

## **Ethnographies of Ordinary Life**

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Office hours:

Monday 3:45 - 4:30

Tuesday 3:30-4:30

Thursday 3:30 - 4:30

This course tries to approach the “ordinary” through ethnographic research and writing. Each student will choose a project (or a series of short projects) for participant observation. Questions include: how is the ordinary made to seem meaningful or made invisible or naturalized? How is it enacted in places, temporalities, practices and habits? How is ordinary life experienced by particular people in particular situations? How is it the site of forms of attachment and agency? How do people become invested in the idea and hope of having an “ordinary life?” How does ordinariness dull us, or escape us, or become a tempting scene of desire?

Students will conduct original ethnographic research.

This is a writing component class. Requirements include:

1. Class attendance. (10% of grade)
2. One two-page paper (10% of the grade). This could be autobiographical, or more loosely, a memoir, or description or personal observation.
3. One five to ten page paper (30% of the grade).
4. A journal or blog of ethnographic fieldnotes. 2 entries a week, approximately 20-30 pages (40% of the grade).
5. One presentation of your work to the class which may include performance or audio visual materials (10% of the grade).

We have a writing mentor assigned to the class. Sid can help you at all stages of your writing – grammar, developing ideas, exploring styles, editing, etc. Please utilize him by meeting with him and having him read drafts of your work. He is NOT responsible for grading.

Readings will include a course pack of articles as well as selections from the required books listed below. The course pack is available through Abel’s Copies, 472-5353, 715-D West 23<sup>rd</sup> St, [www.abelscopies.com](http://www.abelscopies.com)

### **Books:**

D.J. Waldie. *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir*.

Thomas de Zengotita. *Mediated*.

David Shields. *Black Planet: Facing Race during an NBA season*.

Kathleen Stewart. *Ordinary Affects* (on black board).

Leslie Stern. *The Smoking Book*.

### **Articles (in course packet)**

Stephen Collier, Andrew Lakoff and Paul Rabinow. “Bioscurity” *Anthropology Today* 20:5, Oct 2004.

Gladwell, Malcolm. "The Picture Problem" December 13, 2004. *The New Yorker*.  
Flanagan, Caitlin. "The Price of Paradise" Jan 13, 2005. *The New Yorker*.  
Gladwell, Malcolm. "Getting Over It" November 8, 2004. *The New Yorker*.  
Thurman, Judith. "Roots" March 15, 2004. *The New Yorker*.  
Orlean, Susan. "The Outsiders" July 25, 2004. *The New Yorker*.  
Orlean, Susan. "Little Wing: when homing pigeons leave home" Feb 13 & 20, 2006. *The New Yorker*.  
Bilger, Berkhard. "Nerd Camp" July 25, 2004. *The New Yorker*.  
Gary, Romain. 1970. *White Dog*. (selection)  
Barbara Ehereich. *Nickel and Dimed*. (selection).

### **film clips**

In the bedroom  
Devil's Playground  
Super Size Me  
This is Nowhere  
Home Economics  
Falling Down  
Cul de Sac  
Barber Shop  
Real Women Have Curves

### **Schedule**

#### **September 1**

Introductions

#### **September 5-7**

Read D.J. Waldie. *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir*.

Begin your journal of ethnographic fieldnotes. 2 entries a week, 1-3 typed pages per entry. Each entry should be dated. Each entry should be brought to each class (Tuesday and Thursday) for a check.

#### **September 12--14**

Read Leslie Stern. *The Smoking Book*.

Write 2 journal entries, 1-3 typed pages per entry. Each entry should be dated. Each entry should be brought to each class (Tuesday and Thursday) for a check.

#### **September 19-21**

**Write one two-page paper based on your fieldnotes (10% of the grade). This could be autobiographical, or more loosely, a memoir, or description or personal observation. Turn it in Thursday.**

#### **September 26-28**

Read Orlean, Susan. "Little Wing: when homing pigeons leave home" Feb 13 & 20, 2006. *The New Yorker*.

Bilger, Berkhard. "Nerd Camp" July 25, 2004. *The New Yorker*.

Write 2 journal entries, 1-3 typed pages per entry. Each entry should be dated. Each entry should be brought to each class (Tuesday and Thursday) for a check.

**You must meet with Sid about your writing at least once between September 26<sup>th</sup> and October 12<sup>th</sup>.**

### **October 3**

Read Thurman, Judith. "Roots" March 15, 2004. *The New Yorker*.

Orlean, Susan. "The Outsiders" July 25, 2004. *The New Yorker*.

No class Thursday.

Write 2 journal entries, 1-3 typed pages per entry. Each entry should be dated. Each entry should be brought to each class (Tuesday) for a check.

**You must meet with Sid about your writing at least once between September 26<sup>th</sup> and October 12<sup>th</sup>.**

### **October 10-12**

Read Kathleen Stewart. *Ordinary Affects* (on blackboard)

Write 2 journal entries, 1-3 typed pages per entry. Each entry should be dated. Each entry should be brought to each class (Tuesday and Thursday) for a check.

**You must meet with Sid about your writing at least once between September 26<sup>th</sup> and October 12<sup>th</sup>.**

**Tuesday – turn in your journal entries to date.**

### **October 17-19**

Read Thomas de Zengotita. *Mediated*. (selections)

Write 2 journal entries, 1-3 typed pages per entry. Each entry should be dated. Each entry should be brought to each class (Tuesday and Thursday) for a check.

### **October 24-26**

Discuss fieldwork, journal entries, and the development of your long papers.

Write 2 journal entries, 1-3 typed pages per entry. Each entry should be dated. Each entry should be brought to each class (Tuesday and Thursday) for a check.

### **October 31 November 2**

**Thursday - Turn in your five to ten page paper (30% of the grade).**

### **November 7-9**

Read David Shields. *Black Planet: Facing Race during an NBA season*.

Write 2 journal entries, 1-3 typed pages per entry. Each entry should be dated. Each entry should be brought to each class (Tuesday and Thursday) for a check.

Presentations Tuesday and Thursday.

### **November 14-16**

Read Stephen Collier, Andrew Lakoff and Paul Rabinow. "Bioscurity" *Anthropology Today*.

Gladwell, Malcolm. "The Picture Problem" December 13, 2004. *The New Yorker*.

Gladwell, Malcolm. "Getting Over It" November 8, 2004. *The New Yorker*.

Write 2 journal entries, 1-3 typed pages per entry. Each entry should be dated. Each entry should be brought to each class (Tuesday and Thursday) for a check.

### **November 21**

Read Flanagan, Caitlin. "The Price of Paradise" Jan 13, 2005. *The New Yorker*.

Gary, Romain. 1970. *White Dog*. (selection)

Write 2 journal entries, 1-3 typed pages per entry. Each entry should be dated. Each entry should be brought to each class (Tuesday) for a check.

Tuesday – presentations.

No class Thursday – Thanksgiving

### **November 28-30**

Read Barbara Ehrenreich. *Nickel and Dimed*. (selection).

Write 2 journal entries, 1-3 typed pages per entry. Each entry should be dated. Each entry should be brought to each class (Tuesday) for a check.

Tuesday: Presentations

No Class Thursday, the 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **December 5-7**

Presentations Tuesday and Thursday

Write 2 journal entries, 1-3 typed pages per entry. Each entry should be dated. Each entry should be brought to each class (Tuesday) for a check.

**Thursday turn in all journal entries.**