

SOC494H1F
New Topics in Sociology: Ethnography and Intimacy
University of Toronto – St. George Campus
Fall 2023
Wednesdays 1:10 pm – 3 pm

Instructor: Pamela Tsui (she/her)

Email: pamela.tsui@mail.utoronto.ca

Office hours: Monday 10am – 11am via Zoom or by appointment

Course Description

This course explores the intersection between ethnography and intimacy, focusing on how ethnographers have studied and theorized the intimate aspects of social life, and how they grapple with complex intimate relationships in the field and in writing. We will begin by introducing ethnographic studies in intimate fieldwork settings, exploring how ethnographers collect data through a variety of methods, including participant observation, interviews, archival analysis, and auto-ethnographic writing. We will then discuss ethical considerations in conducting research on sensitive and personal topics, and how to navigate the relationship between the researcher and the researched. The course will guide students through the process of ethnographic research design and analysis through structured assignments with instructor feedback.

Learning Goals

For those of us who want to write ethnography, the first thing we must do is read ethnographies not as receptacles of information... but in a writerly way.

Behar, Ruth (2020) "Read More, Write Less"

This course offers an exploration into the sociology of intimacy through the lens of ethnographic research. Students will delve into a diverse array of exemplary ethnographic works, not only gaining insights into the sociological discussions around intimacy, but also learning the craft of ethnography itself.

A focal point of the course is the dynamics of power relations within intimate relationships, along with the evolving definitions of “private” and “public” arenas. The course integrates various theoretical lenses - feminist, queer, Marxist, anti-colonial, and intersectional - to examine different forms of intimacy, ranging from service sector labour to sexual commerce, familial bonds, and human-animal interactions.

By the end of the course, students will have not only developed a comprehensive sociological understanding of intimacy but will also have the practical skills to design and implement their own ethnographic project. Ethnographic projects do not have to be presented in the form of traditional academic writing. Students may also opt for alternative media forms. Throughout this journey, students will participate in a series of discussions and activities, refining and enhancing their individual projects collaboratively.

A note on content warnings

This course explores the intersection of ethnographic research and the study of intimate relationships, encompassing discussions surrounding diverse forms of intimacies. It is important to note that these discussions may involve references to explicit language, sexual practices, family trauma, and personal experiences.

While the aim of this course is to foster critical thinking, open dialogue, and intellectual exploration, I understand that some course material may be triggering or distressing for certain individuals. It is essential to prioritize your well-being throughout the duration of the course. Please be aware that participation in class discussions and engagement with the course material are always voluntary. If at any point you feel uncomfortable or need to step back from certain topics, I encourage you to prioritize your emotional well-being and engage in self-care practices.

If you have experienced or are currently dealing with any challenges related to the topics discussed in this course, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. I am committed to maintaining a respectful and inclusive learning environment for all students.

Prerequisites: The prerequisite to take this course is 1.0 SOC at the 300-level. Students without this requirement will be removed at any time discovered and without notice.

Accessibility Needs

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: disability.services@utoronto.ca or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>

Evaluations		
Evaluation Components	Due Date	Weight
Reading responses (5% each x 5 times, choice between Weeks 2-9)	Ongoing	25%
In-class activities (1% each x 10 times)	Ongoing	10%
Research plan	Oct 13	18%
Fieldnotes	Nov 13	12%
Consultation	See announcement	3%
Presentation	Nov 29 or Dec 6	10%
Final report	Dec 8	22%
	Total	100%

Reading Responses

Each week, you will receive a prompt/template to guide your reading for the upcoming week's material. From Weeks 2 to 9, you are required to submit a total of five reading notes in response to these prompts/templates. In other words, you have the flexibility to choose which five out of the eight weeks you would like to submit your reading responses. The deadline for submitting the reading responses is the night before each week's class at 23:59 PM.

In-class Activities

During the latter part of each class, we will engage in in-class activities designed to bridge the concepts learned in class with the development of your individual projects. These activities serve as scaffolding exercises to assist you in constructing your research project and ultimately completing your final report. At the conclusion of each class, you will be required to upload your completed activity to Quercus. Please note that these activities will be assessed as either Complete or Incomplete, focusing on participation rather than striving for a "correct" answer.

If you find yourself unwell, it is important to prioritize your health and stay at home. For students unable to attend a class meeting, you have the flexibility to complete the activities at your own convenience and submit them accordingly. Please reach out to the instructor, and we will work together to ensure you have the necessary support to catch up on any missed activities.

