

10th ECPR Summer School in Methods and Techniques, 23 July - 8 August
University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
Course Description Form – Week 1 course, 15 hrs (27 July - 31 July)

Course title

SC104. Issues in Political, Policy, and Organizational Ethnography

Instructor details

Prof. Dr. Dvora Yanow

Guest Professor

Sub-department Communication, Philosophy, & Technology

Wageningen University

P.O. 8130 Bode 79, 6700 EW Wageningen, The Netherlands

Professor of Organisational Studies

Keele University, Staffordshire, UK

Dvora.Yanow@wur.nl

Short Bio

Dvora Yanow is a policy/political/organizational ethnographer and interpretive methodologist. Her research and teaching are shaped by an interest in the generation and communication of knowing and meaning in organizational and policy settings. Research includes state-created categories for 'race-ethnic' identities, immigrant integration policies and citizen-making, research regulation and ethics policies, practice theory, and science museums and the idea of science. Her most recent authored book is *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes* (Routledge 2012), with Peregrine Schwartz-Shea. She received the 2012 Cora Maas teaching award for this ethnography course.

<http://wu.academia.edu/DvoraYanow>

Prerequisite knowledge

Note from the Academic Convenors to prospective participants: by registering for this course, you certify that you possess the prerequisite knowledge that is requested to be able to follow it. The instructor will not review these prerequisite items. If you doubt whether you possess that knowledge to a sufficient extent, we suggest you contact the instructor before you register for the course.

This course is designed as an 'intermediate' course in interpretive-qualitative research methods. It is intended for students who are past the research proposal stage – whether just starting, in the middle of, or just after their field research. Students should have already taken at least one course that introduced them to the methodological underpinnings of interpretive-qualitative research, ideally including some readings in the philosophy of social science. Prior experience conducting conversational interviews and with observational research, with whatever degree of participation, along with some readings in that literature, is desirable. Students who wish to brush up on the methodological background will find suggested readings at #10, below.

Short course outline

This course will focus on several of the concepts and issues central to current debates about political, policy, and organizational ethnography, among them the relational turn, reflexivity and positionality, as well as writing and reading as method, looking at one's knowledge claims from the perspective of a reader. Throughout the course, we will also be engaging questions connected with research ethics, in light of growing formal attention to this topic in the form of institutionalized ethics review committees and ensuing requirements on the part of journal publishers.

Long course outline

Participant-observer ethnographic methods – central among the many methods that fall under the umbrella of interpretive and qualitative research methods – have, in one view, been ‘borrowed’ from sociology and anthropology into many fields in political science, including comparative governmental studies, international relations, area studies, public policy (domestic/state, regional, local; international, EU, etc.), public administration/local government studies, public law/legal studies, and organizational studies. They are not new, however, either to organizational studies or to political studies generally, having been employed since the 1950s and perhaps even earlier. Indeed, one might argue that ethnography originated in colonial administrative and other practices, with its anthropological version being a subset of those (Salemink 2003¹). Whatever its origins, ethnography is useful in a wide range of settings for research questions that seek to explore the meanings of particular practices, concepts or processes to situational actors, often in order to illuminate a wider-ranging, at times more theoretical issue of concern. The latter might include studying how street-level bureaucrats implement national policies; how policy-makers or legislators actually think about the decisions they make and how they go about them; how workers shape their work practices and their relationships to managers; and so on.

The course is designed for those who are about to embark on a field research project (i.e., whose research proposals have been accepted by their thesis/dissertation committee or supervisor), are in the midst of conducting one, or have just come out of the field and who are thinking about, starting to or working on writing up their field notes and drafts of chapters or papers/articles. The latter might have conducted a traditional ethnographic or participant-observer study (based in a community or an organization, for instance); the study may have involved ‘shadowing’ a political leader or policy-maker; and/or it might have included formal (expert, elite or other) interviews (i.e., in conversational style – engaging people in talk; I do not consider administering a survey questionnaire to be interviewing). Researchers may also have used ethnographic methods (observing, with whatever degree of participation; talking to situational members) along with a close reading of topic-relevant documents or visual materials in some form (e.g., in archives, newspaper morgues, and the like, or webpages) to generate data which they are intending to analyze using other methods (e.g., discourse analysis; metaphor, category or other language-focused analysis; space analysis; narrative analysis; and so on). We will try to address both the needs and interests of researchers with field experience and those who have yet to begin.

The course will focus on several of the concepts and issues central to current debates about political, policy, and organizational ethnography. These include:

- the relational turn in understanding ethnographic research, including power and politics issues in the conduct of field research;
- questions of reflexivity and positionality, especially as these bear on the generation of data and the trustworthiness of one’s knowledge claims;
- writing as method – looking at knowledge claims and their evidentiary base, and the ways in which these are presented in a research ‘report’.

