As a young man, [Tzvetan] Todorov left his native Bulgaria for France. He found himself in a new land—one sense of *dépayse*—but also disoriented, even homeless—yet another meaning. This sense of homelessness is often a curse, but for Todorov it was a great opportunity. Thanks to his incurable state of *dépaysement*, he remarked, he could not help but bring a ‘new, different, surprised regard to a new culture. I experience this condition as a source of wealth, not impoverishment.’


Participant-observer ethnographic field research—central among the many methods that fall under the umbrella of interpretive and qualitative research methods—has, in one widely cited view, been ‘borrowed’ from sociology and anthropology into many subfields of political science, including comparative governmental studies, international relations, area studies, public policy (domestic, including local, state, regional; international; EU, etc.), public administration/local government studies, public law/legal studies, and organizational studies. It is not new, however, either to organizational studies or to political studies generally, having been employed in the US at least since the 1950s, and some would say even earlier, pointing to Frederick Winslow Taylor’s early 20th century observations of workers, the 1930s studies of the Hawthorne, Illinois, Western Electric plant, and Richard Fenno’s studies of US federal legislators first published in 1966.  

Indeed, one might argue, as Salemink (2003) does, that ethnography originated as a colonial practice, which positions its anthropological version as a subset of a broader range of administrative practices (perhaps even growing out of earlier state practices of statistical descriptions of populations). Whatever its origins, ethnography—Malinowski added the participant-observer dimension to academic ethnography in 1922—is useful in a wide range of settings for research questions that seek to explore the meanings of particular practices, concepts or processes to situational actors, often in order to illuminate a wider-ranging, at times more theoretical issue of concern. The latter might include studying the meaning of ‘security’ (Cai Wilkinson) or ‘democracy’ (Frederic Schaffer) in non-Western states; how policy-makers or legislators think about the decisions they make and how they go about them (Fenno); how workers shape their work practices and their relationships to managers (Julian Orr); the

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1. [www.chronicle.com/article/A-Philosopher-of-Otherness-239178?cid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en&elqTrackId=022ccb0957af4bf5a4c3091091ae2bee&elq=2be1e927da9c4410fa6a95634ac8ae066&elqaid=12552&elqat=1&elqCampaignId=5113](accessed 2 July 2017).
meaning of authority relations in a state (Samer Shehata); how violence gets routinized (Timothy Pachirat); how street-level bureaucrats implement national policies (Yanow); and so on.

This course is intended for those who are in the midst of conducting field research or who have already completed the fieldwork component of their research project and are thinking about, starting to or already working on writing up their field notes and drafts of chapters or papers/articles. (Those who are planning on conducting such a study but have not yet gone into the field should first take the ECPR Summer School’s ‘Field Research I: Introduction to Ethnography and Field Research’ or an equivalent course.) The project might be a traditional ethnographic or participant-observer study (based in a community or an organization, for instance); it may have involved ‘shadowing’ a political leader or policy-maker; and/or it might have included formal (expert, elite or other) ethnographic interviews (i.e., in conversational style—engaging people in talk). Researchers may also have combined ethnographic methods (observing, with whatever degree of participation, which typically includes talking to situational members) with the close reading of topic-relevant documents and/or visual materials in some form (e.g., in archives, newspaper morgues, and the like, or webpages) in order to generate data which they are intending to analyze using other methods (e.g., some form of discourse analysis; metaphor, category or other language-focused analysis; space analysis or other visual method; narrative analysis; and so on).

The course will focus on several of the concepts and issues central to current debates about political, policy, and organizational participant-observer ethnography. These include:

- the relational turn in understanding ethnographic research, including power and politics issues that arise in the conduct of field research;
- reflexivity and positionality, especially as these bear on the generation of data and the trustworthiness of one’s knowledge claims;
- research ethics, in light of growing formal attention to this topic on the part of university (and other) ethics review committees and ensuing requirements presented by journal publishers;
- writing as method – looking at knowledge claims and their evidentiary base, and the ways in which these are presented in research writings.

Classes will combine lecture with discussion. Students will be expected to come to class with their own questions in hand, prepared to discuss the readings and to draw links between them and their own research designs and field experiences. Additional class exercises may be added.