Research Plan

Throughout this course, students will have the opportunity to develop their individual ethnographic projects centred around the common theme of “friendship.” Drawing upon the foundation established through the in-class scaffolding exercises, students will submit a 1000-word research plan, encompassing essential elements such as research questions, the targeted group or setting for observation, ethical considerations, and the proposed approach for conducting participant observation. Your submission will also include an annotated bibliography and an informed consent letter for the participants tailored to your project. Further instructions and specific guidelines regarding this assignment will be provided during class sessions.

Fieldnotes

After receiving feedback and making necessary revisions to the research plan, students will proceed to conduct participant observation at least twice and submit fieldnotes and notes-on-notes, documenting and reflecting upon their experiences in the field. Participant observation is a qualitative research method used to study and understand social phenomena by immersing the researcher in the natural environment of the subjects being studied. During fieldwork, you may become a participant in a friendship setting and observe the interactions first-hand. The fieldwork should not involve risks beyond those of ordinary life, meaning that it will not involve observation of any friendship activities that might put either yourself or the participants in an emotionally or physically demanding context. You should also avoid observing vulnerable populations, such as minors, individuals with cognitive impairments, and people engaged in illegal activities. While observations can occur in public or private spaces, you should concentrate your observations on the chosen individuals, respecting the privacy of others in the same vicinity. Further instructions and specific guidelines regarding this assignment will be provided during class sessions.

Consultation

Prior to the final presentation, students will have the opportunity to engage in a one-to-one consultation session with the instructor to discuss their projects. These consultations will be scheduled during either Week 9 or Week 10 of the course (i.e., the two weeks following the Reading Week). The duration of each meeting is expected to be approximately 10-15 minutes. Detailed schedules for these consultations will be provided during class sessions.

Presentation

During the final two weeks of the course, students will have the opportunity to present their work-in-progress to the class. These presentations serve as a platform for students to showcase their projects and receive valuable feedback from their peers. Other students are encouraged to actively engage by asking questions and offering constructive feedback, aimed at assisting the presenter in further developing and refining their projects.

Final Report

In the final report, students will be expected not only to present their research findings but also to illustrate how the course material has contributed to the advancement of their knowledge in ethnographic research and their sociological understanding of intimacies.

The final report can be submitted in one of the following formats:

- A 3000-word essay adhering to formal academic convention

- A 3000-word essay in alternative creative genre
- A multimedia/video presentation lasting approximately 5 minutes

To determine the appropriate format for their final report, students are encouraged to engage in discussion with the instructor during the consultation session. By providing the flexibility to choose between written or multimedia formats, students can demonstrate their comprehension of the course material and develop their “writing” skills in a manner that aligns with their strengths and preferences.

Late/Extension Policy

- **48-Hour Delayed Submission Policy:** This means that you have the flexibility to submit your assignments up to 48 hours after the official due date without incurring any penalties. No documentation or notification to the instructor is necessary. It is important to note that any work submitted beyond this 48-hour grace period will be subject to the standard daily late penalty, calculated from the original due date. **It is also important to note that the five reading responses, which are spread over eight weeks with multiple opportunities for submission, must be submitted before the class begins.** This is to ensure that you have read the readings and adequately prepared for the classes. Late submissions for these reading responses, even due to circumstances beyond your control, will not be accepted.
- **If you need more than 48 hours:** Extension requests must be submitted to the instructor via e-mail. Request for an extension should come before the due date of the assignment. You should also ask for a specific amount of additional time. I typically do not request documentation, and I typically approve these requests. Any assignment that is submitted beyond the new date, on which you have agreed on with the instructor, will be penalized as explained below.
- **Absence Declaration:** In case of illness, you must supply a completed Declaration of Absence on ACORN. The University is temporarily suspending the need for a doctor’s note or medical certificate for any absence from academic participation. Please use the Absence Declaration tool on ACORN found in the Profile and Settings menu to formally declare an absence from academic participation in the University. The tool is to be used if you require consideration for missed academic work based on the procedures specific to your faculty or campus. In addition to this declaration, you are responsible for contacting me to request the academic consideration you are seeking. You will be notified by the University if this policy changes.
- **Late Assignments:** Assignments submitted without prior notice will incur a deduction of 5 points per day, including weekends and holidays. It is highly recommended that you reach out to the instructor if you encounter any challenges in submitting your assignments.

Regrade Policy

The teaching team will do our best to grade fairly and consistently. If issues with your grade arise and you wish to appeal, please follow this procedure:

If it is a mathematical error, simply alert the instructor/grader of the error.

In the case of a more substantive appeal, you must:

1. Wait at least 24 hours after receiving your mark.
2. Carefully re-read your assignment, all assignment guidelines and marking schemes and the grader’s comments.

