Introduction

This seminar in place-based ethnography provides an introduction to ethnographic fieldwork, with a focus on how the performance of folklore bears on the making of place. A place-based approach to ethnography is understood as a critical means of engaging with communities struggling toward alternatives to globalized economic development that is destructive of place. Choosing a setting in which to practice weekly field exercises throughout the semester, you will explore how people generate social space and humanize the physical environment through a variety of genres of stylized communication and performance.

Readings and discussion will proceed along two lines. One will introduce you to ethnographic methods and issues, while the other will consider theories and case studies of placemaking, with special, though not exclusive, attention to urban settings. For case studies we will turn to writers from the disciplines of folklore, performance studies, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, and journalism. Students will explore 1) how communities generate social space (place) and inhabit, celebrate, and critique it through various forms of social interaction and performance; 2) how to observe and document practices of placemaking through writing, still photography, and audio recording technologies; and 3) how to present ethnographic research in a way that is accessible, meaningful, and useful to communities for whom ethnography can make a difference.

In addition to doing the readings, participating in class discussions and attending guest-led workshops in writing, photography, sound recording, and archiving, work for the course will include selecting a field site in the Philadelphia area that you can visit at least three times weekly; writing up fieldnotes for each visit; documenting your site using technologies of tape recorder and still photography; observing and documenting a performance event at your site; developing an IRB protocol for your research, and archiving your field materials. The final product, due December 14, will be a descriptive essay about your site and the ethnographic questions it raises, concluding with a proposal for continuing fieldwork in this setting, due December 14. I will distribute guidelines for each assignment as we go. Due dates for other assignments are noted in the schedule of topics.
All required and recommended readings and dvds will be on overnight reserve in the Rosengarten Reading room, and readings (but not dvds) will also be on reserve in the Folklore Archive. Full citations appear in the attached bibliography. Texts available for purchase at Penn Book Center, 130 S. 34th Street include:

Michael Agar, *The Professional Stranger: An Informal Introduction to Ethnography*
Erika Brady, *A Spiral Way: How the Phonograph Changed Ethnography*
Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multi-Centered Society*
Mary Hufford, *Conserving Culture: A New Discourse on Heritage*

**Schedule of Topics and Readings**

**September 7:** (I am away this week: please pick up materials and assignment from Joyce Roselle in Logan 303)

**September 14: People Studying People: The Object of Observation**

**Req:** Watch “Kitchen Stories.” (two copies on reserve in Rosengarten; also available at Blockbuster’s Video) and review handout to prepare for discussion.
- Agar, *The Professional Stranger*, pp. 1-72, and 113-131
- Hufford, “Ethnography.” *World Encyclopedia of Folklore*
- Noyes, “Folklore.” *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*
- Lippard, “All over the Place,” in *The Lure of the Local*, pp. 1-20


**September 21: Producing Locality: Commons, Enclosures, and Wild Space**

**Req:** Watch Precious Places, from Scribe Video, on reserve
- Lippard, “Around Here” in *The Lure of the Local*, pp. 21-61

- Cooper, *Subway Art*

**Assignment:** Identify a site, or several, that interest you, and be prepared to discuss in class. Begin drafting an information sheet about your project that you can hand to people at your site.
September 28: Workshop on sense of place and techniques of observation and writing, with Joanne Mulcahy, Northwest Writing Institute

**Req:** Agar, “Getting Started,” “Who Are You to Do This?” and “Beginning Fieldwork,” 73-166.


**Assignment:** Choose your fieldsite and visit it on at least three different occasions. Describe any “cultural scenes” you observe. Write up your notes and bring them to class.

October 5: Fieldnotes and Background Research


**Rec:** Emerson et al, 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*.

**Assignment:** Review your fieldnotes and annotate them to develop questions and interaction with “headnotes.” Formulate questions about your site that can be answered through archival and library research and develop a profile of your site to bring to Friday’s workshop.

