

***Fieldwork In Cultural Anthropology***  
**Fall 2010**  
**University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

Anthropology 411  
Web site: <https://courses.las.illinois.edu>  
Davenport 113  
M-W 3:30-5:00 p.m.

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Davenport 391 (244-7849)  
OH Mondays 9-noon & appointment

*We do not start out with well-formed ideas we carry off to distant places to check out by means of carefully codified procedures systematically applied. We go off to those places, or increasingly, these days, ones closer by, with some general notions of what we would like to look into and of how we might go into looking into them. We then in fact look into them (or, often enough look instead into others that turn out to be more interesting), and after doing so we return to sort through our notes and memories, both of them defective, to see what we might have uncovered that clarifies anything or leads on to useful revisions of received ideas, our own or someone else's, about something or other. The writing this produces is accordingly self-exploratory, self-questioning, and shaped more by the occasions of its production ... Anthropological arguments... are like excuses, made up after the stumblings that made them necessary have already happened.*

Clifford Geertz (1973)

*[A]nthropological connectivity cannot from one case to the next ever be fully abstracted from its (holistic) context. It remains resolutely particular. That is why, stricto sensu, there is not and cannot be a perfectly general method of anthropological inquiry.*

James D. Faubion (2009)<sup>i</sup>

So this is a course about stumblings. It is about retrospective justifications, radical uncertainty, and the sometimes hopeful and often painful possibilities emergent in the connections forged through the deeply imperfect and “unbearably slow” practice of ethnographic fieldwork.<sup>ii</sup>

It is also about *things that really happen*. And our efforts to *grasp* those things.

When we do research, our assumptions about what we’re studying (some of which become our hypotheses) constantly clash with the worlds we see, hear, smell and feel—even as the ways we see, hear, smell and feel are shaped by those very assumptions. This is the fiercely empirical lurch-gestalt-hesitation-revelation practice we call *ethnography*.

“Fieldwork in Cultural Anthropology” focuses on this practice. It aims to help us figure out *how* to **figure out something about something in the world**. All over the University of Illinois, indeed at every research university, we—professors, students, scientists, writers, thinkers—are basically just trying to fathom *something* about *something*, within particular structural constraints. In Anthropology 411 we join this quest.<sup>iii</sup>

How to do it? First, we become *alive to* our immediate surroundings—we recognize the place in which we’re living and learning as **foreground**, not background. In other words, the university itself and its environs become our focus—in ethnography *of*, not just *in*, the

university. As such, we're participating in the Ethnography of the University (EUI) initiative (<http://www.eui.illinois.edu/>). This means that many class exercises may ultimately be archived for the public (see <https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/handle/2142/755>).<sup>iv</sup>

Second, we start thinking questions we have about what's going on here in the world in and around the U of I. Then we imagine how to turn those queries into research projects. As we mull the possibilities, we interrogate the ethics of making our inquiries and using the particular methods we do to answer them. We discuss these issues within the context of what many people see as the fraught history of anthropology. But we always return to explore the practical matters of *doing*, of investigating *something* and writing about it, ever cognizant that our research and representations always have effects in and on the world.

As a way to think about the politics of research methods, we analyze parts of one major ethnographic text in this class, the monograph *Sidewalk*, and study sections of an ethnographic team's work in *The Weight of the World*. These readings have been included to help you think about how to do research—not to weigh you down. We will discuss the more methodological aspects of the works. All along, we critically examine our own processes as represented in class assignments. In order to produce our own ethnographic texts, we plunge quickly into the *doing of it*, carrying out a series of exercises. Many of our questions about methods arise in the midst of our *trying out* methods (rather than just reading about them).

Your final product in class is not, however, an ethnographic text; it is a short research proposal in which you discuss the best methods for exploring the questions you have refined throughout the semester. Rather than prepare you to write a full-fledged research proposal (for which there is an entire course, and which would focus much more on theoretical aspects of the research), the idea here is to develop a sense of the evolving relationships between specific questions and appropriate methods in the context of particular field sites.

The goal is to develop confidence for planning and then doing longer-term research projects—all the while recognizing that ethnographic fieldwork is kind of like jazz. It is ever open to possibilities, forever being improvised, yet always constrained (and also enabled) by structured rules and expectations (themselves not so crystal clear ...).<sup>v</sup>

### **Special accommodations**

Students with special needs or disabilities that may require some modification of seating or other class requirements should inform me at the start of the course, so appropriate arrangements may be made.

