

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY
Myra Kraft Transitional Year Program

TYP 9a: Writing
Fall 2014

**INTRODUCTION TO ETHNOGRAPHY: WRITING ABOUT CULTURE,
LANGUAGE, AND RACE**

Instructor: Doug Bafford
Email: bafford@brandeis.edu
Office Location: Goldfarb Library, 217
Office Hours: Monday 8:00-9:00 PM and
Thursday 11:00 AM-12:00 PM
Mailbox: Academic Services, Usdan

Tutor: Deanna Miserendino
Email: dmiseren@brandeis.edu
Office Hours and Location: TBD
Mailbox: Academic Services, Usdan

Class Meeting Time: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday 9:00-9:50 AM
Location: Olin-Sang American Civilization Center, Room 116

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In this course we will develop academic writing skills through the medium of *ethnography*, a term that combines the Greek roots for “people” and “writing.” Thus, the kind of writing we will both read and produce will be that which describes the cultures, languages, and ideas of human communities. Within such a broad field, this introductory semester will focus particularly on (1) the idea of “culture” and cultural difference, (2) variation in speaking styles among different social groups, and (3) culturally constructed notions of “race” and “ethnicity.” In learning the foundations of ethnography, will develop the ability to write concise and formal essays suitable to an academic environment. We will refine our writing processes and focus attention on the elements that constitute good, clear writing, including sound organization, insightful theses, extensive editing, and grammatical correctness. By the end of the course you will be able to craft two of the three types of assignments characteristic of the Brandeis writing program: a close reading of a text and a lens essay of two texts. Since ethnography is a primary tool of the formal academic study of anthropology, we will also learn anthropological concepts that will help us understand the diversity and unity across the human experience.

REQUIRED READINGS:

The following required books are provided by the program. All other required and optional readings will be available online via the course site, LATTE.

Norma Mendoza-Denton, *Homegirls: Language and Cultural Practice among Latina Youth Gangs*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. 2008.

Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*, Sixth Edition with 2009 MLA and 2010 APA Updates. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's. 2010.

William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, Fourth Edition. London: Longman. 1999 [1918].

COURSE GOALS:

By the end of this semester, you should be able to

- Write well-organized academic essays
- Produce written work without substantial grammatical error
- Argue insightful, non-obvious, and well-motivated theses in your papers
- Approach college writing assignment—in this class and others—with confidence
- Explain different anthropological and popular notions of “culture”
- Interpret the social significance given to language differences
- Differentiate the concepts of “race” and “ethnicity”
- Examine the social effects of racial and ethnic discrimination from a social scientific perspective

CLASS POLICIES:

In order to create the most effective learning environment possible and for the consideration of your fellow students, please follow these simple guidelines while in class:

1. Arrive on-time having read the assigned readings and completed any written work due that day.
2. Turn off all cell phones and other electronic communication devices. If you absolutely need to have your cell phone on (e.g., you are waiting for an important call), please let me know at the start of class.
3. Always have a notebook and writing utensil in front of you. We will be writing in *every class*, and having quick access to something with which to jot down notes will help cultivate a habit of writing, which will serve you well in other coursework.
4. Allow for an atmosphere of respectful academic discourse. This course—and anthropology in general—engages in potentially controversial themes on which many people (including me) have strong opinions. Try your best to debate respectfully and sympathetically, even when you disagree with your classmates or with me. We want to allow everyone to express his or her perspective in a safe yet academically critical setting. You may find it helpful to think of it this way: We are going to debate *ideas*, not other people.
5. Ask questions about anything (terms, concepts, history, etc.) you do not know or are unsure of. Even if it seems like a silly question, chances are other people have the same uncertainty.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Your primary requirements for this class include two major papers: the close reading essay and the lens essay. For the first assignment, you will conduct a close analysis of a cultural “text,” broadly construed. This essay of four to five double-spaced pages should engage deeply with a cultural practice, work of literature, essay, or other cultural phenomenon that will be selected during class. For the second assignment, you will use one text as a lens through which to view/interpret another. That is, you will use two written works, one of which will tell you something new about the other. This essay will be between

six and seven double-spaced pages. More detailed guidelines for both of these assignments will be handed out closer to their due dates.

