

ANT 101: Introduction to Sociocultural Anthropology

Fall 2005, M,W,F 9:30 — 10:20, Chambers 1027

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Field Project: **Due 4 November 2005**

Fieldnotes and analytical essays should be emailed to me as an attachment by the end of class on 4 November. This project is designed to familiarize you with the conduct of ethnographic field research, applying the theoretical and methodological considerations we have discussed to a particular social situation. What you choose to study is up to you; if you have questions about what is suitable, please email or meet with me. The field project consists of two parts: fieldnotes, and an analysis in the form of a short essay. Fieldnotes should be typed, and may include diagrams, maps, pictures or any other documentary material (i.e., menu from a restaurant, flyer from a party, etc.). The analytical essay will be limited to 3-5 pages, and will concisely summarize how your observations fit in with some of the issues we have discussed in the course. Here are some suggestions to think about:

Your fieldnotes will count for 40% of the field project grade, and will be evaluated based on the level of detail, depth of observation, and materials collected. They will not be graded for grammar or style at all. The fieldnotes, however, should be typed.

The analytical essay will count for 60% of the field project grade, and will be evaluated based on the use of ethnographic detail from the fieldnotes, analysis using the anthropological concepts that we have addressed, and strength of argument (as on the handout).

Here are some examples of field projects:

1. Attend a particular musical event, lecture, or practice. Start mapping out the locale in which the event is situated, especially areas for the musicians/actors, lecturer, and other participants. Who is involved in the event? How does the design of performance hall/classroom, practice/dressing rooms shape the conduct of the event? What messages are implied in the division of space?
2. Follow an athlete/team for a day. Draw up a time schedule of a day in the life of an athlete, coach, official, athletic staff, trainer, etc. Collect practice schedules and plans. What ideas or goals are behind the design of a practice or how time is spent? What cultural messages or social structural issues are implied in the division of time?
3. Examine a particular campus or off-campus organization, attending a meeting and/or interviewing members. What are the goals of the organization, and how do they accomplish them? Who participates in the organization? How are boundaries constructed between members and non-members? Is there a “culture” to the organization? How is this culture transmitted to new members?

What you choose for your fieldsite is limited by your creativity and your time – avoid being over-ambitious in what you want to observe (i.e., Christianity in Charlotte). The key to a successful field project is being able to limit your fieldsite (i.e., a specific church or religious event/community) to something manageable. You must also respect the privacy of individuals, explaining upfront who you are and what you are doing. I will have a handout later from the Institutional Review Board that spells out ethical considerations in social research.

Example of One Page of Fieldnotes

Date[10/29/96

Place[Shengtang

Weather Conditions[cool in am, hot in pm

Got up early today to meet Guo Zenghua at 7:00 so that we can head over to Shengshan to excavate a body. By 7:30 he had not arrived, so Mr. Qiu went over with me to find him at his house, but no one was there. I then decided to go over myself and find him, and bumped into him on the corner, talking to Secretary Lin.

The family surname was Xie. There were two men and three women present. Guo and I had biked over, and then waited for them to arrive. While we were waiting, Guo showed me around the cemetery and pointed at the new tomb in place. A man with two cows came through while we were waiting. He then heard some digging above, so he told me that they may have taken another road up and that we should go ahead and climb up.

They had arrived, and the two men and one woman were already cleaning up the area. Two women climbed up with us, carrying supplies and the gim ngang. After asking them if I could videotape, with Mr. Guo explaining to them who I was and what I was doing, I started to set up. While I was setting up the tripod, the man lit some firecrackers and Mr. Guo and another guy started to dig up the casket. They removed the dirt until the casket was revealed.

Mr. Guo then washed his hands and face with baijiu that the women had brought up, then opened up the casket. As they were digging, I had noticed a mouse, and as Mr. Guo was taking bones out of the shoes and pants, he grabbed some little mice and threw them out! Before starting to grab the bones, he washed his hands with something that looked like kerosene (need to ask him about that). He started from the bottom up, grabbing bones and placing them onto a basket cover with some paper spread around the top. He took one set of bones and wrapped it in red paper (part of the pelvic bone through which the deceased women would bear children, sheng haizi). Other bones were thrown into the pile. The skull was taken out and placed at the top.

In the meanwhile, the other people present (the other man and the three women) all started to clean the bones. They used the paper to wipe the flesh off the bones. As he pulled up bones, he threw the clothing off to one side. They continued to carefully clean the meat off, and then Guo finished off everything with kerosene. While they cleaned meat off the bones, Guo and the other guy took the casket apart and threw it on the side. He then took the gim ngang, cleaned it out and burned some paper, then started to lay the bones in. He first took the larger leg bones, then threw in the rest of the bones. They made quite a production of counting the teeth, and later Mr. Guo wrapped the teeth up in red paper. The teeth and the pelvic bone were the two pieces wrapped in red paper (need to ask him about this).

He then put the skull in, and then put the gim ngang into the pit, covered it with one cover (the inside of the gim ngang and the first cover had writing on it, describing who it was similar to what would be placed on a tombstone). He then put some red paper on the top, and covered it with another cover, the same color and material as the gim ngang. They then put the dirt back and cleaned the area around it. While the men finished off the grave that we had dug up, the other women cleaned up around the grave next to it, cutting weeds. one woman then lit candles, and handed two of them to him to place on the other grave, while the three women placed candles on the new grave. She then took a bottle of something (bai jiu?), and sprinkled it on the grave. The three women made a sign of the cross, and said a hail mary. (I guess this makes it Catholic!). The man put the candles on the grave, but he didn't say any prayers aloud. They then put some fruit in bags in front of the two graves -- a bag of bananas in front of the old one (the man's grave?) and a bag of oranges in front of the new one. They opened the bag. After a while, they resealed the bags and took them back home. They lit firecrackers on both graves, and then we went back home after that. When we got back to the village, Guo asked me if I wanted to eat lunch at the families house. Twice I said no, and he didn't ask a third so I guess it was OK.

I got home, and we had lunch. After lunch, we rested for a while and then I went up to the paichusuo. I picked up the pictures from across the street, went across and took care of it. I then went to the namecard store to pick up the namecards, and the worker there told me that they couldn't find the English font to make the back of the cards, so

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Field Project Evaluation:

Fieldnotes: _____

Level of detail in observation (field of view; amount that was observed)

poor adequate good very good excellent

Depth of observation (detail in description of what was observed)

poor adequate good very good excellent

Variety of data collected (use of a wide range of possible material; effort)

poor adequate good very good excellent

Writing of observation and avoidance of interpretation (recognition of objectivity/subjectivity)

poor adequate good very good excellent

Analytical Essay: _____

Strength of argument (well-stated, meaningful argument)

poor adequate good very good excellent

Sharpness of argument (connecting local/specific to wider/abstract)

poor adequate good very good excellent

Use of evidence that supports argument (ethnographic description connected to argument)

poor adequate good very good excellent

Evidence drawn from field material (evidence in fieldnotes or clear where it came from)

poor adequate good very good excellent

Style of writing (grammar, structure of expository writing, etc.)

poor adequate good very good excellent

Total Grade: _____