### **Evaluation and expectations**

I expect you to be in class, on time, at 3:30 p.m. each Monday and Wednesday, and stay until the end of class—with cell phones and all other electronic devices disabled. Attendance does matter! I count on you coming to every class session; if you have more than two undocumented absences, your grade will be lowered. You should be prepared to join in discussion, having done the reading and finished the exercises due for that day.

You will be conducting fieldwork throughout the semester; one estimate is four hours a week, though that amount will vary. We will discuss your fieldwork in class—be prepared to talk about it. All representations of that fieldwork, and comments on others' research, must be submitted (to the Moodle site) **on time**, except in the event of documented illness and emergency. When you are writing on your computer, be sure to save your work frequently, backing it up. Late submissions will lose one-third letter grade for each day past due.

As part of the course's mission to reflect on methods while we're in the midst of using them, everyone will be assigned to collaborative group (one or two other students, depending on class size). Group members will formally comment on each other's work and hopefully informally offer each other support.

The annual EUI conference will take place on November 30. I expect all undergraduates to participate in it, either with a presentation or a poster.

Detailed instructions for each written assignment, as well as a description of how grades are assigned, is provided in a separate document.

### **Academic integrity**

The University of Illinois prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty. To make sure you understand and abide by the university policies concerning plagiarism, see the explanations at <http://www.research.uiuc.edu/ethics/plagiarism.asp#students>. See also <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml> for more information. Plagiarized work will result in an F just like any other form of cheating.

The point here is that you must give credit to others when you use their ideas and words. *This includes all in-class readings!* There are a number of ways to do this. As the University Library explains in its web site, "Citing is the process of giving credit to the sources you used to write your paper. ... It can be difficult to figure out what needs to be credited." This is especially true in the Internet/Wikipedia age.<sup>vi</sup>

The Library web site continues: "*Use this rule of thumb:* If you knew a piece of information before you started doing research, generally you do not need to credit it. You also do not need to cite well-known facts, such as dates, which can be found in many encyclopedias. [This does not mean Wikipedia words are free for the (uncredited) taking! At the very least, credit Wikipedia; but I would prefer you go on to other, vetted, authoritative sources after checking that site.] All other information such as quotations, statistics, and ideas should always be cited in your papers."<sup>vii</sup> See the library web site for assistance: <http://www.library.illinois.edu/learn/tutorials/citation.html>.

### **Readings**

*We will refer to the following books throughout the course. Most readings, whether articles or book chapters, are available on Moodle. A few can be accessed through the URLs listed in this syllabus.*

Becker, Howard. *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Bourdieu, Pierre, et al., eds. *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, translated by Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson et al. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999 [1993].

Duneier, Mitchell. *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1999.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Faubion, James D. and George E. Marcus, eds. *Fieldwork Is Not What It Used to Be: Learning Anthropology's Method in a Time of Transition*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009.

Quinn, Naomi, ed. *Finding Culture in Talk: A Collection of Methods*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.

### **Supplies**

**Notebook:** One or two small, unobtrusive notebook that you can carry with you all the time (including to class). As you develop your ethnographic ideas, record them in the notebook—whether observations of the world around you, reflections on readings, feelings arising from interactions, or tentative hypotheses emergent from your exercises. I would suggest you write in the notebook daily. Your Moodle entries will draw from these initial notes.

**Audio recorder:** You will need an audio recorder for several assignments. If you don't have one, please make arrangements to borrow one. If it isn't a digital recorder, you'll need tapes, and of course remember to check your power source (batteries).

### **WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

This class meets twice a week, on Mondays and Wednesdays—but note that there are a number of assignments due (to be posted on Moodle) on **Fridays**. Starting on Week 7, we will divide the week's classes into a discussion of the readings on Mondays and conversations about our particular projects on Wednesdays (though there will undoubtedly be lots of overlap!).

Week 1 What is ethnography?

**M August 23**

Introductions

**W August 25**

Duneier, "Introduction," and "Appendix: A Statement on Methods,"  
3-14 and 333-357.

In addition to Duneier, we will divide up the following readings among us. As you read your one chapter, attend especially to what kinds of questions the authors are asking and what methods they use to approach their queries. I have also included in this section the introduction to Bronislaw Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*; those of you who are not sure what all the references to "Malinowskian" mean in the readings can look at that file. Finally, Alma Gottlieb's chapter will give you one firm way to define ethnography.

Peterson, Kristin. "Phantom Epistemologies." In Faubion, 37-51.

Chung, Jae A. "Ethnographic Remnants: Range and Limits of the Social Method." In Faubion, 52-72.

Hamilton, Jennifer A. "On the Ethics of Unusable Data." In Faubion, 73-88.