Since editing is the heart of good writing, the editorial process for each of these main papers will last longer than the initial writing of it. A first (albeit *complete*) rough draft will be due three or four weeks before the final version is to be turned in. After I provide feedback on the **ethnographic content** of your writing (including the organization of ideas, depth of argument, etc.), you will produce a second rough draft two weeks later. I will also be grading this second rough draft and returning it to you to correct **grammatical and mechanical errors**, after which you will submit a polished final version. Since there are only two major essays to write in this class and you will have a significant amount of time to work on each one, my expectations are high. I will provide support at each stage of the process to help you meet these expectations.

In addition to the two primary assignments, you will be asked to write four “mini-essays.” These one-to-two page assignments will be scrutinized less intensively than the close reading and lens essays. They are an opportunity for you to practice your writing skills and to reflect back on course themes. For those who have not written academic essays in a while, they may also serve as a way to get used to writing again.

There will also be an in-class midterm exam covering the course material discussed in the first half of the term. You will have the full class period to complete a series of short-response and essay prompts.

PAPER FORMAT AND SUBMISSION:

The presentation of your written work is an important component of college writing that we will develop in this course. *All* written assignments (with the exception of in-class exercises and exams), even rough drafts, will be expected to follow the following guidelines. These rules may seem arbitrary or complicated, but they will enhance the professionalism of your work. (We will discuss how to format each one in class.)

Papers must be typed and checked for spelling and grammatical mistakes to the best of your ability. They should be printed on white 8 ½-by-11 inch paper with **1-inch margins**, stapled in the upper left-hand corner, double-spaced, and in 12-point Times New Roman font. Even though Microsoft Word automatically adds extra space after each paragraph, kindly remove these before printing your paper. Please also include your last name and the page number in the header of each page. All references to material not your own **MUST** be cited according to MLA format both in the text and at the end (i.e., a “Works Cited” list). Every submitted work should list at the top of the first page, in order, your name, your instructor’s name, the course number, the date you finished it, and a unique title. A sample of this format is available on LATTE.

All written assignments must be submitted in hard copy and *on-time*. For each day (or portion thereof) that your paper is late, your grade will be reduced by one-third of a letter (e.g., from B+ to a B). This rule applies to both the rough drafts and the final version. You have plenty of time to prepare each draft, so I recommend that you start early and avoid beginning the paper the night before. I’ve read countless assignments and essays; I can tell immediately when students rushed through the writing process at the last minute. (This means *please* remember to read through your entire draft *at least* once

before printing it. I will share some stories about this in class.) If I do not think you have spent a reasonable amount of time on a draft, your lack of effort will be reflected in your grade.

READINGS:

In this as in other college classes, you are expected to come to class having carefully read *all* the assigned materials. Due to our small class size, I expect everyone to contribute to discussion at each class meeting. If you have not closely read the materials for the day, it will be noticeable, and your participation grade will be affected. Since most of our readings will be available electronically on LATTE, many students find it helpful to print them out to annotate while they read and to refer to during class. While you are not *required* to print out all the readings, if you do not have them in front of you during class, I expect you to have taken notes on some of the important passages, and I may call on you to answer questions about them. On a lighter note, I want you to see the readings for this course not as a burden but as a chance to explore new worlds; ethnographic writing can be a lot of fun, and I hope you enjoy yourselves as we tackle fascinating topics!

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

Attendance at all classes is expected as a basic requirement of the course. You cannot learn this material if you are not present in class, since the core of what we will be covering will be brought out through discussion and many important points are not covered in the readings. Multiple absences will be addressed with Erika Smith, the MKTYP director. Furthermore, while attendance will play a crucial part of your grade, there is more to being “present” than simply showing up. Your mental presence at and participation in each class period is a crucial component of this class and your participation grade.