Prerequisite knowledge
The course is designed as an ‘advanced’ course in interpretive-qualitative research methods. It is intended for students who have already conducted field research. That prerequisite can be waived for students who have taken and successfully passed “Field Research I: Introduction to Ethnography and Field Research” or its equivalent. In addition, students should have already taken at least one course introducing them to the methodological underpinnings of interpretive and qualitative research, ideally including some readings in the philosophy of social science. (Examples of such courses in the ECPR Methods School include ‘Introduction to Interpretive Research Designs’ [Summer] and ‘Philosophy and Methodology of the Social Sciences’ [Summer refresher, Winter course].) Those who wish to brush up on the methodological background will find suggested readings following the daily schedule.

Required readings
[Please note that ‘required’ refers to the reading of things, not necessarily to their purchasing.]


2. Depending on your research field:
   


4. Goffman, Alice. 2014. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Entire book; we will use this as the ‘case study’ illustrating the issues discussed in session #3.]

5. Journal articles, conference papers, and book chapters, as noted on the syllabus.

In general, you are responsible for locating the readings on your own. Hard-to-obtain readings [marked *] will be provided; details on this will be sent to those registered for the course. If there are other readings that you are having difficulty getting ahold of via your own university library, please let me know; I will help to the extent that I can. Please keep in mind that I cannot post readings on the course Moodle page for reasons of copyright. The CEU library will do its best to make readings available, too, but most of these should be read before the course starts, and the library cannot promise when things will be available or guarantee that they will be.

**Pre-course assignment**

You will be invited to briefly introduce yourself via email to all course participants. In particular, please answer the following questions:

- Where do you stand with respect to your fieldwork: finished? just starting? etc.
- What specific questions or concerns, if any, are you bringing with you to the course?

**Please email your introduction to the group no later than 27 July.** If received by then, your specific questions are more likely to be built into course discussions, and many people will begin (or indeed, already be) traveling around that time.

**In-class procedures**

1. If we are a large-ish group, you will be asked to divide yourselves into working groups of 2-3 members each. If we are a small group, we may proceed with ‘groups’ of one.

2. Each group will be responsible for bringing questions from the readings and/or participants’ experiences to one of the day’s meetings. If you wish, you may ask others not in your group for their contributions to the set of questions.

**Credits**

This course carries 2 ECTS. The subject matter does not allow for an examination, and none will be offered. It is not possible to do ‘additional work’ for additional credit.

**A note on the course slides**

I am often asked to send my slides, either after a class session or at the end of a course. In case this alters your expectations for the sessions and how you might engage the materials there, let me say now that I do not make my slides available, for three reasons. One, some of the material I use is under copyright, and I do not have permission to circulate it. Second, the slides constitute my
processing of the readings assigned for class. You, too, can do the same readings and note for yourself what you find important (as you would during class sessions). Three, recent research shows that we learn more, and better, when we make our own notes on lectures. If you are interested in a particular slide or in specific sources that I might list there, please do ask me; I will be happy to share those.

Instructor’s bio
I am a policy/political/organizational ethnographer and interpretive methodologist interested in the generation and communication of knowing and meaning in organizational and policy settings. My current research includes a book project on state-created categories for immigrant and ‘race-ethnic’ identities, immigrant integration policies and citizen-making, research regulation and ethics policies, practice theory, and science museums and the idea of science. My most recent authored book is *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes* (Routledge 2012), with Peregrine Schwartz-Shea; our co-edited book *Interpretation and Method* is out in a second edition (M E Sharpe 2014). I received the 2012 and 2014 Cora Maas teaching awards for previous versions of this course.

http://wu.academia.edu/DvoraYanow
Daily Schedule of Session Topics and Readings

**Reader’s Guide:**

a. This is the updated, final syllabus for the 2017 course; but the schedule may be modified during the course week (e.g., changing the sequence of course topics), depending on registered students’ backgrounds and how our discussions evolve.

b. This course covers a lot of ground, in a short amount of time. I have designated Friday’s sessions for the discussion of topics that will have arisen during the week but which we’ve not adequately discussed, and to take up questions about your individual projects that we have not gotten to yet. You are, of course, always welcome to raise questions as these are sparked by in-class discussions during the week.

c. Be advised: More is listed in the syllabus than what you are likely to be able to read in advance of the course. My philosophy of syllabus design is to provide you with a range of readings, for two reasons. Ph.D. students and others planning on an academic career should note that becoming familiar with and mastering the literature of a field is part of the not-so-hidden agenda of coursework. The syllabus is designed, therefore, to introduce you to a variety of readings in this field. In addition, I try to select readings that I find engaging, but what is engaging for me may not be for you, so there is some redundancy built in such that if one reading doesn’t ‘speak’ to you, another in the grouping might. Please do at least a few of the readings for each session before the course; others may prove interesting to you later on.