Naficy, Nahal. "The Dracula Ballet: A Tale of Fieldwork in Politics." In Faubion, 113-128.

Breglia, Lisa. "The 'Work' of Ethnographic Fieldwork." In Faubion, 129-142.

Recommended:

Malinowski, Bronislaw. "Introduction: The Subject, Method, and Scope of this Inquiry." In *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983: 1-25.

Gottlieb, Alma. "Ethnographic Methods: Ethnography: Theory and Methods." In *A Handbook for Social Science Field Research: Essays and Bibliographic Sources on Research Design and Methods*, edited by Ellen Perelman and Sara R. Curran, 47-68. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 2006.

<b>Due:</b> Reading response #1
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Week 2 "Just" observing?

**M August 30**

hooks, bell. "Is Paris Burning?" In *Black Looks: Race and Representation*.

Boston: South End Press, 145-156.

Phelan, Peggy. "The Golden Apple: Jennie Livingston's *Paris is Burning*." In *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*. New York: Routledge, 1993: 93-111.

**W September 1**

Stilgoe, John R. "Beginnings." In *Outside Lies Magic: Regaining History and Awareness in Everyday Places*. New York: Walker and Company, 1998: 1-19.

Becker, selections from "Imagery," 46-57.

Goldberg, Natalie. "Don't Tell, but Show," and "A Tourist in Your Own Town." In *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1986: 68-69, 99-100.

**F September 3**

<b>Due:</b> A Day in the Life of the University observation notes
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Week 3 Ethics and identity

**M September 6 Labor Day**

No class

**W September 8**

Discussion of human subjects protection and Institutional Review Board compliance

García, María Elena. "Ethnographic Responsibility and the Anthropological Endeavor: Beyond Identity Discourse." *Anthropological Quarterly* 73 (2): April 2000: 89-101.

Twine, France Winddance, "Racial Ideologies and Racial Methodologies." In *Racing Research, Researching Race: Methodological Dilemmas in Critical Race Studies*, ed. France Winddance Twine and Jonathan W. Warren, with foreword by Troy Duster. New York: New York University Press, 2000: xi-xiv and 1-34.

EUI Protection of Human Subjects page:

<http://www.eui.illinois.edu/resources/board.html> (available through the EUI site in the Moodle page)

University of Illinois Institutional Review Board page:

<http://irb.illinois.edu/>

American Anthropological Association, "Code of Ethics," available on line <http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm>

<b>Due:</b> Reading response #2
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**F September 10**

<b>Due:</b> Brainstorming
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Week 4 Doing, recording, writing

**M September 13**

Emerson, "Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research," 1-16.

Bourdieu, "To the Reader," "The Space of Points of View," "Jonquil Street" (1-22)

Duneier, "The Magazine Vendors" and "The Men without Accounts," 43-111.

**W September 15**

Emerson, "In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes," 17-38.

Emerson, "Writing Up Fieldnotes I: From Field to Desk," 39-50.

**F September 17**

<b>Due:</b> A Day in the Life of the University write-up and reflection
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*Week 5 Site as Universe-ity*

**M September 20**

*On universities:*

Ewell, Peter. 1998. "Who Do You Think You Are? The Art of the Institutional Reality Check." *University Business*: 20-21.

Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates. 1998. *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities*. Stony Brook, NY: State University of New York at Stony Brook for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. <http://naples.cc.sunysb.edu/Pres/boyer.nsf/>. (see "What is a Research University," 2-4; "An Overview" and "The University as Ecosystem", 1-10.

*For analyzing texts:*

Fairclough, Norman. "Assumptions." In *Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge, 2003: 55-61.

Strauss, Claudia. "Analyzing Discourse for Cultural Complexity." In Quinn, 203-242.

**W September 22**

<b>Due:</b> Reading university documents
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**F September 24**

<b>Due:</b> Project ideas, including identification of something to search for in archives
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*Week 6 Archive, inquiry, method, politics*

**M September 27**

The Primary Source Village

<http://www.library.uiuc.edu/village/primarysource/index.htm>

This is a tutorial on primary sources – what they are, how to find them, and what to do with them! Please review Modules 1, 2, and 3.

**NOTE: We will meet at the Student Life and Culture Archival Program**

<http://web.library.uiuc.edu/ahx/slc/>

(Archives Research Center, Room 105, 1707 S. Orchard Street, Urbana [222-7841])

**W September 29**

Social Science Research Council. "The Art of Writing Proposals: Some Candid Social Science Research Council Competitions."

