 2

**Monday, July 16**

► Selections from *Mules and Men*, Zora Neale Hurston

*Assignment due:* Respond to reading on Carmen by 9 p.m. the night before class

View in class: *American Tongues*

**Wednesday, July 18**

► Selections from *Turf Wars: Discourse, Diversity, and the Politics of Place*, Gabriella Gahlia Modan

*Assignment due:* Respond to reading on Carmen by 9 p.m. the night before class

**Monday, July 23**

**DRAFT of Assignment 2 due in class; Bring two copies**

No reading due

Peer work on drafts

**Wednesday, July 25**

**Student Conferences**

**Monday, July 30**

► "Competing Logics and the Construction of Risk," Diane E. Goldstein

*Assignment due:* Respond to reading on Carmen by 9 p.m. the night before class

Introduction to Assignment 3

In-class writing activity

**Wednesday, August 1**

**Writing Assignment 2 due in class**

No reading due

**Monday, August 6**

► Selections from *Veils and Daggers: A Century of National Geographic's Representations of the Arab World*, Linda Steet

*Assignment due:* Respond to reading on Carmen by 9 p.m. the night before class

Workshop on Library Research

**Wednesday, August 8**

► Selections from *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, James Clifford

*Assignment due:* Respond to reading on Carmen by 9 p.m. the night before class

In-class writing workshop: brainstorm for final projects

**Monday, August 13**

**DRAFT of Assignment 3 due in class; Bring two copies**

No reading due

Peer work on drafts

**Wednesday, August 15**

No reading due

In-class writing workshop

**Monday, August 20**

**Final Assignment 3 due IN CLASS**

In-class reflection on your writing

Course evaluations

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## **General Means of Evaluating**

*Holistic*

Is the essay acceptably within the parameters of the assignment?

*Argument*

Is there a coherent argument? Do I feel a strong sense of the writer's control of working with evidence, moving toward generalizations, and maintaining clear connections between the two? Further, is there a sense of the **value** of the argument being put forth? Likewise, is there a sense of the writer's recognition

of the limitations of the argument being developed?

*Evidence*

Is there a coherent argument? Do I feel a strong sense of the writer's control of working with evidence, moving toward generalizations, and maintaining clear connections between the two? Further, is there a sense of the value of the argument being put forth? Likewise, is there a sense of the writer's recognition of the limitations of the argument being developed?

*Conventions of Usage*

Has the writer adopted appropriate conventions of usage and grammar? Is my reading facilitated by consistently effective use of writing conventions—syntax, punctuation, spelling, etc.? If not, to what extent is my reading distracted by lapses in convention?