d. The daily ‘thought’ questions are what I have in mind when I think about each session’s focus. Use them to guide your readings. How do you answer them? What other questions do you have?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic(s)</th>
<th>Details, Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MONDAY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>9-10.30</strong></td>
<td>1. Introductions to persons and topic</td>
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<td>Think: What do we mean by field research, fieldwork, participant observation, ethnography, and interviewing? The opening session will introduce the course topic, as well as course participants, in a way oriented to provide us with a shared language for the course. This background, and especially the 2\textsuperscript{nd} session today, may also help you in presenting, explaining, and perhaps even justifying your work to members of your department, colleagues at conference panels, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>10.30-11.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>BREAK</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>11.00-12.30</strong></td>
<td>2. Logics of inquiry in interpretive research: Abduction and surprises; flexibility and exposure; from observing to theorizing.</td>
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<td>Think: Compare abduction with induction as a logic of inquiry for ethnographic processes. What are the ‘knowledge (truth) conditions’ of ethnographic research? How can one design and plan for a research project when the ‘setting’ is a movable target. What are the implications of abductive inquiry for theorizing from field data?</td>
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<td>In class</td>
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<td>2 short videos &gt;&gt; on moving from observation to theory.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Read</td>
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<td>Time</td>
<td>Session</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.00-?</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>9-10.30</td>
<td>3. Power issues in the field: Researcher identities</td>
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**For further reading**


Read


Down, Simon and Hughes, Michael. 2009. When the ‘subject’ and the ‘researcher’ speak together. In Sierk Ybema et al., *Organizational ethnography*. London: Sage, ch. 4. [and see below @ **]


Vähäsantanen, Katja and Saarinen, Jaana. 2013. The power dance in the research interview: Manifesting power and powerlessness. *Qualitative Research* 13/5: 493-510.

Koning, Juliette and Ooi, Can-Seng. 2013. Awkward encounters and ethnography. *Qualitative Research in...*


**Consider** (scan in re. collaborative authorship; what’s going on here?)


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**Think:** Can one bridge the epistemological differences between researcher and researched? That is, can ‘outsiders’ become ‘insiders’? How native is a ‘native’ ethnographer?

**Read**


**For further reading**

Ganiel, Gladys and Mitchell, Claire. 2006. Turning the categories inside-out: Complex identifications and
**5. Evidence and ‘proof’ in field research—the case of Alice Goffman**

Think: Sociologist Alice Goffman’s book has been the focus of critics’ allegations that ethnography as a method is not trustworthy in terms of the character of its “findings.” The topic lends itself to several themes, including ideas raised by DA-RT discussions* in (US) political science:

1) that ethnographic—and by extension, other interpretive and qualitative—research is insufficiently transparent;
2) that such research is not replicable, thereby casting doubt not only on its claims, but also on its character as science;
3) that it is advocacy masquerading as science.

With respect to Goffman’s work, critics have questioned the character of the evidence and also challenged the author’s own research ethics. We will use her book as the foil for this session’s discussion. Read it and some of the criticisms; a few of these are listed here, and others will be provided (see email). How do you assess the critiques? What about researcher power and the *political* character of research?

* On DA-RT, see readings listed at the end of the syllabus.

Read


Some of the critiques:


Goffman, Alice. 2015. A reply to Professor Lubet’s critique. *New Republic*

[www.ssc.wisc.edu/soc/faculty/docs/goffman/A%20Reply%20to%20Professor%20Lubet.pdf](http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/soc/faculty/docs/goffman/A%20Reply%20to%20Professor%20Lubet.pdf)

Lubet, Steven. 2015. Alice Goffman’s denial of murder conspiracy raises even more questions. *New Republic* (June 3).


Parry, Marc. 2015. Conflict over sociologist’s narrative puts spotlight on ethnography. *Chronicle of Higher Education* (June 12).

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<th>References</th>
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6. Evidence and ‘proof’ in writing field research: Evaluative ‘standards’ for interpretive research – ‘rigor’ and objectivity, ‘reliability’ and ‘validity’?  

Think: One way to understand the controversy over Goffman’s book is through attending to the character of the writing, in the context of the broader argument that writing is method. Are there special characteristics of ethnographic writing that distinguish it from other genres of research writing? Do these have any bearing on the trustworthiness of the researcher’s claims? What makes ethnographic (and other forms of interpretive) research trustworthy?  