3. If you still feel the grade you received is not an accurate reflection of the work that you produced, you must discuss your grade within 1 week of the grade being returned to you, addressing the comments they provided to you.
4. If you are unable to come to an agreement, you may request a regrade from the instructor. In your request, you must provide a written explanation addressing why you feel the mark and comments do not adequately reflect your assignment.
5. Keep in mind that upon regrading, your mark may go up or down or stay the same.

Detailed Course Outline

Class Format

All required readings will be available electronically on the course website on Quercus. Students are expected to complete all required readings prior to each class and participate in classroom discussions.

You are also expected to be respectful of fellow classmates in discussions and lectures, curious and open-minded about others' and one's own perspectives, and cultivate an environment for mutual growth through collaboration and dialogue.

Note: every attempt will be made to follow this schedule, but it is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Week 1 (Sep 13)	<p>Introduction</p> <p>Behar, Ruth. 2020. "Read More, Write Less." Pp. 47-53 in <i>Writing Anthropology: Essays on Craft & Commitment</i>, edited by C. McGranahan. Durham: Duke University Press.</p> <p><u>In-class Activity: Brainstorming research topics</u></p>
PART I – Exploring ethnographies of intimacies	
Week 2 (Sep 20)	<p>Performing intimacies</p> <p>*Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 1983. <i>The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling</i>. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press. Chapter 1 (focus on the section “Sources and Method” and skim the rest) and Chapter 6</p> <p>*Bernstein, Elizabeth. 2007. <i>Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity, and the Commerce of Sex</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Selected pages of Chapter 1 (pp.1-17) and Chapter 4 (pp.87-111 and skim the rest).</p> <p>*Pande, Amrita. 2010. "Commercial Surrogacy in India: Manufacturing a Perfect Mother Worker." <i>Signs</i> 35(4):969-92.</p> <p><u>Submit a Reading Response for Week 2 before class, by 23:59pm on Sep 19</u></p> <p><u>In-class Activity: What is intimacy?</u></p>
Week 3	What is (not) the problem?

(Sep 27)	<p>*Barcelos, Chris. 2020. <i>Distributing Condoms and Hope: The Racialized Politics of Youth Sexual Health</i>. Oakland, California: University of California Press. Introduction and Chapter 2</p> <p>Ghodsee, Kristen. 2016. <i>From Notes to Narrative: Writing Ethnographies That Everyone Can Read</i>. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1 (pp. 9-22)</p> <p>Tuck, Eve and K. Wayne Yang. 2014. "Unbecoming Claims: Pedagogies of Refusal in Qualitative Research." <i>Qualitative Inquiry</i> 20(6):811-18.</p> <p><u>Submit a Reading Response for Week 3 before class, by 23:59pm on Sep 26</u></p> <p><u>In-class Activity: Identify the research question</u></p>
<p>Week 4 (Oct 4)</p>	<p>Research design: Sex and institutions</p> <p>*Kulick, Don and Jens Rydström. 2015. <i>Loneliness and Its Opposite: Sex, Disability, and the Ethics of Engagement</i>. Durham and London: Duke University Press. Chapters 1 and 3</p> <p>Tavory, Iddo and Stefan Timmermans. 2009. "Two Cases of Ethnography." <i>Ethnography</i> 10(3):243-63.</p> <p><u>Submit a Reading Response for Week 4 before class, by 23:59pm on Oct 3</u></p> <p><u>In-class Activity: Describe the group/setting</u></p>
PART II – Intimacies in the field	
<p>Week 5 (Oct 11)</p>	<p>Ethics in the field</p> <p>Fine, Gary Alan. 1993. "Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research." <i>Journal of Contemporary Ethnography</i> 22(3):267-94.</p> <p>González-López, Gloria. 2011. "Mindful Ethics: Comments on Informant-Centered Practices in Sociological Research." <i>Qualitative Sociology</i> 34(3):447-61.</p> <p>Humphreys, Laud. 2017[1975]. <i>Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places</i>. Second Edition. Routledge. Chapter 2</p> <p><u>Submit a Reading Response for Week 5 before class, by 23:59pm on Oct 10</u></p> <p><u>In-class Activity: Ethical considerations</u></p> <p><u>Submit the Research Plan by 23:59pm on Oct 13 (Friday)</u></p>
<p>Week 6 (Oct 18)</p>	<p>Self and embodiment in the field</p> <p>*Meadow, Tey. 2018. <i>Trans Kids: Being Gendered in the Twenty-First Century</i>. Oakland, CA: University of California Press. Chapter 1, 2, 5</p>

