EAS 630: Preparing for International Fieldwork

Winter 2023
Class Meets 8:00 to 5:00 PM Sat & Sunday, March 18th/19th
Class Meeting Room: 1046 Dana Building

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Office hours: By Appointment Only.

Course outline
This new one-credit seminar class is intended for students with limited fieldwork experiences, and who will likely be working on an international field project (MS project, thesis, dissertation, etc) over the summer. The course is designed as a weekend workshop and has three main elements, with the following topic areas. Part I: Conceptualizing International Fieldwork; Introduction to the class; Recognizing Positionality and Privilege in Fieldwork; Ethics in International Fieldwork and Research; Safety in International Fieldwork. Part II: Operationalizing Fieldwork Under The ‘Rough and Tumble’ Of Everyday Life: Survey Instruments, Recruiting Research Assistants & Translators; Arrival, Field notes, and Departures; Participatory Methods in Mapping, Citizen Science and other Techniques; Navigating Bureaucracies & Dealing with Crises. Part III: Reflections On Fieldwork: Key Lessons and Advice For Students: Roundtable Panel Discussion with Faculty. MS Thesis, Project, and Ph.D. Students

Course learning goals
There are five main learning goals and objectives for this class. The overall objective of the class is to provide greater context to some of the less examined dimensions of international fieldwork. The first goal is to more formally operationalize the shift from student to researcher in an international context. Second, to integrate key lessons from researchers who have published critical insights into the practices of doing international fieldwork. Third, to think about the advantages and disadvantages of different fieldwork techniques over others. Fourth, to refine the research proposal and think about going from conceptualizing the research to operationalizing the research. Finally, to gain valuable lessons from people on campus who have undergone this process previously and under varied disciplinary and regional fieldwork contexts. Collectively, these five goals impart key components of international fieldwork preparation.

Course prerequisites
There are no course prerequisites, but students are highly recommended that they work on a proposal for their international fieldwork. This can include a Masters’s project proposal, thesis proposal, pre-dissertation proposal, etc.

Course format
Classes are discussion-oriented, active learning exercises, and draw heavily on readings from the literature (both the required and in some cases, the supplemental readings). Some discussions will be led by students and will involve the preparation of a carefully thought-out set of discussion questions or discussion points. Material for the handouts can be drawn from the readings (e.g. key figures) or other sources. All students are expected to do the readings and to be ready to discuss them in class.
Academic Misconduct
Students are advised to thoroughly examine the student advocacy and judicial affairs website to understand what is meant by academic misconduct. The website can be accessed from here (http://www.rackham.umich.edu/policies/academic_and_professional_integrity/).

Course readings
Additional readings (required): Will be provided as needed as pdf files on CANVAS

Grading

| Seminar Participation & Readings Responses | 50% |
| Fieldwork Preparation, Timeline & Logistics: | 50% |
| Total: | 100% |

Final grades are based on a total percentage for the term. Grade cut-off points (in terms of percentages) are as follows: A+ (100%), A (95.00 to 99.99%), A- (90.00 to 94.99%), B+ (87.00 to 89.99%), B (83.00 to 86.99%), B- (80.00 to 82.99%), C+ (77.00 to 79.99%), C (73.00 to 76.99%), C- (70.00 to 72.99%), D+ (67.00 to 69.99%), D (63.00 to 66.99%), D- (60.00 to 62.99%), F (50.00 to 59.99%), F (40.00 to 49.99%).

*Tentative Schedule
* Note that during the course some of the topics and readings may have their dates changed, or contents altered. I will try to provide as much warning of changes as possible.