Read  

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<tr>
<th>11-12.30</th>
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<td>9-10.30</td>
<td>7. Ethnography and research ethics I: Researcher &lt;&gt; researched relationality—protecting research participants beyond ethics review committee policies</td>
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<td>Think: What is the history, internationally and in your home country or institutional base, of concerns with research ethics and the protection of human subjects/participants in research? What ethical issues do you face, or have you encountered, in your research? Do these involve protecting participants? Informed consent? Something else? What about deception or covert research—should it be prohibited? Why/why not? Should ethnographers be obliged to ‘give back’? Should we stop doing ethnography and do (participatory) action research instead, on ethical grounds? If there are ethics review committees on your campus, what is your relationship to them? Are there ethical issues which that review process does not address?</td>
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**More, if you have time:**


**Additional readings**


### Read


### On deception in field research


### Background to Erikson/Leo exchange


### For further readings


Read in context with reviews of Alice Goffman, *On the run*.


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<th>11-12.30</th>
<th>8. Ethnography and research ethics II: Protecting the researcher</th>
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| Think: How might research pose danger for a researcher? Has or does your research place you in danger?  
What sort? And if so, how have or do you handle(d) that? What would you advise a new field researcher? | Read | Lee-Treweek, Geraldine and Linkogle, Stephanie, eds. 2000. *Danger in the field: Risk and ethics in social research*. London: Routledge, Overview and chs. 1, 3, 6, 8, 9; skim 4, 5, 7.  
Afternoon/evening

‘Lab’ assignment: Integrating all of this into your own work...: What specific research ethics issues or personal risks are you facing, or have you faced, in your research? How will/did you handle them? What other issues are on your mind that we’ve not yet discussed, or not fully? Prepare this for tomorrow.

FRIDAY

9-10.30 9. Your turn: Participants’ Issues

What’s on your mind? What haven’t we discussed yet?

10.30-11

B R E A K

11.00-12.00 10. Other topics in p/p/o

Think: What is special about ‘ethnography’? How is it different from ‘just’ interviewing? Is it thinkable to
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<tr>
<td>10.00-10.30</td>
<td><em>ethnography and participant observation</em> do ‘textual ethnography’ in political science, and if so, what does or might that mean? Further open session to address participants’ concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00-12.30</td>
<td>Course evaluation [time set aside at the request of Methods School organizers].</td>
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Background readings

General


An interview, rather than an academic article, but one in which a rationale for interpretive-qualitative research is articulated quite clearly


On fieldnotes


Additional literature

A. Methodological and historical works


Reiter, Bernd. 2006. The hermeneutic foundations of qualitative research. *Qualitative Methods* 4/2: 18-24. [answer to the question, When should I stop interviewing?]
B. On representation and knowledge claims


C. More readings on method


Feldman, Martha S., Bell, Jeannine, and Berger, Michele Tracy, eds. 2003. Gaining access. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira.

Fenno, Richard F., Jr. 1986. Observation, context, and sequence in the study of politics. American Political Science Review 80/1: 3-15. [the source of ‘soak and poke’]


Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine and Majic, Samantha, eds. 2017. Ethnography and participant observation: Political science research in this “late methodological moment.” Symposium introduction. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 50/1: 97-102. Includes these essays and comments:


On interviewing


On silences


On shadowing


McDonald, Seonaidh and Simpson, Barbara. 2014. Shadowing research in organizations: The methodological debates. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management* 9/1: 3 – 20. [Introduction to a special issue]


Visual methods


D. Teaching

E. Political or policy ethnographies (not necessarily traditional or self-described ethnographies)

F. For organizational ethnographies, see Annotated Bibliography in Ybema et al., 2009. And:

G. Literary anthropology
H. For those who may be unaware of the DA-RT issues and debates that have been roiling APSA over the last couple of years, some sources are:


Also by Isaac:


Special issues from various APSA sections devoted to the topic:


*Comparative Politics Newsletter* 26/1: 1–64 (2016)

*International History and Politics Newsletter* 1/2: 2-29 (2016)


[https://dialogueondart.org/about/](https://dialogueondart.org/about/)

from QMMR: [www.qualtd.net/page/about AND www.dartstatement.org](http://www.qualtd.net/page/about AND www.dartstatement.org)