

Amsterdam Business Research Institute

# **Ethnography**

Course Manual

Academic year 2024 – 2025



<b>Course title</b>	<b>Ethnography</b>
<b>Coordinator(s)</b>	Professor Ruthanne Huising, <a href="mailto:huising@essec.edu">huising@essec.edu</a> Associate Professor Anastasia Sergeeva, <a href="mailto:a.sergeeva@vu.nl">a.sergeeva@vu.nl</a>
<b>Lecturer(s)</b>	Professor Ruthanne Huising, <a href="mailto:huising@essec.edu">huising@essec.edu</a> Associate Professor Anastasia Sergeeva, <a href="mailto:a.sergeeva@vu.nl">a.sergeeva@vu.nl</a>
<b>Office hours</b>	By appointment
<b>Study period</b>	Spring 2025
<b>ECTS</b>	5 ECTS
<b>Tuition</b>	€1250 20% discount on <b>early bird registration</b> : €1000

**Please note that the course manual is still subject to change and serves as an indication for students!**

### **Course Overview**

This is an advanced course on the craft of ethnography. We will explore the process of getting into the field, gathering data, and organizing and analyzing data to identify and theorize patterns in organizational life. In the last session we will discuss publishing so that you get a sense of the end of the line. However, the focus will be on the hard work of getting to that point. This is a hands-on course which will require that you practice the main skills required of ethnographers. You will be expected to work extensively before and during the course, and complete assignments throughout the course period.

Because this is a course about fieldwork, there are several assignments rather than a final paper. We want you to get your hands dirty. Why? We want you to understand what it takes to do this work, what can be gained from doing this work, and whether you would like to do this work. If you want to conduct fieldwork for your dissertation, you need to start practicing as soon as possible. Working on smaller projects or assignments allows you to learn from your mistakes in a low-risk situation. Please take each assignment seriously. In doing so you will learn so much more than by passively reading texts and offering abstract points to our discussions.

Prior to each session you will try your hand at some aspect of the end-to-end research process. To do this you will need to start early on the readings and reserve time to complete the assignments. This is not a course you prepare for the day before. The readings provide instructions about how to do the assignments and work through the process. After completing the readings, make a plan for how and when you will complete the assignment. We realize that this may not be how you manage most of your course work, but it simulates the fieldworker's

life. You must balance teaching, meetings, writing, reading, analysis on other projects and life outside of work with being in the field. Fieldwork is time consuming and rarely convenient. You can use data collected in the course of an ongoing research project where appropriate.

**Learning objectives** After the successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand their ethical responsibilities in conducting fieldwork and the processes to be used to protect the people and communities they study.
- Record rich, detailed field notes and design and conduct rich interviews.
- Code and analyze field notes and interview transcripts.
- Work from raw empirical findings to analytical interpretations to theoretical contributions
- Navigate the review and publishing process.

For ongoing seminars, workshops, and resources related to the craft of ethnography please see the [www.ethnographyatelier.org](http://www.ethnographyatelier.org).

**Course content** This is an advanced course on the craft of ethnography. We will explore the process of getting into the field, gathering data, and organizing and analyzing data to identify and theorize patterns in organizational life. In the last session we will discuss publishing so that you get a sense of the end of the line. However, the focus will be on the hard work of getting to that point. This is a hands-on course which will require that you practice the main skills required of ethnographers. We will collect new data and work with existing data.

### **Course design/Ground rules**

Class discussions are the lifeblood of this course. PhD courses operate like intensive workshop and therefore it is crucial that you come to class having read the material, done the assignment and reflected on any gaps or challenges you experienced. This means you have to go beyond “consuming” the texts and spend time wondering about them. What assumptions, connections, arguments, etc don’t you understand? What arguments and assumptions do you take issue with? What captured you and why? What irritated you and why? How does the week’s material connect with or disconnect from your experience in the field? And so on. Make a note of these insights and ideas so that we can address them in class.

Attendance is mandatory. If you cannot make it to class because of illness or other unfortunately events, send us an email. To promote our mutual engagement and attention, we ask that you turn off your telephone and

disconnect from all communication channels not related to our course. We need your full attention.

**Form of tuition**      The estimated time participants spend on study activities is:

Attending interactive sessions	24 hours
Reading preparations	60 hours
Work on assignments	66 hours
Total	<u>150 hours</u> (5 ECTS)

**Assessment**      Students will be assessed based on:

- Class participation
- 4 individual assignments
- 1 group assignment

**Preliminary Course Schedule:**

- **Week 1\***  
May 13 (from 10:00-13:00) Forum 4  
May 14 (from 10:00-13:00) Forum 4  
May 15 (from 10:00-13:00) TBD  
May 16 (from 10:00-13:00) Forum 4
- **Week 2**  
May 20 (from 10:00-13:00) Forum 4  
May 21 (from 10:00-13:00) Forum 4
- **Week 3**  
May 26 (from 10:00-13:00) Forum 4  
May 27 (from 10:00-13:00) Forum 3  
May 28 (from 10:00-13:00) Forum 3

*\*The first week of this course may be taught at ESSEC Business School, Paris. More information will be provided later.*

**Literature:**

*\*This is a list of readings from prior course edition. The reading list for the 2025 edition will be updated by March 2025. This list is provided to give an indication of the type and amount of reading to be done during the course.*

## Course Schedule

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### Session 1: Warrants and Ethics (assignment 0)

#### **Warrants**

Glaser, Barney and Anselm Strauss. 2009 (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Aldine Transaction, London. **Chapter 1, 2, and 4.**

Timmermans, S., & Tavory, I. (2012). Theory construction in qualitative research: From grounded theory to abductive analysis. *Sociological theory*, 30(3), 167-186.