Friday October 7: Resources for Place-Based Ethnography in Philadelphia: Miriam Camitta

**Assignment:** Watch Crosstown, a film that Miriam Camitta produced about a Philadelphia community’s three decade long struggle against the proposed Crosstown Expressway, and make note of the kinds of resources used in the film that could be helpful to you in researching your site. Come with the list of resources you’ve identified for the Precious Places and Crosstown videos, and with questions about where to find information on your site.

October 12: Genres of Historical Discourse and the Performance of Place


Assignment: Identify at least three genres of vernacular historical discourse in The Lure of the Local and recall as many as you can from the Precious Places video. Begin talking with people at your site about the history of the place, if you have not already. What do you learn, and through what forms of historical discourse? Develop a list of potential performances at your site that you could study further, as well as a list of key consultants you would need to be able to work with. Refine your information sheet as needed and create release forms for photography and tape recordings. Bring these to class, along with your fieldnotes for this week.

For examples of release forms see: http://www.loc.gov/ folklife/fieldwork/formsmenu.html

October 19: No class – AFS meetings in Atlanta, Georgia

October 26 and 28: Ethnographic Photography Workshop with Richard Bell

Lippard, “Out the Picture Window.” Lure of the Local, pp. 178-192

Assignment: Develop a list of photographic images you would like to make to convey a sense of the place you have chosen to work in. Bring this with you to the workshop.

November 2: The Dialogue of Local with Larger Than Local: Critical Regionalism and the Ethnographic Interview

Shuman, “Dismantling Local Culture,” Western Folklife 52:345-364
Lippard, “Around Here,” The Lure of the Local, pp. 61-82


Assignment: Articulate an emerging cluster of larger research questions raised in this week’s readings that may apply to your site, and develop a set of interview questions/topics designed to get at your research questions. Bring these to class, along with your fieldnotes for this week.
Some resources for developing your interview:


**November 9 and 11: Audio Recording Workshop with Barry Dornfeld**

**November 16: Ethics in Fieldwork and Civic Professionalism**

Lippard, “Down to Earth: Land Use,” *The Lure of the Local*, pp. 124-177

**Resources:**
A Statement of Ethics for the American Folklore Society
[http://www.afsnet.org/aboutAFS/ethics.cfm](http://www.afsnet.org/aboutAFS/ethics.cfm)

*Handbook on Ethical Issues in Anthropology*

American Sociological Association statement of ethics:
[http://www.asanet.org/page.ww?section=Ethics&name=Ethics](http://www.asanet.org/page.ww?section=Ethics&name=Ethics)

**Assignment:** In your fieldnotes for this week, incorporate reflections on ethical aspects of your fieldwork, related either to issues raised in the readings, or to issues that, in your view, the readings neglect. Bring in several pages of transcription of your field recording from last week to share in class.

**November 23: Backtalking Fungibility: Place, Public Policy, and the Ethnographer**


**November 30: Archiving Places: The Social Life of Ethnographic Materials**

Guest: Dr. Catherine Kerst, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress


Brady, A Spiral Way, pp. 118-125.

Review the American Folklife Society’s working version of an ethnographic thesaurus at http://www.afsnet.org/thesaurus/

**Assignment:** Inventory your field collection so far and bring in the inventory, along with an example of each kind of material and format.

**Dec. 7: Perils, Politics, and Poetics of Writing Ethnography**


http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/center/stewart.html

Dorst, John. “Moving Skin.” (Handout)

**Assignment:** Be prepared to describe, discuss, and defend the politics and poetics of your approach to writing ethnography.

**December 14: Presentations in class.**
December 16: Due date for turning in finalized projects.
Folklore 502: FIELDWORK THEORY AND PRACTICE

Course Bibliography


Bateson, Gregory. Steps to An Ecology of Mind.


Cobb, Edith.


-------. In press. “Stitching Up the Shallow Body.”


Frampton, Kenneth.


Ives, Edward D. *The Tape-Recorded Interview: A Manual for Fieldworkers in Folklore and Oral History*.


