

SOAN 278: URBAN ETHNOGRAPHY AND THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Winter 2022

Carleton College

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Professor Wes Markofski

Class: MW 1:50-3:00pm, F 2:20-3:20pm (5a), Leighton 402

Office Hours: MW 3:15-4:15pm, Thurs 10:30-12:30pm or by appt.

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While the intellectual roots of ethnography as a mode of social inquiry lie in anthropological explorations of distant places and peoples, American sociology has a rich tradition of focusing the ethnographic eye on the American experience. We will take advantage of this tradition to encounter urban America through the ethnographic lens, expanding our social vision and investigating the nature of race, place, meaning, interaction, and inequality in the U.S. While doing so, we will also explore the unique benefits, challenges, ethics, and underlying assumptions of ethnographic research as a distinctive mode of acquiring and communicating social knowledge. As such, this course offers both an immersion in aspects of the American experience and an inquiry into the craft of ethnographic writing and research.

Student Learning Outcomes

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology has specified six student learning outcomes we want students to acquire before graduating. The relevant outcomes for this course are:

- Articulating the complexity of contemporary socio-cultural phenomenon in their many dimensions (e.g., temporal, structural, spatial, and symbolic).
- Applying sociological theory to analyze socio-cultural phenomena.
- Drawing upon your understanding of historical and contemporary socio-cultural phenomena to engage the world.
- Selecting appropriate sociological and/or anthropological research methods to study socio-cultural phenomena.

Course Materials

There are four required books for the course, which are available at the Carleton bookstore. Other required readings will be made available on the Moodle course website.

- Victor Rios. 2011. *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*. New York: NYU Press.
- Matthew Desmond. 2016. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. New York: Crown.
- Joseph C. Ewoodzie, Jr. 2021. *Getting Something to Eat in Jackson: Race, Class, and Food in the American South*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Iddo Tavory. 2016. *Summoned: Identification and Religious Life in a Jewish Neighborhood*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Course Requirements

Your final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

Participation 12.5%	[Due each class session]
Reading Questions 12.5%	[Due each class session]
Discussion Leadership Assignment 10%	[TBD]
Response Paper #1 15%	[Due Friday, 1/21]
Response Paper #2 15%	[Due Friday, 2/11]
Response Paper #3 15%	[Due Friday, 2/25]
Final Response Paper 20%	[Due Sunday, 3/13]

A = 100-93; A- = <93-90; B+ = <90-87; B = <87-83; B- = <83-80; C+ = <80-77; C = <77-73; C- = <73-70; D+ = <70-67; D = <67-60; F = <60

Policy on Late Work: Late work will be penalized 7 points per day late in the absence of clear and demonstrable extenuating circumstances (e.g., extended illness, family emergency, letter from dean's office, etc.), with late penalties capped at a maximum of 30 points (out of 100) per assignment.

Readings: To do well in this course, it is imperative that you commit to several hours of active, focused reading prior to each class meeting in order to complete the readings and reading questions and be prepared to engage dynamically in class discussions. Please note some readings contain potentially disturbing and/or difficult material; if you find yourself struggling or reacting to a reading in a way that is causing you harm, please stop reading and contact me so we can decide together how best to move forward.

Some questions to keep in mind while reading: : What is the main argument of the section/text? Key concepts and definitions? What evidence or methods are used to support the authors' arguments? What might be missing? Make a note of concepts/arguments you find difficult to understand (to bring up in class). Make a note of things you agree/disagree with, or find plausible/implausible, exciting/problematic, etc. (to bring up in class discussions).

Reading Questions: In order to facilitate active, critical engagement with the readings, and to stimulate discussion & debate with one another (through which much of our learning will occur), each student is required to upload via Moodle at least two reading questions prior to each class meeting:

- (1) One observation, question, or critique about an ethnographic scene, quotation, finding, or argument in the text (*Examples: What exactly does Tavori mean by a “sociology of summoning”? Or Is eviction or surveillance of the sort seen in Rios and Desmond typical of other U.S. cities and neighborhoods? Or I think Gonzales’s ethnography-based policy recommendations regarding DACA expansion is persuasive, here’s why ...*)
- (2) One observation, question, or critique about the author’s method and approach to writing ethnography. (*Examples: Is it ok for white sociologists to conduct ethnographic research in disadvantaged BIPOC neighborhoods? Or I think first-person as opposed or third-person ethnographic voice is preferable, here’s why ... Or I think ethnographers should (always/sometimes/never) report the actual names and places involved in their research.*)

Reading questions should be posted by 1:00pm before each class session. You may miss two session’s worth of reading questions without consequence; beyond that, each failure to upload reading questions will incrementally lower your reading question grade. Reading question submissions can range from a couple sentences up to a single paragraph in length. The key is to demonstrate substantial, thoughtful engagement with each day’s readings.