**Ethics (please note that Van Maanen's article contains extreme violence which you may skip).**

Alice Goffman (2015) *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. Methodological Appendix. New York: Picador.

Becker, H. S. (1966). Whose side are we on? *Social Problems.*, 14, 239.

Van Maanen, J. (1982). The Moral Fix: On the Ethics of Fieldwork, *Social Science Methods*, Volume 1: *Qualitative Social Research*. pp.115-139

#### **Recommended Reading:**

Bechky, B. A., & O'Mahony, S. (2015). 16 Leveraging Comparative Field Data for Theory Generation. *Handbook of qualitative organizational research: Innovative pathways and methods*.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1965). Temporal aspects of dying as a non-scheduled status passage. *American Journal of Sociology*, 71(1), 48-59. (theory development example)

Katz, J. (1997). Ethnography's warrants. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 25(4), 391-423.

O'Mahony, S., & Bechky, B. A. (2006). Stretchwork: Managing the career progression paradox in external labor markets. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49(5), 918-941. (theory development example)

Silverman, D. (1989). Six Rules of Qualitative Research: A Post-Romantic Argument. *Symbolic Interaction*, 12(2), 215-230.

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### Session 2. Accessing, Observing, and Recording Social Life (assignment 1)

#### **Access**

Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. H. (2006). *Analyzing Social Settings*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company. **Chapter 3 and 4.** These chapters are boring by cover what you need to know about access.

#### **Observation**

Gene Weingarten, Pearls Before Breakfast, April 7 2007

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<https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/gene-weingarten>

**Recommended Reading:**

Becker, H. S. (2008). *Writing for social scientists: How to start and finish your thesis, book, or article*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Kamler, B., & Thomson, P. (2014). *Helping doctoral students write: Pedagogies for supervision*. Routledge.

King, S. (2000). *On writing: A memoir of the craft*. Simon and Schuster, New York.

McPhee, J. (2017). *Draft No. 4: On the Writing Process*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York.

Rodriguez, N. M., Ryave, A., & Ryave, A. L. (2002). *Systematic self-observation: A method for researching the hidden and elusive features of everyday social life* (Vol. 49). Sage.

Zinsser, W. (2006). *On writing well: The classic guide to writing nonfiction*. Harper and Row, New York.

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**Session 3 and 4. Writing Field Notes (assignment 2 is an in-class assignment)**

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing ethnographic field notes*. University of Chicago Press. The entire book is there. **Please read chapter 1, 2, 3, and 4.**

**Recommended Reading:**

Beaulieu, A. 2010. "Research Note: From Co-Location to Co-Presence: Shifts in the Use of Ethnography the Study of Knowledge." *Social Studies of Science* 40 (3): 453–70.

Seaver, Nick. 2017. "Algorithms as Culture: Some Tactics for the Ethnography of Algorithmic Systems." *Big Data & Society* 4 (2).

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**Session 5. Designing Interview Guides and Conducting Interviews (assignment 3)**

Ahmed, S. (2021). *Complaint!*. Duke University Press. Introduction.

Weiss, R. S. (1995). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. Simon and Schuster. Pp 1-149.

**Recommended Reading:**

Becker, H., & Geer, B. (1957). Participant observation and interviewing: A comparison. *Human Organization*, 16(3), 28-32.

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Gubrium, J., & Holstein, J. (1995). The active interview. *Qualitative research methods series, 37*. pp 1-17. The entire book is there for your reference.

Small, M. L. (2009). How many cases do I need?' On science and the logic of case selection in field-based research. *Ethnography, 10*(1), 5-38.

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### **Session 6. Analyzing Field Notes and Interview Transcripts (assignment 4)**

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research techniques*. Sage. **Chapter 5, 8, 9, 10, and 14.**

Locke, K., Feldman, M., & Golden-Biddle, K. (2022). Coding practices and iterativity: Beyond templates for analyzing qualitative data. *Organizational research methods, 25*(2), 262-284.

#### ***Recommended Reading:***

Grodal, S., Anteby, M., & Holm, A. L. (2020). Achieving rigor in qualitative analysis: The role of active categorization in theory building. *Academy of Management Review*.

Locke, K., Feldman, M. S., & Golden-Biddle, K. (2015). Discovery, validation, and live coding. *Handbook of qualitative organizational research: Innovative pathways and methods*, 371-380.