**Some online resources:**

American Folklore Society: [http://afsnet.org/sitemap.cfm](http://afsnet.org/sitemap.cfm)

American Folklife Center: [http://www.loc.gov/folklife/](http://www.loc.gov/folklife/)


American Sociological Association: [http://www.asanet.org/index.ww](http://www.asanet.org/index.ww)

Center for Folklore and Ethnograpy: [http://www.sas.upenn.edu/anthropology/folklore/center/links.html](http://www.sas.upenn.edu/anthropology/folklore/center/links.html)


Place Matters: [http://www.placematters.net/](http://www.placematters.net/)
Project for a Civic and Environmental Commons:  
http://www.uky.edu/RGS/AppalCenter/research/pcec.html

Public Interest Anthropology at Penn:  http://www.sas.upenn.edu/anthro/CPIA/

Scribe Video:  http://www.scribe.org/

Indivisible: Stories of American Community:  http://www.indivisible.org/

Tending the Commons:  http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cmnshome.html

Downloadable publications on Community-Based Approaches to Environmental Protection:  http://www.epa.gov/ecocommunity/bib.htm

Place, understood as an ongoing social accomplishment, is increasingly a focus of attention across the humanities, arts, social sciences, and planning professions. Whereas communities can exist without being bound to particular places, places can’t exist apart from the communities that animate them. Attending to how communities generate and renew locality, place-based ethnography can help to illuminate alternatives to globally-based forms of development. Led by professionals in the fields of writing, photography, filmmaking, and archiving, these hands-on workshops are designed for students wishing to engage the study of locality through participant observation, ethnographic writing, sound recordings, photographic images, and the civics of archiving place.

Students may register for one or all workshops, but space is limited, so early registration is recommended. All workshops will be held in the Archive of the Center for Folklore and Ethnography, Room 312, Logan Hall, from 1-4 p.m. For details and to register, visit the CFE website at: http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/center/placebased_workshops.html

**DOCUMENTING LOCALITY**

**Tools and Technologies for Place-Based Fieldwork**

**A Workshop Series at the Center for Folklore and Ethnography**
SEPTEMBER 28: DISCOVERING AND DESCRIBING PLACE

Ethnographers and Creative Nonfiction writers alike rely on observation, memory and sensory perception to evoke a sense of place in their writing. In this workshop, we’ll write from our own experience, utilizing tools from both types of writing. We’ll discuss ways to keep the senses alive in fieldwork, attending to the negative spaces of silence and darkness as well as to the positives they define. In addition, we’ll look at examples of how varied writers evoke place in rural and urban settings. If we have time, we’ll write a portrait of someone, looking at how to contextualize descriptions of people in distinct places.

Students may register for one or all workshops, but space is limited, so early registration is recommended. All workshops will be held in the Archive of the Center for Folklore and Ethnography, Room 312, Logan Hall, from 1-4 p.m. For details and to register, visit the CFE website at: http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/center/placebased_workshops.html
Miriam Camitta, is a folklorist and independent film maker whose work focuses on the effect of urban renewal projects on traditional life and neighborhood uses of open space. Her documentary, Crosstown, which was broadcast on local public television in 2001 and screened in the Philadelphia Festival of World Cinema, depicts the way of life lost to urban renewal in the story of a community-led fight against a federal highway routed through South Street, Philadelphia. Camitta teaches “Writing and Culture” in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania. For the last two years she has been a humanities scholar for Scribe Video Center’s Precious Places documentation project of Philadelphia neighborhoods.

OCTOBER 7: RESOURCES FOR PLACE-BASED ETHNOGRAPHY IN THE PHILADELPHIA AREA

Ethnographers, film makers, and writers draw on a variety of archival materials to understand and evoke a contemporary and historic sense of place. In this workshop, we will focus on the use of photographs, maps, drawings, prints, posters, plans and planning materials, census data, newspapers, city directories in the evoking and archiving of specific Philadelphia places in ethnography, film and fiction. Workshop participants will be introduced to the variety and location of major archival resources in the Philadelphia area. A portion of the workshop will be devoted to a question and answer session in which workshop participants will have the opportunity to explore the potential for using the resources of specific Philadelphia archives.