[http://www.ssrc.org/fellowships/art\\_of\\_writing\\_proposals.page](http://www.ssrc.org/fellowships/art_of_writing_proposals.page)

Lewin, Ellen. "Confessions of a Reformed Grant Hustler." In *Out in the Field: Reflections of Gay and Lesbian Anthropologists*, edited by Ellen Lewin and William L. Leap, 111-127. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996.

<b>Due:</b> Report on archival document; revision of project ideas
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**F October 1**

<b>Due:</b> Commentary on Report on archival document and revision of project ideas
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Week 7 *The interview I*

**M-W October 4, 6**

Becker, "Sampling," 67-108.

Emerson, "Writing Up Fieldnotes II: Creating Scenes on the Page," 66-107.

Duneier, "New Uses of Sidewalks," 115-154.

Bourdieu, "The Order of Things," 60-76.

**W October 6**

<b>Due:</b> Interview and transcription
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**F October 8**

<b>Due:</b> Commentary on Interview and transcription
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Week 8 *The interview II*

**M-W October 11-13**

Bourdieu, "Understanding," 607-626.

Anderson, Kathryn and Dana C. Jack. "Learning to Listen": Interview Techniques and Analyses." In *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, edited by Sherna Berger Gluck and Daphne Patai, 11-26. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Briggs, Charles. "Questions for the Ethnographer: A Critical Examination of the Role of the Interview in Fieldwork." *Semiotica* 46-2/4 (1983): 233-261.

Briggs, Charles. "Interview." In *Key Terms in Language and Culture*, ed. Alessandro Duranti, 132-135. Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 2001.

Weiss, Robert. "Interviewing." In *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press, 1994: 61-119.

Duranti, Alessandro. "Transcription: From Writing to Digitized Images." In *Linguistic Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997: 122-161 (skim most of this, focusing on 137-161).

**W October 13**

<b>Due:</b> Progress report
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Week 9 *The interview III*



**M-W October 18, 20**

Duneier, "The Limits of Informal Social Control," 157-228

Quinn, Naomi. "How to Reconstruct Schemas People Share, from What They Say." In Quinn, 35-81.

Hill, Jane H. "Finding Culture in Narrative." In Quinn, 157-202.

**W October 20**

<b>Due:</b> Interview and analysis
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**F October 22**

<b>Due:</b> Commentary on Interview and analysis
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*Week 10 Beyond the interview: Focus groups, mapping, photographs*

**M-W October 25, 27**

Note: These readings will be divided among the class according to interest.

**Focus Groups:**

<http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU19.html>

<http://ag.arizona.edu/fcs/cyfernet/cyfar/focus.htm>

Morgan, David L. *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 1988: 1-17.

**Mapping Place:**

Nelson, Laura C. "Special Places: Neighborhoods, Memories, Movement." In *Measured Excess: Status, Gender, and Consumer Nationalism in South Korea*. New York: Columbia University Press: 60-66.

Lynch, Kevin. 1960. "The Image of the Environment." In *The Image of the City*. Cambridge: MIT Press: 1-13.

Mehl, Garrett with Gerry Stimson, Leanne Riley and Andrew Ball, "Mapping Where Tobacco Is Marketed and Used." In *Youth Tobacco: Rapid Assessment and Response Guide*. Geneva: World Health Organization: Tobacco Free Initiative and Department of Child and Adolescent  
[http://www.who.int/hpr/youth/html/yt\\_rar/Chapter\\_9.html#9.8](http://www.who.int/hpr/youth/html/yt_rar/Chapter_9.html#9.8)  
 (Also offers helpful guides to focus groups, surveys, visual methods and additional research methods.)

**Mapping and Kinship and Social Exchange:**

Crane, Julia and Michael Angrosino. "Charting Kinship." In *Field Projects in Anthropology* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., edited by Julia Crane and Michael Angrosino. Long Grove, Ill., Waveland Press, 1992: 44-52.

Johnson, Allen. "The Exchange Orientation." In *Quantification in Cultural Anthropology: An Introduction to Research Design*. Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1978: 96-117.

**Time Allocation:**

Gross, Daniel. "Time Allocation: A Tool for the Study of Cultural Behavior." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 13 (1984): 519-558.

**Photography:**

Pink, Sarah. "Photography in Ethnographic Research." In *Doing Visual Ethnography: Images, Media and Representation in Research*, 49-76. London: SAGE, 2001.

*Week 11 Beyond the interview II: Surveys and numbers*



**M-W November 1, 3**

Fink, Arlene and Jacqueline Kosecoff. *How to Conduct Surveys: Step-by-Step Guide* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Thousand Oaks, Cal.: SAGE, 1998: 9-26, 36-38, 60-62.