Participation: Your personal success in this course (as well as its collective success) depends on your active and sustained engagement throughout the entire term. I expect everyone to participate at a high level; however, I recognize we don’t all have the same personalities or learning styles. While participation includes asking questions and contributing vigorously (yet respectfully) to class discussions, it also involves consistent presence and attentiveness to others throughout the term. Active participation also means attending class regularly and refraining from non-course related use of electronic devices during class time.

Civil Discourse @ Carleton: I strive to create an inclusive, equitable, and respectful classroom that values diversity of identity and expression. Let’s work together to ensure that classroom discussions throughout the term reflect our shared commitment to academic and egalitarian norms of mutual respect, recognition, and tolerance. Note this does not mean engaging in “tone policing” or mandating emotionless argument: sometimes authentic academic/public discourse can become heated! Rather, it involves the difficult task of combining our passionate personal, intellectual, political, moral, or religious convictions with what the philosophical and psychological literature refers to as “intellectual humility,” defined as a “willingness to improve one’s knowledge of the world” and “low concern for intellectual domination” over others. It is “closely allied with traits such as open-mindedness, a sense of one’s fallibility, and being responsive to reasons. Thus, intellectual humility advocates for conviction through critical self-reflection” (humilityandconviction.uconn.edu). Let’s work together to listen to, and learn from, our different experiences and understandings of the world, even when we find it difficult to do so.

Please keep these ideas in mind, revisiting them at times throughout the term to aid our collective efforts at promoting civil discourse and learning across difference at Carleton:

- Listen carefully to what others are saying, even when you strongly disagree with what is being said. Comments you make (asking for clarification, sharing critiques, expanding on a point, etc.) should reflect that you have paid attention to the speaker's actual points.
- Respect others' rights to hold opinions and beliefs that differ from your own. When you disagree, challenge or criticize the idea, not the person.
- Don't interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking.
- Support your statements. Use evidence and provide a rationale for your points.
- Share responsibility for including all voices in the discussion. If you have much to say, try to hold back a bit; if you are hesitant to speak, look for opportunities to contribute.
- Recognize that we are all still learning. Be willing to change your perspective, and make space for others to do the same. (www.crlt.umich.edu/examples-discussion-guidelines)

Discussion Leadership Assignment: Those who have a say in how and what they learn tend to learn more and enjoy the process better. As such, each student, with a partner, will have the opportunity to facilitate class discussion for roughly one half of one class period (~30-35 minutes) during the term. This means you will be “extra familiar” with the required reading assignments, arrive with discussion questions, presentation, or other prepared discussion format, and be the primary discussion facilitators for the first segment of one class period. You will email me a brief outline of your discussion leadership plans by 9pm the day before you lead discussion.

Response Papers #1-3: 4-5 page papers, due 4/14 (*Punished / On the Run*), 5/6 (*Evicted*), and 5/20 (*Lives in Limbo*), describing and assessing the findings and methods of a major sociological ethnography.

Final Response Paper: An 8-page paper, describing and assessing the findings and methods of a major sociological ethnography (*Summoned*)—and assessing various approaches to writing sociological ethnography based on our course readings—due the last day of class, Wednesday, 6/2, at midnight.

Paper Formatting: All papers must be uploaded to Moodle in either a **Microsoft Word or PDF file** format and use APA, MLA, Chicago, or ASA citation styles.

Important Note: If at any point in the term you become concerned about your grade, a particular assignment, classroom participation or classroom climate issues, falling behind, or anything else, *please don't wait to come visit me during office hours or otherwise contact me!* The sooner we identify potential problems and concerns, the more effectively we will be able to work together to address them.

Plagiarism & Academic Integrity

In line with Carleton's policy on [academic integrity](#) and [plagiarism](#), it is assumed that a student is the author of all coursework submitted by that student. Please refer to Carleton's [full policy](#) for additional information or see me if you have questions.