Students may register for one or all workshops, but space is limited, so early registration is recommended. All workshops will be held in the Archive of the Center for Folklore and Ethnography, Room 312, Logan Hall, from 1-4 p.m. For details and to register, visit the CFE website at: http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/center/placebased_workshops.html

CENTER FOR FOLKLORE & ETHNOGRAPHY
We will cut through the overwhelming amount of information out there about photography equipment and photography do’s and don’ts and talk about a few very basic concepts. With these basics your photographs will demand attention and be able to communicate with a clear and concise voice. Please bring your camera with a new battery on the first day. We will be shooting and evaluating.

Students may register for one or all workshops, but space is limited, so early registration is recommended. All workshops will be held in the Archive of the Center for Folklore and Ethnography, Room 312, Logan Hall, from 1-4 p.m. For details and to register, visit the CFE website at: http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/center/placebased_workshops.html
BARRY DORNFELD is a management consultant, documentary filmmaker, sound recordist, media researcher, and educator. His award winning documentary work has been featured on public television, including: LaVaughn Robinson; Dancing History, Look Forward and Carry on the Past: Stories from Philadelphia’s Chinatown, contributions to Indivisible – Local Heroes: Changing America, national touring exhibit and book, Gandy Dancers, and Plenty of Good Women Dancers: African-American Women Hoofers in Philadelphia. He is the author of Producing Public Television, Producing Public Culture (1998, Princeton University Press), an ethnography of a PBS documentary series. He holds a PhD from Annenberg School of Communications and has taught at University of the Arts in Philadelphia, where he chaired the Communication Department.

NOVEMBER 4 AND 9: DOCUMENTING CULTURE THROUGH SOUND

Through voice, music, and soundscapes both natural and manufactured, sound shapes and signifies our cultural worlds. This two-session workshop begins by exploring the acoustic underpinnings of social life, and how we can approach the representation of worlds of sound. Moving from a discussion of sound as a social and cultural force, through careful listening to audio recordings, we will then learn how to use small format digital recorders to capture culture and place. Field recording exercises will allow participants to learn through experience to “ear witness,” record and evaluate aural culture and environments, and to think more deeply about sound recording in cultural representation.

Students may register for one or all workshops, but space is limited, so early registration is recommended. All workshops will be held in the Archive of the Center for Folklore and Ethnography, Room 312, Logan Hall, from 1-4 p.m. For details and to register, visit the CFE website at: http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/center/placebased_workshops.html

CENTER FOR FOLKLORE & ETHNOGRAPHY
Catherine Hiebert Kerst is a folklife specialist and archivist for unpublished ethnographic field collections from the Archive of Folk Culture, at the American Folklife Center, Library of Congress. Kerst, who holds a PhD in folklore from George Washington University, helped to launch the Mellon-funded Ethnographic Thesaurus, a joint project of the American Folklore Society and the American Folklife Center. She engages archival education of many kinds, especially relating to the organization, preservation, and presentation of ethnographic field materials so that they will be accessible to the widest possible public.

NOVEMBER 30: ARCHIVING PLACE: THE SOCIAL LIFE OF ETHNOGRAPHIC MATERIALS

Archives often serve as custodians of social memory. In this workshop, we will explore the role that ethnographic research archives play in preserving and representing place-based culture. Using examples drawn from the ethnomusicological documentation Sidney Robertson Cowell collected for the WPA in Northern California from 1938 to 1940, we will consider a variety of issues that ethnographic field collections residing in an archive bring to light. Among other things, we will discuss the relationship of the community to the archive, archival considerations to be aware of while doing fieldwork, and the challenges of providing access, digital and otherwise, to archival collections of a cultural nature.

Students may register for one or all workshops, but space is limited, so early registration is recommended. All workshops will be held in the Archive of the Center for Folklore and Ethnography, Room 312, Logan Hall, from 1-4 p.m. For details and to register, visit the CFE website at: http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/center/placebased_workshops.html