WEEKLY TUTORIALS:

Each student’s writing is unique, and to address your strengths and weaknesses as a writer, you will meet with the assigned tutor individually for a half-hour each week. This is considered part of the requirements for this course, and your absence at these sessions will be considered as an absence from class. If you must miss a meeting, you and the tutor can coordinate to reschedule for another time later in the week or the following week. However, multiple missed, rescheduled, or tardy meetings will result in a reduction of your attendance/participation grade. Please come to each session with copies of your recent and/or current assignments so that you will have material to work with.

GRADING:

You will be evaluated based on the quality of your assignments, the degree of improvement throughout the semester, and the value of your participation in class. Each component of the course will be weighted as follows:

Close Reading Essay.....	20%
Lens Essay.....	30%
Midterm Exam.....	15%
Mini-Essays and In-Class Assignments.....	15%

Attendance/Participation (including class *and* tutorials).....20%

Your final grade will be calculated based on the average score of all these categories and will fall on the following scale, as defined by the university:

- A.....High Distinction (for exceptional work)
- A-
- B+
- B.....Distinction (for very good work)
- B-
- C+
- C.....Satisfactory (for acceptable work)
- C-
- D+
- D.....Passing, but Unsatisfactory (for poor work)
- D-
- E.....Failing Grade

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

You are expected to be familiar with and to follow the university’s policies on academic integrity and plagiarism (see <http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/sdc/ai>). Faculty may refer any suspected instances of alleged dishonesty to the Office of Student Development and Conduct. Instances of academic dishonesty may result in sanctions, including but not limited to failing grades being issued, educational programs, and other consequences.

WRITING CENTER:

One of the best resources at Brandeis to improve your writing is the on-campus Writing Center, located in the Goldfarb Library, room 107. They offer free 45-minute sessions to help improve the organization, conciseness, and impact of your essays. (They will also work, to a lesser extent, on recurring grammatical concerns.) To register for a session, go to <http://www.brandeis.edu/writingprogram/writingcenter/register.html> or stop by during their evening drop-in hours (Monday through Thursday). If you make an appointment, please be sure to keep it, since they have had problems with some students not showing up in the past. Students who attend a full session (remember to ask for a sheet of paper confirming you were there!) will receive a 24-hour extension on ONE of their drafts (either rough draft or final). On a final note, you will occasionally find me working in the Writing Center. While you may sign up with me, note that this will not count for the 24-hour extension, and I discourage it. A big part of the Writing Center is to get as many *different* perspectives on your writing as possible. (Remember you can make an appointment with me whenever you’d like.)

CLASS SCHEDULE:

<i>Class Unit</i>	<i>Day</i>	<i>Reading Due</i>	<i>Writing Due</i>
Week 1: Prologue – Approaching Cultural Difference	August 28	None	
<u>PART I: Culture</u>			
Week 2: Introduction – What is Culture, and Who Has It?	September 3	Syllabus Horace Miner, “Body Ritual among the Nacirema” Robert Lavenda and Emily Schultz, <i>Core Concepts in Cultural Anthropology</i> , Reading Ethnography	
	September 4	Bronislaw Malinowski, <i>Argonauts of the Western Pacific</i> Norma Mendoza-Denton, <i>Homegirls</i> , Introduction and Chapter 2 Robert Lavenda and Emily Schultz, <i>Core Concepts in Cultural Anthropology</i> , Chapter 1 (optional)	
Week 3: Variations among Human Cultures (Or, How Are We All Different?)	September 8	Bruce Knaft, <i>The Gebusi</i> , Chapter 3	
	September 10	Diana Hacker, <i>A Writer’s Reference</i> , A1 and C1	
	September 11		Mini-Essay – Ethnographic Critique
Week 4: Similarities among Human Cultures (Or, How Are We All the Same?)	September 15	John Monaghan and Peter Just, “Bee Larvae and Onion Soup: Culture”	
	September 17	Diana Hacker, <i>A Writer’s Reference</i> , A2 and MLA-1	