Throughout the course, we will also be engaging questions connected with research ethics, in light of growing formal attention to this topic in the form of institutionalized ethics review committees and ensuing requirements on the part of journal publishers.

Classes will combine lecture with discussion. Students will be expected to come to class with their own questions in hand, prepared to discuss the readings and to draw links between them and their own research designs and field experiences.

¹ Salemink, Oscar. 2003. Ethnography, anthropology and colonial discourse. In *The ethnography of Vietnam's Central Highlanders: A historical contextualization, 1850-1990*, 1-39. London: RoutledgeCurzon.

Course readings

1. Edward Schatz, ed., *Political ethnography: What immersion contributes to the study of power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
2. Sierk Ybema et al., *Organizational ethnography*. London: Sage, 2009.
3. Peregrine Schwartz-Shea and Dvora Yanow, *Interpretive Research Design: Concepts and Processes*. New York: Routledge, 2012. [SSY in syllabus]
4. Other journal articles, conference papers, and book chapters, omitted from this course information form. They will be provided in the final syllabus for those who register for the course.

Topic schedule

What follows is an overview intended to suggest the overall orientation of the course, rather than to be taken as the official, final syllabus for the 2015 course. The details of daily readings will be updated and otherwise modified in the early summer, if the course is confirmed. The final version will be conveyed to registered students at that time.

The final syllabus will also include daily homework assignments in the form of course-related exercises to be carried out somewhere in Ljubljana, taking advantage of the city as a natural laboratory for thinking about key issues in the course. These may also entail working in small groups.

To the extent possible, the course will accommodate student presentations of and questions about their own work during class time. If the class is large, however, it will be very difficult to arrange dedicated presentation time for each student. Students are always invited to ask questions specific to their own research projects as these are sparked by in-class discussions. These aspects of course design will be determined once the size of the class is known.

<u>Monday</u>	
9-10.30	Seeing like an ethnographer: Introductions and course overview
11-12.30	Design I: Issues in selecting settings, actors, times, ...
<i>Afternoon/evening 'lab'</i>	<i>Information on labs will be provided to course participants.</i>
<u>Tuesday</u>	
9-10.30	'But I thought we were friends?!' Access and the relational turn in ethnographic research
11-12.30	'Native,' 'at-home' ethnography: Insider-outsider standing and knowledge claims
<i>Afternoon/evening 'lab'</i>	<i>Information on labs will be provided to course participants.</i>
<u>Wednesday</u>	
9-10.30	Logic of inquiry in interpretive research: Abduction and surprises
11-12.30	Positionality and power: Reflexivity in the field and on the page
<i>Afternoon/evening 'lab'</i>	<i>Information on labs will be provided to course participants.</i>
<u>Thursday</u>	
9-10.30	Design II. Flexibility and exposure
11-12.30	Issues in evaluation and writing
<i>Afternoon/evening 'lab'</i>	<i>Information on labs will be provided to course participants.</i>
<u>Friday</u>	
9-10.30/11-12.30	Organizational-policy-political ethnography: Different from anthropological ethnography?

Software and hardware requirements

None.

For further reading

General methodological background:

Agar, Michael. 2013. *The lively science: Remodeling human social research*. Minneapolis, MN: Mill City Press. [see his webpage www.ethnoworks.com; the book page is www.thelivelyscience.com/]

Jackson, Patrick Thaddeus. 2010. *The conduct of inquiry in international relations: Philosophy of science and its implications for the study of world politics*. NY: Routledge.

Yanow, Dvora and Schwartz-Shea, Peregrine, eds. 2014. *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*, 2nd edition. Armonk, NY: M E Sharpe.

Additional suggestions for further reading will be provided in the syllabus for course participants.

Possible course sequences

The following ECPR Methods School courses might be usefully sequenced with this one.

NB. This is a suggested, not a required, list.

Before this course:

	Course title	Summer School	Winter School
1	Introduction to Interpretive Research Designs	X	
2	Introduction to Qualitative Interpretive Methods		X
3	Knowing and the Known: The Philosophy and Methodology of the Social Sciences		X
4	Expert Interviews for Qualitative Data Generation	X	
5	Interpretative interviewing		X

After this course:

	Course title	Summer School	Winter School
1	Introduction to Interpretive Research Designs	X	
2	Expert Interviews for Qualitative Data Generation	X	
3	Interpretative interviewing		X
4	Analysing Discourse I and II– Analysing Politics: Theories, Methods and Applications	X	
5	Writing ethnographic and other qualitative-interpretive research: Learning inductively		X