

Soc. 535/435
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CRN 35019/35924

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Ethnomethodology

Course Description

In society, the production of order* is the local achievement and abiding preoccupation of every participant. This advanced course on Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis will take up topics and methods in the study of the production of social order* in local settings. In our work we are captivated by *the investigation of the actually lived details* of ordinary microsocial interaction, and we are oriented to describing *just how* people organize their practical activities *together*.

It is expected that all students have come to the class with some expertise in the field already (at a minimum, Soc 335). This is a time-consuming seminar requiring the completion of extremely challenging readings, many of which *will have to be read twice*, and two hands-on field research projects. This is not the course for *beginning* these studies! Undergraduates who do not have the background or prerequisites are *welcome* in Soc 335 – Interaction and Social Order, the more appropriate place to commence these studies.

* The asterisk indicates that the "order" under investigation is always and necessarily *in the process* of being produced, its production is ongoing, it never settles into an essence, and it is *necessarily* indeterminate. (In fact, its indeterminacy is a principal resource for participants in their own practical organizational and micropolitical projects.) The asterisk means that we never become too settled upon our ideas and we are suspicious of any propaganda, including our own. Each and every reification is open to deconstruction, but not by our *theoretical* skills (the accomplished craft of any sociology student and the pride of all conventional sociological traditions, whether positivist, Marxist, feminist or symbolic interactionist): ethnomethodology's radicalism consists of examining *the practical social interactional work* of the parties who staff the scenes and who produce the social order*, meanings, language, and rules for any occasion.

Course Evaluation - Undergraduates

There will be two midterms, one written worth 25 points and one oral worth 20 points. There will be two Research Projects, which should be approached as opportunities to have some fun while doing social research:

Project 1 – The Reflexivity of Interpreting a Sketch Map

Sketch maps are occasioned maps that are drawn by friends or associates to give directions for finding a location (the party, a surf spot, a restaurant, etc.) . In this project, students will work in teams of *three persons*. Find a friend to choose an obscure or difficult-to-locate place and draw a sketch map of how to get there. The three team members are to drive to the location (one driving, one reading the map, and one operating an audio recorder) and record their process of *making sense of the map*. The friend should be at the destination (the trailhead for the hike, the picnic bench, the difficult-to-locate restaurant, etc.), preferably with a cellphone. [If you cannot locate a friend like this, one of the three students can play this role.]

Especially, you want to capture the points at which interpreting the map is difficult or ambiguous. What possible alternatives existed, and how did you decide which possibility was the right one? Was the map a good one or not? Why? Are sketch maps *necessarily* vague? Are cartographers' maps, such as a topographic map, vague? While driving and interpreting the sketch map, you want to be sure to vocalize as much as you can, so that the tape captures as much of your in-the-course thinking as possible and so that *you will be able to observe and study what you did* when you review the tape after the event. You **must** use an external microphone so that the noise of the car's engine is less disruptive.

It is impossible to speak about reflexivity generally, one can understand it much more clearly and evidently when one locates an actual situation in which reflexivity is operative (reflexivity is a phenomenon that will be explained during the class lectures). So this is a «perspicuous» setting in which the reflexive work of understanding something – in this case, interpreting a sketch map – can be made visible for sociological analysis.

We are interested in just the ways that the details of the map, in and as the *in vivo* work of following them, take on their definiteness of sense. That is, the correspondence of the map to the geographic objects, and of the geographic objects to the map, will constantly be in flux, and your processes of understanding must tame this 'movement' in the possible meanings and interpretations of the

sketch. In sum, what “work” is getting done while you are reading your map? (The mind works very quickly, so you need to focus carefully to be able to notice each detail of what you are actually doing.)

The developing *way(s)* the map is made to come out over the course of the journey should be discussed in a 3-5 page paper, with particular attention paid to the definiteness of the things that the map refers to along with the way (how do they gain or lose any definiteness?). The way that the map's details collect their references from the geography that these same details make explicit is everything that the term “reflexivity” could be. Also, pay attention to the *in situ* production of devices for communicating clearly with your partner. A list of team members is due on **April 7**. Copies of the audio tape (in either analog or digital form) must be turned in on **April 14**. A typed transcript of five minutes of some *verbatim* conversation located on the tape must be turned in on **April 16**. A 3-5 page typewritten paper (double-spaced, no smaller than 12 point font) will be turned in on **April 23**. [Worth 15 points.]

Project 2 – Organizing the objectivity of coffee tasting and maintaining the intelligibility of the formal descriptors for taste

This is an innovative and time-consuming project that will require creativity and daring on the part of all students. Past classes have had great fun with this project. In teams of four, students will videotape and describe approximately one hour of coffee tasters who are blind-tasting samples of coffee as they speak about them using technical descriptive terms for coffee tastes (terms like «round», «fruity», «medium bodied», «acidic», etc.). Students will examine how meanings for these terms are made objectively available, how the meanings of some terms are stabilized, and students may locate instances when the meaning of a word or descriptive term *shifts* over the course of being used.