	<p>Meadow, Tey. 2018. "The Mess: Vulnerability as Ethnographic Practice." Pp. 154-66 in <i>Other, Please Specify, Queer Methods in Sociology</i>, edited by T. Meadow, D. L. Compton and K. Schilt: University of California Press.</p> <p><u>Submit a Reading Response for Week 6 before class, by 23:59pm on Oct 17</u></p> <p><u>In-class Activity: Intimacies in the field</u></p>
<p>Week 7 (Oct 25)</p>	<p>Writing fieldnotes – Intimate details</p> <p>*Geertz, Clifford. 1972. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." <i>Daedalus</i> 101(1):1-37.</p> <p>Ghodsee, Kristen. 2016. <i>From Notes to Narrative: Writing Ethnographies That Everyone Can Read</i>. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. Chapters 3 and 4 (pp. 31-50)</p> <p><u>Submit a Reading Response for Week 7 before class, by 23:59pm on Oct 24</u></p> <p><u>In-class Activity: Writing workshop</u></p>
<p>PART III – Writing intimacies</p>	
<p>Week 8 (Nov 1)</p>	<p>Memoir and autoethnography (1)</p> <p>*Cho, Grace M. 2021. <i>Tastes Like War: A Memoir</i>. New York: Feminist Press. Prologue, Part 1 and 2.</p> <p>Adams, Tony E. and Andrew F. Herrmann. 2023. "Good Autoethnography." <i>Journal of Autoethnography</i> 4(1):1-9.</p> <p><u>Submit a Reading Response for Week 8 before class, by 23:59pm on Oct 31</u></p> <p><u>In-class Activity: Writing workshop</u></p>
<p>Nov 8</p>	<p>READING WEEK – No class</p> <p><u>Submit the Fieldnotes by 23:59pm on Nov 13 (Monday)</u></p>
<p>Week 9 (Nov 15)</p>	<p>Memoir and autoethnography (2)</p> <p>*Cho, Grace M. 2021. <i>Tastes Like War: A Memoir</i>. New York: Feminist Press. Part 3 and 4.</p> <p><u>Submit a Reading Response for Week 9 before class, by 23:59pm on Nov 14</u></p> <p><u>Consultation</u></p>
<p>Week 10</p>	<p>Writing in multimedia form</p> <p>A week prior to the class, the instructor will present choices of</p>

(Nov 22)	movies/documentaries as the “required reading” for the week. The class will engage in a discussion and collectively decide on one of these options. <u>Consultation</u>
Week 11 (Nov 29)	Student Presentation (1) <u>In-class Activity: Peer review</u>
Week 12 (Dec 6)	Student Presentation (2) and Conclusion <u>In-class Activity: Peer review</u> <u>Submit the Final Report by 23:59pm on Dec 8 (Friday)</u>

Academic Integrity

- Be sure that you have familiarized yourself with the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters before submitting assignments or sitting for exams. The University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences.
- You can find advice on “How Not to Plagiarize” and other advice on documentation format and methods of integrating sources at <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources>.

Ouriginal

Sometimes, students will be required to submit their assignments to the University’s plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool’s reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

For some of your assignments, we will be using the software Ouriginal. It uses text matching technology as a method to uphold the University’s high academic integrity standards to detect any potential plagiarism. Ouriginal is integrated into Quercus. For the assignments set up to use Ouriginal, the software will review your paper when you upload it to Quercus. To learn more about Ouriginal’s privacy policy please review its [Privacy Policy](#).

Students not wishing their assignment to be submitted through Ouriginal will not be assessed unless a student instead provides, along with their work, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

In this course, I recognize and encourage the use of generative AI, such as Open AI’s GPT model and Notion AI, as a tool for collaboration, brainstorming, and editing in the research and writing process. AI can be an invaluable partner, helping you to generate ideas, to refine and polish your writing, and to deepen your thinking about the subjects at hand.

However, it is essential to note that **students are ultimately accountable for the work they submit**. AI should not be the primary source of your academic understanding or research. AI is a brainstorming tool, but it is not a source of peer-reviewed references and often lack the accuracy or evidence support that is inherent to rigorous academic work.

Therefore, to ensure the highest academic integrity, please use peer-reviewed academic sources when researching and building an understanding of literature. Primary sources should always be cited directly in your work. AI can help you navigate these sources and make connections you may not initially see, but it should not replace your engagement with the original texts.

Students must submit, as an appendix with their assignments, any content produced by an artificial intelligence tool, and the prompts used to generate the content. When it comes to citing AI in your work, we will follow a slightly relaxed version of the MLA AI citation guidelines (<https://style.mla.org/citing-generative-ai/>). You are required to cite the AI only if it generates something entirely original for you. If you have used the AI to edit your writing or brainstorm ideas, it is not necessary to provide a citation.

Remember, the goal of using AI in this course is to enhance your learning process, not to shortchange it. AI should help you think more deeply, converse more broadly, and engage more thoroughly with the course material. Use it wisely and responsibly.