	September 18	Ralph Linton, "100% American"	Mini-Essay – Comparing and Contrasting Culture Concepts
<u>PART II: Language</u>			
Week 5: The Scientific Study of Language (Introductory Linguistics)	September 22	William O'Grady, "Language: A Preview" (recommended) Robert Lavenda and Emily Schultz, <i>Core Concepts in Cultural Anthropology</i> , Chapter 3 (optional)	
	September 23	Diana Hacker, <i>A Writer's Reference</i> , B1 and B2	
	September 24	Franz Boas, "On Alternating Sounds"	
Week 6: The Social Dimensions of Language – Sociolinguistics and Linguistic Anthropology	September 29	Norma Mendoza-Denton, <i>Homegirls</i> , Chapter 7	Mini-Essay – My Language Genealogy
	October 1	Diana Hacker, <i>A Writer's Reference</i> , C2 and C3	
	October 2	Janet McIntosh, "Mobile Phones and Mipoho's Prophecy: The Powers and Dangers of Flying Language"	
Week 7: Language and Thought	October 6	Review Part II Readings So Far	Short Exercise – Connection between Two Readings
	October 8	Benjamin Whorf, "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behaviour to Language"	
Week 8: Language vs. Dialect	October 13	<i>New York Times</i> , Dialect Map Activity Diana Hacker, <i>A Writer's Reference</i> , P3, P4, and P7	Close Reading Draft #1
	October 15	Norma Mendoza-Denton, <i>Homegirls</i> , Chapter 6	

Week 9: Language as Lived Experience	October 20	Diana Hacker, <i>A Writer's Reference</i> , E3 and W5	
	October 22	MIDTERM EXAMINATION	
	October 23	Norma Mendoza-Denton, <i>Homegirls</i> , Chapter 10	
<u>PART III: Race and Ethnicity</u>			
Week 10: The Biological Fiction of "Race"	October 27		Bring two copies of current close reading draft
	October 29		Close Reading Draft #2
	October 30	Jared Diamond, "Race without Color" AAA Statement on Race	
Week 11: Race vs. Ethnicity	November 3		
	November 5	Diana Hacker, <i>A Writer's Reference</i> , S6 and S7	
	November 6		Close Reading Final Draft
Week 12: Race as Lived Experience	November 10	Karen Brodtkin, <i>How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America</i>	
	November 12	Norma Mendoza-Denton, <i>Homegirls</i> , Chapter 1; Chapter 3 (skim)	
	November 13	Diana Hacker, <i>A Writer's Reference</i> , E5 and G3	
Week 13: Alternative Racial Schemes	November 17	Michael Baran, "'Girl, You Are Not Morena. We Are Negras!': Questioning the Concept of 'Race' in Southern Bahia, Brazil"	
	November 19	Sample Lens Essay (optional)	Lens Essay Outline
	November 20	Philippe Bourgois, "If You're Not Black You're White: A History of Ethnic Relations in St. Louis" (skim)	
Week 14: Finishing Up Race	November 24	Diana Hacker, <i>A Writer's Reference</i> , P1 and P2	Lens Essay Draft #1

Week 15: Culture, Language, and Race	December 1	Norma Mendoza-Denton, <i>Homegirls</i> , Chapter 4 (optional)	
	December 3	Doug Bafford, “Legitimizing Racism: The Linguistic Construction of Group Identity and Ideology in White Nationalist Speech”	Lens Essay Draft #2
	December 4		
Week 16: Epilogue – Wrapping Up	December 8	Franz Boas, “Race and Progress” Franz Boas, “Advances in Methods of Teaching” (highly recommended)	Lens Essay Final Draft
Final Exam Week – Tuesday, December 16 at 1:30			Mini-Essay – Reflections on Writing Mid-Year

*****NB: This schedule and syllabus are subject to change as we move through the semester.*****