Our focus is the local production of specificity and clarity about the meaning of formal descriptions for the taste of coffee, terms whose sense and reference are subjective but actual. Some terms may begin their career as general or vague and gain more specific sense as their application is routized and more expertise is gained in the local setting. Students are advised to pay particular attention to how the application of these terms can organize and enhance the tasting experience, and can even serve as a tutorial for expanding each taster's ability to taste. Also, students should pay attention to any reflexivity of understanding they discover. Students will analyze the hour-long video digitally in their teams, produce a 6-7

page paper, and present their study to the class at the end of the course. [Worth 40 points.]

Schedule for Project 2:

April 30 – hand in sheet with members of project team listed

May 19 – hand in written transcripts

June 2 – *Final Paper Due*

June 2 & 4 –Class Presentations

Please note: late papers (including late transcripts) will receive *two points off* per day late.

Because of the field work that is a component of these projects, students are encouraged to begin the work *as early as possible* and to consult the professor as *much* and as *often* as necessary. On occasion, workshop time will be made available during class; students should plan in advance for this so they can use this time productively (and not depart the classroom early). The professor will always happily make himself available for consultation pertaining to the work of analyzing the students' tapes. There will be no course final.

Attendance

Students will receive a one point reduction for each day they miss classes, or arrive late, or depart early. Attendance will be measured at the time when during the class session the roll is taken. This means that students who arrive after (or depart before) the roll has been taken will not be considered present that day.

Total Points – 100

Final Note: papers with grammatical or spelling errors will be graded down. (Students weak in grammar are advised to read *Eats, Shoots and Leaves*, see below.)

Readings

Course Texts:

Harold Garfinkel, *Ethnomethodology's Program*

Luigi Odello, *Espresso Italiano Tasting* (available in class)

Reading Packet

Recommended:

Lynne Truss, *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* (in General Books section of the bookstore).

Ethnomethodology Syllabus

3/31	Introduction	
4/2	What is Ethnomethodology?	Garfinkel, <i>Ethnomethodology's Program</i> , pp 65-68, 91-99, and 114-20.
4/7	Instructed Actions A	Garfinkel, <i>Ethnomethodology's Program</i> , Chapt. 6, pp 197-218 (to be read twice) Project 1 team sheet to be handed in.
4/9	Instructed Actions B and Giving Accounts	Heritage, <i>Garfinkel & Ethnomethodology</i> , pp 150-57
4/14	Ethnomethodology vs. Reductionist Analyses	Garfinkel, <i>Ethnomethodology's Program</i> , Chapt. 4, pp 145-168 Copy of tape due
4/16	Conversation Analysis	John Heritage, "The Conversation Analytic Approach," 241-65 Lieberman, "Hermeneutics of Intercultural Communication," pp 171-81. Copy of transcript due
4/21	Intercultural Communication	Lieberman, "The Hermeneutics of Intercultural Communication" pp. 181-215.
4/23	Orders of Everyday Life	<u>Project 1 Paper Due</u>
4/28	Ethno's Methods	Garfinkel, <i>Ethnomethodology's Program</i> , Chapt. 5, pp 169-193
4/30	The Natural Organization of a Chemistry Class	Garfinkel, <i>Ethnomethodology's Program</i> , Chapt. 7, pp. 219-244 Project 2 team sheet to be handed in. WRITTEN MIDTERM.
5/5	Studying the Local Orderliness of Queues	Garfinkel, <i>Ethnomethodology's Program</i> , Chapt. 8, pp 245-261 Odello, <i>Espresso Italian Tasting</i> (entire)
5/7	Three Sociologies Compared	Howard Becker, David Sudnow & Alfred Schutz on jazz music Finish <i>Espresso Italian Tasting</i> Begin Work on Project 2.
5/12	Workshop: Multimedia Data Analysis	ORAL MIDTERMS (20 pts) <i>In-class Workshops on Project 2</i>
5/14	Workshop: Multimedia Data Analysis	ORAL MIDTERMS <i>In-class Workshops on Project 2</i>
5/19	Local Practices of Jurors	Garfinkel, "Rules of Correct Decision Making/Jurors" pp 104-15 Transcripts for Project 2 due.
5/21	The Reflexivity of Accounts	Garfinkel & Sacks, "On Formal Structures of Practical Actions"
5/26	Multimedia Lab Work	WORK ON PROJECT 2
5/28	Multimedia Lab Work	WORK ON PROJECT 2
6/2	Class Presentations of Projects	<u>Project 2 Paper Due</u>
6/4	Class Presentations of Projects	& <i>Course Review</i>