

## Approaches to Musical Ethnography<sup>1</sup>

ETH 480, Fall 2018

M 9-12, ET 12

Class site: <http://anaar.digitalscholar.rochester.edu/>

Professor: Anaar Desai-Stephens

Email: [ADesai-Stephens@esm.rochester.edu](mailto:ADesai-Stephens@esm.rochester.edu)

Office: ET 401

Office hours: By appointment.

- What does it mean to do *musical* ethnography?
- What kinds of insights and knowledge does ethnography afford about musical practice and musical cultures?
- What risks and challenges does ethnography pose, for both the ethnographer and her informants?
- What is the relationship between research methods, and the choices it entails, and the production of knowledge?

To address these core questions, we will read texts that critically reflect on ethnography as a method and a lens; texts that hone in on a specific ethnographic research technique; and exemplary ethnographic monographs that highlight the play between research and writing, methods and theory. At the same time, we will carry out weekly hands-on ethnographic assignments and spend time in class both preparing and debriefing these exercises. In doing so, we will develop a lived and critical understanding of ethnography as an important methodology for gaining insight into the “complexity of (musical) knowing and being” ([“A Guide to Feminist Pedagogy, Vanderbilt University”](#)).

### Course Goals

- To explore the relationship between ethnographic research and the written knowledge it produces.
- To go outside our comfort zones by a) engaging with communities that we might not otherwise engage and/or b) using techniques, methods, modes of investigation that we might not otherwise use.
- To gain insight into the lifeways of a particular musical community or practice in Rochester

### Course Objectives

Having taken this course and completed all the assignments, you will be able to:

- Synthesize ethnographic texts for their critical perspectives
- Describe and deploy a range of ethnographic methods and articulate various critical perspectives about them

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<sup>1</sup> With inspiration from syllabi by Deborah Matzner, Andrew Weintraub, Morgan Luker, and Kate Mariner.

- Develop an informed research question - that is, to place insights gathered through ethnographic research within the context of ethnomusicological/anthropological concepts and literature.

### Course Requirements and Assignments

- *Participation* – Please come to class prepared to share your thoughts and reflections on the readings and ethnographic assignments. This is an intimate class consisting of people from diverse educational and disciplinary backgrounds. As such, I ask that we all a) listen respectfully and take each other’s ideas seriously; and b) take responsibility for developing our collective conversation by proposing questions, offering ideas, and building productively upon others’ comments. Be brave, while acknowledging your own needs.
- *Weekly reading response* – Every week, you will post a response to the readings. Your response should do the following:
  - Briefly summarize the core argument and main themes of the assigned readings. (You do not need to write about background readings).
  - Relate the topic to previous readings and topics, and to your research, as relevant.
  - Conclude by posing 1-2 generative questions for discussion in class (and more, if you’d like).
  - Your writing need not be overly formal, but it should be clear and polished. Reading responses should be 250-400 words in length and should be posted to our class WordPress site, under “Reading Responses,” by 8 pm the day before class.
- *Weekly ethnographic assignments* - These hands-on assignments will ask you to practice the ethnographic techniques we are discussing in class. They may emerge out of the readings we’ve done that week or they might foreshadow upcoming topics and conversations. We will typically workshop these assignments in class.
- *Final research paper or project*: Broadly, the graduate students should plan to turn in a fully researched ethnographic research paper (~25-30 pages); the undergraduate students will create a proposal for a research project, which will contain some of the main components of an ethnographic research paper. Full assignment details will be provided shortly and we can determine the specific parameters of your final project in person.

### Assessment

This course is self-graded. This means that you will assign your own overall course grades informed by instructor feedback on your assignments, two reflective essays, and two check-in meetings. Individual assignments will receive detailed feedback, but not letter grades.

- Self-assessment Reflection Essay 1 – Due Week 3, 9.24.2018
  - In which you consider your goals and growing edges for this course (full prompt to be handed out in Week 2)
- Self-assessment Reflection Essay 2 – Due Sunday, 12.9.2018
  - In which you consider your efforts and growth over the span of this course.
- Check-in Meetings: Week 6 (10.17-10.19.2018) and Week 14
  - Of course, please feel free to come see me at any time to talk about your work, our course materials, and the ethnographic experience!

While you are responsible for determining your final grade, I will ask students who do not turn in the required assignments, as detailed above, to justify their grade to me in-person.