Bernard, H. Russell. "Questionnaires and Survey Research." In *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Walnut Creek, Cal.: AltaMira Press, 1995: 256-288.

*Some national numbers that might be of interest*

National Center for Education Statistics ([www.nces.ed.gov](http://www.nces.ed.gov)): (under postsecondary button) [www.nces.ed.gov/surveys](http://www.nces.ed.gov/surveys) (longitudinal surveys on students) and [www.nces.ed.gov/ipeds](http://www.nces.ed.gov/ipeds) (census-type data on colleges and universities).

Measuring Up 2000: State Report Cards (The National Center for Public Policy in Higher Education) ([www.highereducation.org](http://www.highereducation.org)).

*Some local numbers that might be of interest*

Management and Information main web site: <http://www.dmi.uiuc.edu>  
 Campus Profile: <http://www.dmi.uiuc.edu/cp/>  
 Student enrollment reports: <http://www.dmi.uiuc.edu/stuenr/>  
 Course Information System: <http://www.dmi.uiuc.edu/course>

**W November 3**

<b>Due:</b> Fieldwork techniques I
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**F November 5**

<b>Due:</b> Commentary on Fieldwork techniques I
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Week 12 Putting It Together**M-W November 8, 10**

Emerson, "Pursuing Members' Meanings," 108-141.

Duneier, "Regulation and the People Who Work the Streets," "The Construction of Decency," "Afterward by Hakim Hasan," 231-330.

Metcalf, Peter. Selections from *They Lie, We Lie: Getting on with Anthropology*. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.

**W November 10**

<b>Due:</b> Fieldwork techniques II
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**F November 12**

<b>Due:</b> Commentary on Fieldwork techniques II
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Week 13 Power and possibility**M November 15**

Fortun, Kim. "Figuring Out Ethnography." In Faubion, 167-183

**W November 17**

Anthropology meetings  
No class

<b>Due:</b> Memo on power relations
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**M-W November 22-24**  
**Thanksgiving week**  
No class

*Week 14 Thinking through*

**M-W November 29, December 1**

Heider, Karl G. "The Rashomon Effect: When Ethnographers Disagree."  
*American Anthropologist* 90 (March 1988): 73-81.

Sanjek, Roger. "On Ethnographic Validity." In *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990: 385-418.

**T November 30**

EUI Conference, 3-8 p.m.

**W December 1**

<b>Due:</b> Findings
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*Week 15 Ends, beginnings*

**M December 6**

Locke, Lawrence F., Waneen Wyrick Spirduso and Stephen J. Silverman, "The Function of the Proposal." In *Proposals that Work: A Guide for Planning Dissertations and Grant Proposals*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE, 2007: 3-23.

**W December 8**

Student presentations

<b>Due:</b> Proposal
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<sup>i</sup> In this essay on fieldwork and connectivity, Faubion says (earlier), "More emphatically, the point is that only connecting is neither in fact nor in principle anthropologically adequate. Which connections the anthropologist makes—to the human subjects under investigation, to subjects and scenes and sites already investigated, to analytical apparatuses, to anthropology as a discipline, to the world at large, and by no means least to herself—are also of critical moment to the best pursuit of any anthropological project... (145, in Faubion).

<sup>ii</sup> Phrase snatched from the felicitous title of George E. Marcus' article, "The Unbearable Slowness of Ethnography."

<sup>iii</sup> Paraphrased from *EUI in Short*, <http://www.eui.illinois.edu/docs/EUIinShort.mov>. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is one of 96 U.S. doctorate-granting institutions categorized as a RU/VH (Research University/very high research activity) by the Carnegie Foundation. See <http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/descriptions/basic.php>.

<sup>iv</sup> We will only publicly archive texts for which we have the author's (your) permission, of course.

<sup>v</sup> I wrote this line soon after reading Kim Fortun, "Figuring Out Ethnography," in *Fieldwork Is Not What It Used to Be*, 167-183; in it, I later realized, she writes, "A good text to bring in

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here ... is Paul Berliner's *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (1994). The key argument of the book is that the play of improvisation requires extraordinary discipline and structured preparation" (177).

<sup>vi</sup> See "Plagiarism lines blur for students in digital age":

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/02/education/02cheat.html?scp=1&sq=for%20students%20in%20internet%20age.%20no%20shame&st=cse>

<sup>vii</sup> University Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign,

<http://www.library.illinois.edu/learn/tutorials/citation.html> (accessed 10 August 2010).