Academic Support

Taking Care & Well-Being: With the college, I urge you to take care of yourself—your health and well-being—throughout this term and your entire Carleton career. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, don't hesitate to contact me and/or other campus resources such as [Student Health and Counseling](#) or the [Office of Health Promotion](#). If your personal situation (due to COVID-19 illness or other circumstances) begins to impact your ability to engage with the course, please contact me and/or the Dean of Students Office.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Carleton College is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Office of Accessibility Resources (Henry House, 107 Union Street) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, autism spectrum disorders, chronic health, traumatic brain injury and concussions, vision, hearing, mobility, or speech impairments), please contact OAR@carleton.edu or call Sam Thayer (10), Director of the Office of Accessibility Resources (x4464), to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

Technological Resources for Students with Disabilities: The Assistive Technologies program brings together academic and technological resources to complement student classroom and computing needs, particularly in support of students with physical or learning disabilities. Accessibility features include text-to-speech (Kurzweil), speech-to-text (Dragon) software, and audio recording Smartpens. If you would like to know more, contact aztechs@carleton.edu or visit go.carleton.edu/aztech.

Learning Strategies & Time Management: Oscar Alvarez, Academic Skills Coach, is eager to help you develop learning strategies that work in the Carleton context. His goals are to heighten your awareness of your personal strengths and to offer different ways you can approach your academic work so you're more efficient and effective. For details on how to schedule a videoconference with Oscar, visit: [Learning Strategies & Time Management](#). If you prefer to learn these skills and strategies on your own, visit "[Helpful DIY Resources](#)."

Library: Librarians work as liaisons to academic departments, and yours can be found at <https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/library/help/help/liaisons/>. You can make an online appointment with your library liaison or chat with a librarian online 24/7. You can also [email and call](#). Librarians help students find and evaluate articles, books, websites, statistics, data, government documents, and more. For more information on hours and librarians, visit the Gould Library website at go.carleton.edu/library.

The Writing Center: The Writing Center a space with peer writing consultants who can work with you during any stage of the writing process (brainstorming to final proofreading). Hours and more information can be found on the [writing center website](#). You can reserve specific times for conferences by using their [online appointment system](#).

The Term-Long Program for Multilingual Writers: If English is not your first language and you believe you might benefit from working regularly with a writing consultant this term, email Melanie Cashin, [Multilingual Writing Coordinator](mailto:mcashin@carleton.edu), at mcashin@carleton.edu. She can arrange once- or twice-a-week meetings between you and a specific writing consultant throughout the term.

Title IX: Carleton is committed to fostering an environment free of sexual misconduct. Please be aware all Carleton faculty and staff members, with the exception of Chaplains and SHAC staff, are “responsible employees.” Responsible employees are required to share any information they have regarding incidents of sexual misconduct with the Title IX Coordinator. Carleton’s goal is to ensure campus community members are aware of all the options available and have access to the resources they need. If you have questions, please contact Laura Riehle-Merrill, Carleton’s Title IX Coordinator, or visit the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response website: <https://www.carleton.edu/sexual-misconduct/>.

Course Outline and Reading Schedule

* Please read the selections in order as they are listed on the syllabus, and be sure to bring the day’s readings with you to class. Stop and start your reading at the obvious place (section beginning/end, first/last paragraph, etc.) unless otherwise noted.

INTRODUCTION

Wed 1/5 (Week 1)

Introduction, *The Craft of Urban Ethnography*

- “Voices from the Sidewalk: Ethnography and Writing Race,” Mitch Duneier and Les Back

PUNISHED & ON THE RUN (STANDPOINT & CHICAGO SCHOOL ETHNOGRAPHY)

Fri 1/7

On the Run (1)

- Alice Goffman, *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*, Preface, Introduction, Conclusion
- Sarah Brayne, “Surveillance and System Avoidance,” (pp. 367-372, 385-387)

Mon 1/10 (Week 2)

On the Run (2)

- Review of *On the Run* (Steven Lubet, *The New Republic*)
- Alice Goffman, “A Reply to Professor Lubet’s Critique”
- Lubet’s response to Goffman (*The New Republic*)

- “The Society of Fugitives,” (James Forman Jr., *The Atlantic*)
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/10/the-society-of-fugitives/379328/>
- “The Stoop isn’t the Jungle,” (Dwayne Betts, *Slate*)
http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/jurisprudence/2014/07/alice_goffman_s_on_the_run_she_is_wrong_about_black_urban_life.html
- Review of *On the Run* (Victor Rios, *American Journal of Sociology*)
- “Slumming It,” (Claude Fischer, *Boston Review*)
<http://bostonreview.net/blog/claude-fischer-made-america-alice-goffman-slum-ethnography>

Wed 1/12

Punished (1)

- Victor Rios, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*, Preface, Chapters 1 & 2

Fri 1/14

Punished (2)

- Victor Rios, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*, Chapters 3 & 4

Mon 1/17 (Week 3)

Punished (3)

- Victor Rios, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*, Chapter 5 & 6

Wed 1/19

Punished (4)