### Texts and Course Materials

- (Mostly) Required Texts (available in the bookstore and on library reserve):
  - Seeger, Anthony. 2004 (1988). *Why Suya Sing: A Musical Anthropology of an Amazonian People*. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press
  - *Shadows in the Field*. 2008 (1997). Eds. Barz and Cooley. New York: Oxford University Press.
  - Hurston, Zora Neale. 2018. *Barracoon: the Story of the “Last Black Cargo.”* New York: Harpers Press.
  - *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. 2011 (1995). Eds. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press
    - required for graduate students, optional for undergrads
  - Luker, Morgan. 2016. *The Tango Machine: Musical Culture in the Age of Expediency*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Other Readings: On WordPress (WP), you will find hard-to-locate articles, book chapters, and (occasionally) audio-visual materials. The remaining articles can be accessed through JSTOR.
- Useful Resources for Ethnographic Research:
  - *Engaging Communities: Writing Ethnographic Research*:  
<http://www.engagingcommunities.org/>
  - *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. 2015 (1993). Eds. Bernard and Gravlee. New York: Rowman and Little. - \*Available as an E-book through the UofR library.

- Tools: You will also need access to the following:
  - An audio recorder – a phone will do, although higher-quality recorders are helpful
  - Audio editing software – free ones include Audacity and GarageBand.
  - A small notebook or another dedicated place to take notes while you conduct research.

### **Policies**

*Attendance:* This is a discussion-based seminar and your engaged participation is crucial to our success. Missed classes and repeated lateness will directly affect your final grade. Please contact me as early as you can if you know you will have to miss a class.

*Screens:* You are welcome to use a laptop or tablet to access your readings and notes. However, please do not let your screen be a barrier to your active and engaged presence in this class. It goes without saying that you should not be on the internet during class; I recommend that you turn off your wifi connection. Speak with me or one of your classmates if you'd like recommendations for good digital annotation software.

*Academic Honesty:* I take plagiarism very seriously and expect that you will as well. Please familiarize yourself with Eastman's [Academic Honesty Code](#). When in doubt, cite a source or ask what to do.

## Reading Schedule

*This schedule may be adjusted at my discretion to accommodate our class interests and needs.  
I will give you one week's notice regarding any changes.*

### **Week 1 (9.10.2018): An Introduction to (Musical) Ethnography**

- Rice, Timothy. 2014. *Ethnomusicology: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
  - Chap. 1, "Defining Ethnomusicology;" Chap. 3, "Conducting Research;" Chap. 5, "Music as Culture;" and Chap. 8, "Ethnomusicology in the modern world."
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. "Thick Description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture."

### **Week 2 (9.17.2018): Musical Fieldwork and "The Field"**

- Background: Musante, Kathleen. "Participant Observation." In *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, pgs. 238-244 and 248-255.
  - \*Available as an E-book through the UofR.<sup>2</sup>
- Participant-observation:
  - Shah, Alpa. 2017. "Ethnography? Participant Observation, a Potentially Revolutionary Praxis." *Hau* 7(1)
- Performance as research:
  - Baily, John. 2001. "Learning to Perform as a Research Technique in Ethnomusicology." *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 10(1).
  - Bigenho, Michelle. 2008. "Why I'm not an ethnomusicologist." In *the new (ethno)musicologies*, ed. Stobart. MD: Scarecrow Press. (WP)
- "The Field":
  - Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson. 1997. "Discipline and Practice: The Field as Site, Method, and Location in Anthropology." In *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*, edited by Gupta and Ferguson. Berkeley: University of California Press. (WP)
  - Rice, Timothy. 1997. "Toward a Mediation of Field Methods and Field Experience in Ethnomusicology." In *Shadows in the Field*.
- **\*Ethnographic Assignment #1 Due (Participant-Observation)**

### **Week 3 (9.24.2018): On Ethnographic Authority: representation, positionality, access, and ethics**

- Narayan, Kirin. 1993. "How Native is the Native Anthropologist?" *American Anthropologist* 95(3).
- Burnim, Mellonee. 1985. "Culture Bearer and Tradition Bearer: An Ethnomusicologist's Research on Gospel Music." *Ethnomusicology* 29(3).
- Appert, Catherine. 2017. "Engendering Musical Ethnography." *Ethnomusicology* 61(3). (WP)
- Clifford, James, and George Marcus. 1986. "Introduction: Partial Truths." In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Clifford and Marcus. Berkeley: University of California Press (WP)
  - \*to be read by graduate students only

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<sup>2</sup> Which means that you can download ~150 pages to keep and to take notes on.