Maxwell, J. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. *Harvard educational review, 62*(3), 279-301.

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### **Session 7. Heuristics, Writing, and Visualization in the Analysis Process (assignment 5)**

Glaser, Barney and Anselm Strauss. (1967). The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Aldine de Gruyter **Chapter 3 and 5.**

Cloutier, C., & Ravasi, D. (2021). Using tables to enhance trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Strategic Organization, 19*(1), 113-133.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., Huberman, M. A., & Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. **Chapter 5 and 7.** Note that each chapter has numerous ideas. Read broadly to identify approaches that seem to suit the data and then read deeply about selected approaches.

#### **Fundamental Texts on Analyzing Qualitative Data**

Becker, H. S. (2008). *Tricks of the trade: How to think about your research while you're doing it*. University of Chicago Press.

Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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Corbin, Juliet and Anselm Strauss. (2008). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques 3rd edition*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Glaser, Barney and Anselm Strauss. (1967). The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Aldine de Gruyter

Golden-Biddle, K., K. Locke. (2007). *Composing qualitative research*, 2nd ed. Sage, Thousand Oaks, California.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., Huberman, M. A., & Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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### Session 8. Bag of Tricks - Analysis of Analyses (assignment 6 to be done in class)

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### Session 9: Publishing Qualitative Research

Luising, R. (2016). Getting Started as a Reviewer.

Locke, K., & Golden-Biddle, K. (1997). Constructing opportunities for contribution: Structuring intertextual coherence and “problematizing” in organizational studies. *Academy of Management Journal*, 40(5), 1023-1062.

Medawar, P. B. (1963). Is the scientific paper a fraud?

Tratt, M. G. (2009). From the editors: For the lack of a boilerplate: Tips on writing up (and reviewing) qualitative research. *Academy of Management Journal*, 52(5), 856-862.

Tratt, M. G. (2008). Fitting oval pegs into round holes tensions in evaluating and publishing qualitative research in top-tier North American journals. *Organizational Research Methods*, 11(3), 481-509.

Tratt, M. G. (2012). Responding to Reviewers. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55 (6), 1261-1263.

Tratt, M. G. (2008) Tips to Article-Writers.

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### Additional Reading

I have uploaded the methods chapters of the following books and papers. You may be interested to read **the methods descriptions (methods section only)** of the following book-length and article-length ethnographies.

The following articles and books rely heavily on ethnographic interviews. Read or browse if interested.

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### BOOKS



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Anteby, M. (2008). *Moral gray zones: Side productions, identity, and regulation in an aeronautic plant*. Princeton University Press.

Lamont, M. (1992). *Money, morals, and manners: The culture of the French and the American upper-middle class*. University of Chicago Press.

Swidler, A. (2013). *Talk of love: How culture matters*. University of Chicago Press.

### **ARTICLES**

Ewick, P., & Silbey, S. (2003). Narrating Social Structure: Stories of Resistance to Legal Authority<sup>1</sup>. *American Journal of Sociology*, 108(6), 1328-1372.

Rivera, L. A. (2012). Hiring as cultural matching the case of elite professional service firms. *American Sociological Review*, 77(6), 999-1022.

Turco, C. J. (2010). Cultural foundations of tokenism evidence from the leveraged buyout industry. *American Sociological Review*, 75(6), 894-913.

Viterna, J. S. (2006). Pulled, Pushed, and Persuaded: Explaining Women's Mobilization into the Salvadoran Guerrilla Army<sup>1</sup>. *American Journal of Sociology*, 112(1), 1-45.

The following articles and books rely heavily on ethnographic observation. Read or browse if interested.

### **BOOKS**

Turco, C. (2016). *The Conversational Firm: Rethinking Bureaucracy in the Age of Social Media*. Columbia University Press. (Ethnography of organization: read all of this as highly instructional)

Orr, J. E. (1996). *Talking about machines: An ethnography of a modern job*. Cornell University Press. (Ethnography of job: read all as instructional)

Desmond, M. (2016). *Evicted: Poverty and profit in the American city*. Crown. (One of the best ethnographers around. Read if interested.)

Goffman, A. (2015). *On the run: Fugitive life in an American city*. Picador. (This is very long. This book is highly controversial. Read if interested.)

Zaloom, C. (2006). *Out of the pits: Traders and technology from Chicago to London*. University of Chicago Press. (Read if interested.)

### **ARTICLES (remember methods section only)**

Bechky, B. A. (2006). Gaffers, gofers, and grips: Role-based coordination in temporary organizations. *Organization Science*, 17(1), 3-21.

Huising, R. (2014). The erosion of expert control through censure episodes. *Organization Science*, 25(6), 1633-1661.

Kaplan, S. (2008). Framing contests: Strategy making under uncertainty. *Organization Science*, 19(5), 729-752.

Michel, A. (2012). Transcending socialization: A nine-year ethnography of the body's role in organizational control and knowledge workers' transformation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 0001839212437519.

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