PART I: CONCEPTUALIZING INTERNATIONAL FIELDWORK

Pre-class Reading


Saturday, March 18th

8:00-8:30 AM A. Introduction to the class

Agenda
1. Overview of topic materials
2. Setting standards for the workshop/ground rules for participation
3. Student Introductions
4. Setting the stage for what international fieldwork involves

8:30 AM – 10:30 AM B. Recognizing Positionality and Privilege in Fieldwork

Agenda
1. Lecture on transitioning from student to researcher 'in the field'
2. Understanding ‘power/knowledge’ under different contexts
3. The art and science of fieldwork and positionality
4. Ninety-minute discussion of key required readings (below)


**Supplementary Readings:**


10:30 – 10:45 AM

**Break**

10:45 – 11:45 AM

**C. Ethics in International Fieldwork and Research**

Agenda

1. 20 min lecture on transitioning from student to researcher ‘in the field’
2. Ethics in fieldwork: Some key rights and responsibilities
3. Discussion of key required readings (below)


**Supplementary Readings:**


11:45 – 12:45 PM  
**D. Safety in International Fieldwork**

**Agenda**
1. Registering travel and insurance
2. Thinking through transport, logistics, and planning
3. Culture, cognition, and care
4. Discussion of Key Required Readings (below)


**Supplementary Readings:**


12:45 – 1:30 PM  
**Lunch**

**PART II: OPERATIONALIZING FIELDWORK UNDER THE ‘ROUGH AND TUMBLE OF EVERYDAY LIFE**

1:30 – 3:30 PM  
**E. Survey Instruments, Research Assistants & Translators**

**Agenda**
1. Participatory Rural/Rapid Appraisals and Ethnographies
2. Pre-testing Survey Instruments
3. Ensuring duplicates, digital preservation, and photography
4. Recruiting and Paying Research Assistants & Translators
5. Small-group exercise (20 mins) on working with translators
6. Discussion of Key Required Readings (below)


**Supplementary Readings:**


3:30 – 3:45 PM  Break

3:45 – 4:45 PM  F. Arrival, Field notes, and Departures

Agenda
1. Setting up expectations
2. Taking field notes
3. Using field notes
4. Preparing to leave the field
5. Using field notes back on campus

Supplementary Readings:


4:45 – 5:00 PM  Summarize key Lessons from Day 1

Sunday, March 19th

9:00 – 10:30 AM  G. Participatory Methods in Mapping, Citizen Science, and other Techniques
Agenda
1. Learning how to collect GPS Data (outdoor field exercise)
2. Indigenous Knowledge
3. Learning how to use and deploy participatory mapping, story maps, and other participatory exercises
4. Thinking about citizen science: opportunities and limitations
5. Discussion of key readings (required)


Supplementary Readings:


10:30 – 10:45AM

Break

10:45 – 12:45 AM

H. Navigating Bureaucracies & Dealing with Crises

Agenda
1. Research Permits, Government Permissions, and Academic Affiliations
2. Dealing with Power
3. Radical changes to the research design
4. Small-group exercise (20 mins) on role-playing crises
5. Discussion of Key Required Readings (below)


**Supplementary Readings:**


12:45 – 1:30 PM   Lunch

**PART III: REFLECTIONS ON FIELDWORK: KEY LESSONS AND ADVICE FOR STUDENTS**

1:30 – 3:30 PM   I. Roundtable Panel Discussion with Faculty, MS Thesis, Project, and Ph.D. Students

Tentative Panellists:

Omolade Adunbi (Director & Professor, African Studies Center, UM)
Shobita Parthasarathy (Professor & Director, Science Technology and Public Policy)
Julie Hui (Assistant Professor, School of Information)
Amna Batool (Ph.D. Student, School of Information)
Justine Davis (Assistant Professor, Afro-American and African Studies)
Ember McCoy (Ph.D. Candidate, SEAS)

3:30 – 3:45 PM   Break

3:45 – 4:30 PM   End of class wrap up and summarize Key Lessons from Days 1 & 2

**FINAL ASSIGNMENT: PREPARATION/REFINEMENT OF PROPOSAL AND TIMELINE/LOGISTICS FOR FIELDWORK (50% OF FINAL GRADE)**