- Clifford, James. 1988. "On Ethnographic Authority." In *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Stoller, Paul. 1994. "Ethnographies as texts/ethnographers as griots." *American Ethnologist* 21(2).
- Selections from [www.engagingcommunities.org](http://www.engagingcommunities.org): "Framing ethical research," "Writerly ethos," "Ethical conundrums in community research."
- AAA and SEM statements on ethics
- **\*Self-grading Reflection Essay #1 Due**

**Week 4 (10.1.2018): Producing a Musical Ethnography #1:**

- Seeger, Anthony. 2004 (1988). *Why Suyu Sing: A Musical Anthropology of an Amazonian People*. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press
- **\*Ethnographic Assignment #2 Due (Choosing a Site and Positionality)**

**Week 5 (10.8.2018): Fieldnotes**

- Barz, Gregory. 2011 (1997). "Confronting the Field(note) IN and Out of the Field." In *Shadows in the Field*.
- Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, "In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes," in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. (WP)
- Selections from [www.engagingcommunities.org](http://www.engagingcommunities.org)
- **\*Ethnographic Assignment #3 Due (Fieldnotes)**

**Week 6 (10.15.2018): Columbus Day – No Class**

- **In-person Meeting #1** – I will send out a sign-up sheet with several possible dates/times.

**Week 7 (10.22.2018): Interviews, Interviewing, and Transcribing**

- Hurston, Zora Neale. 2018. *Barracoon: the Story of the "Last Black Cargo."* New York: Harpers Press.
- Wong, Deborah. "Finding an Asian American Audience: The Problem of Listening," *Asian American Music* 19(4): 365-384. 2001.;
- Feld, Steven et al. 2005. "Vocal Anthropology: From the Music of Language to the Language of Song." In *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, ed. Duranti. (WP)
- Spradley, James. 1979. *The Ethnographic Interview*. Wadsworth Cengage.
  - Excerpts TBD (WP)
- **\*Ethnographic Assignment #4 Due (Generating Interview Questions)**

**Week 8 (10.29.2018): Field Recordings: Documenting the Sonic**

- Radano, Ronald and Tejumola Olaniyan. 2016. "Introduction: Hearing Empire – Imperial Listening." In *Audible Empire: Music, Global Politics, Critique*, edited by Ronald Radano and Tejumola Olaniyan. Durham: Duke University Press.
  - \*Available as an E-book through the UofR.
- Other readings TBD
- **\*Ethnographic Assignment #5 (Transcribing an Interview)**

**Week 9 (11.5.2018): Transcription: Representing the Sonic**

- Seeger, Charles. 1958. "Prescriptive and Descriptive Music-Writing." *Musical Quarterly* 44.
- Herndon, Marcia. 1974. "Analysis: The Herding of Sacred Cows?" *Ethnomusicology* 18(2).
- Qureshi, Regula Burckhardt. 1986. "Musical Sound and Contextual Input: A Performance Model for Musical Analysis." *Ethnomusicology* 31.
- Ellingson, Ter. 1992. "Theory and Method: Transcription" In *Ethnomusicology: An Introduction* edited by Helen Myers. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Widdess, Richard. 1994. "Involving the Performers in Transcription and Analysis: A collaborative Approach to *Dhrupad*." *Ethnomusicology* 38(1).
- **\*Ethnographic Assignment #6 (Making a Field Recording)**

**Week 10 (11.12.2018): Producing a Musical Ethnography #2**

- Luker, Morgan. 2016. *The Tango Machine: Musical Culture in the Age of Expediency*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- **\*Ethnographic Assignment #7 (Transcribing a Field Recording)**

**Week 11 (11.19.2018): Asking Analytical Questions and Articulating Methods**

- TBD
- **\*Ethnographic Assignment #8 (Generating Analytical Questions)**

**Week 12 (11.26.2018): On Writing and Style**

- TBD
- **\*Ethnographic Assignment #9 (Creating an Ethnographic Vignette)**

**Week 13 (12.3.2018): Final Project Presentations**

- **\*Final Projects due Friday, 12.7.2018 via email**
- **\*Self-assessment Reflection Essay #2 due Sunday, 12.9.2018 via email**

**Week 14 (12.10.2018): No Class**

- **In-person Meeting #2** during class time