- Victor Rios, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*, Chapter 7, Conclusion, Appendix
- OPTIONAL: Robert Garot, *American Journal of Sociology* review of *Punished*
- OPTIONAL: Juan Battle, *Contemporary Sociology* review of *Punished*

Fri 1/21

***** Paper #1 Due *****

TBD

EVICTED: POVERTY AND PROFIT IN THE AMERICAN CITY
(RELATIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY)

Mon 1/24 (Week 4)

Evicted (1)

- Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, Prologue, Chapters 1-4

Wed 1/26

Evicted (2)

- Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, Chapters 5-8

Fri 1/28

Evicted (3)

- Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, Chapters 9-12

Mon 1/31 (Week 5)

Evicted (4)

- Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, Chapters 13-16

Wed 2/2

Evicted (5)

- Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, Chapters 17-21

Fri 2/4

Evicted (6)

- Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, Chapters 22-24, Epilogue

Mon 2/7 (Week 6)

Midterm Break

Wed 2/9

Evicted (7)

- Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, “About This Project”
- Review of *Evicted* (David Harding, *American Journal of Sociology*)
- “The Great Expectations of Matthew Desmond” (Marc Parry, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*)
- “Who Profits from Poverty?” (David Adler, *Current Affairs*)
- Matthew Desmond, “How Home Ownership Became the Engine of American Inequality” (*NYT Magazine*)
- “How We Undercounted Evictions by Asking the Wrong Questions,” (Andrew Flowers, *FiveThirtyEight*)

Fri 2/11

***** Paper #2 Due *****

Relational Ethnography

- Matthew Desmond, "Relational Ethnography," *Theory and Society*

**GETTING SOMETHING TO EAT IN JACKSON: RACE, CLASS, AND FOOD IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH
(DU BOIS / CHICAGO SCHOOL ETHNOGRAPHY)**

Mon 2/14 (Week 7)

Getting Something to Eat in Jackson: Race, Class, and Food in the American South (1)

- Joseph Ewoodzie Jr., *Getting Something to Eat in Jackson*, Chapters 1 & 2

Wed 2/16

Getting Something to Eat in Jackson: Race, Class, and Food in the American South (2)

- Joseph Ewoodzie Jr., *Getting Something to Eat in Jackson*, Part I (Chapters 3-5)

Fri 2/18

Getting Something to Eat in Jackson: Race, Class, and Food in the American South (3)

- Joseph Ewoodzie Jr., *Getting Something to Eat in Jackson*, Part II (Chapters 6-8)

Mon 2/21 (Week 8)

Getting Something to Eat in Jackson: Race, Class, and Food in the American South (4)

- Joseph Ewoodzie Jr., *Getting Something to Eat in Jackson*, Part III (Chapters 9-11)

Wed 2/23

Getting Something to Eat in Jackson: Race, Class, and Food in the American South (5)

- Joseph Ewoodzie Jr., *Getting Something to Eat in Jackson*, Part IV (Chapters 12-14)

Fri 2/25

Getting Something to Eat in Jackson: Race, Class, and Food in the American South (6)

***** Paper #3 Due @ 11:59pm *****

- Joseph Ewoodzie Jr., *Getting Something to Eat in Jackson*, Chapters 15-16 (stop at Acknowledgements)

**SUMMONED: IDENTIFICATION AND RELIGIOUS LIFE IN A JEWISH NEIGHBORHOOD
(PRAGMATIST ETHNOGRAPHY & ABDUCTIVE ANALYSIS)**

Mon 2/28 (Week 9)

Summoned (1)

- Iddo Tavory, *Summoned: Identification and Religious Life in a Jewish Neighborhood*, Chapters 1-2

Wed 3/2

Summoned (2)

- Iddo Tavory, *Summoned: Identification and Religious Life in a Jewish Neighborhood*, Chapters 3-4

Fri 3/4

Summoned (3)

- Iddo Tavory, *Summoned: Identification and Religious Life in a Jewish Neighborhood*, Chapters 5-6

Mon 3/7 (Week 10)

Summoned (4)

- Iddo Tavory, *Summoned: Identification and Religious Life in a Jewish Neighborhood*, Chapters 7-8

Wed 3/9

Summoned (5)

- Iddo Tavory, *Summoned: Identification and Religious Life in a Jewish Neighborhood*, Appendix
- Timmermans and Tavory, "Theory Construction in Qualitative Research: From Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis," *Sociological Theory*

Fri 3/11

***** Paper #4 Due Sunday, March 13, @ 5pm *****

Conclusion, Assessing Sociological Ethnographies (*Final Course Evaluations*)

- TBD