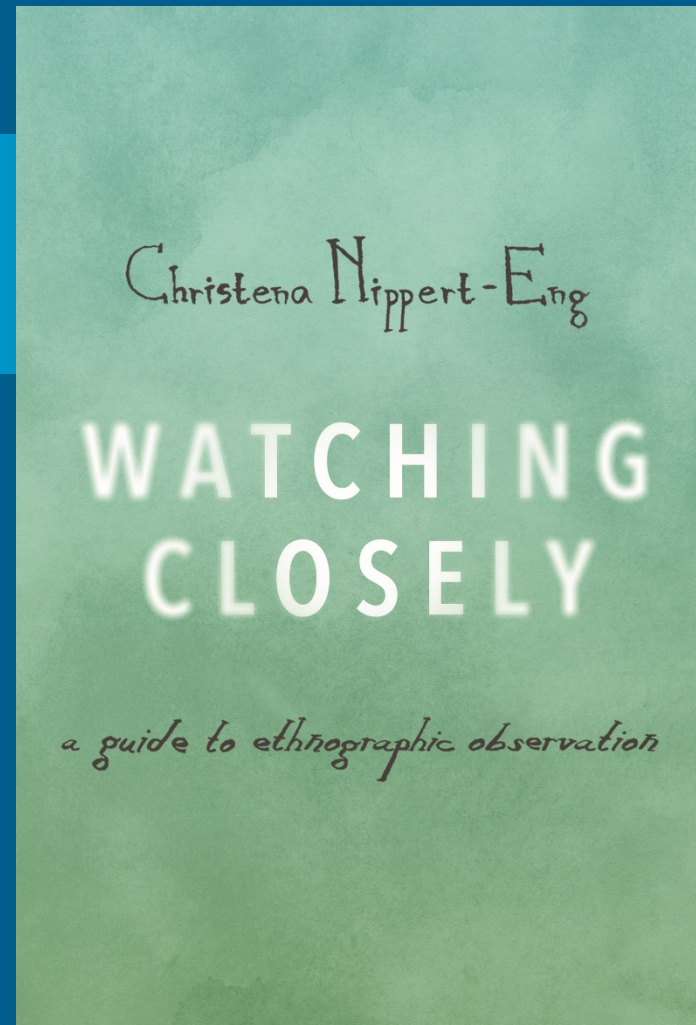


# Watching Closely: Reflections on the Methods of Direct Observation

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SSRC February 12, 2016



Oxford University Press, November 2015

# [ Constraints on course design ]

- 1) Interesting opportunity
- 2) Observation, only
- 3) Hands-on, side-by-side, great location
- 4) Scientific: rigorous, systematic, peer reviewable
- 5) How to envision and re-present data, too, especially visual
- 6) Go, creativity!
- 7) Fieldnotes → renderings
- 8) Memorable

# [ Key decisions ]

- Studio/fine arts model
- (Nonhuman) animals





# Exercises in Behavioral Observation



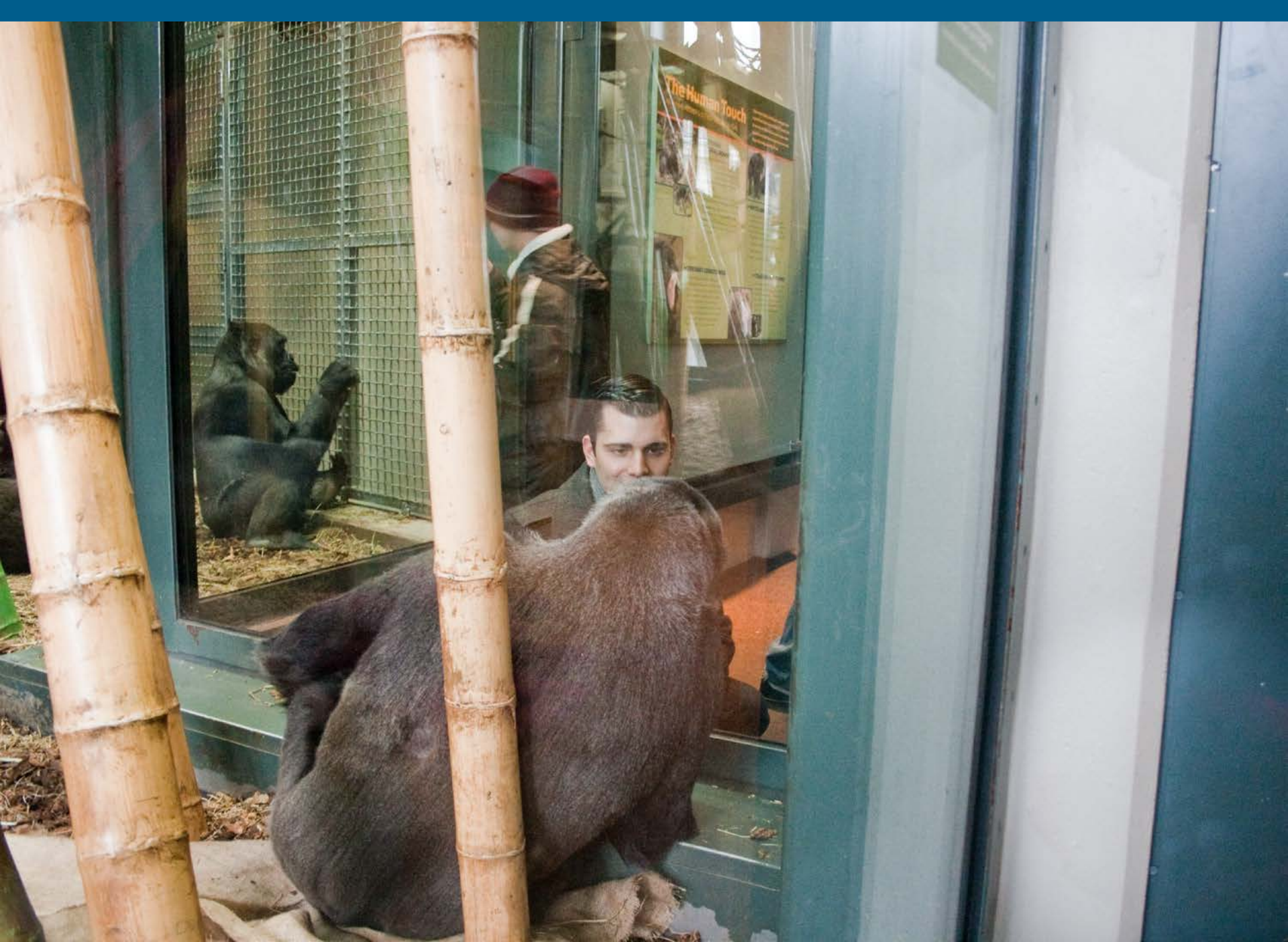






















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Part One:  
Getting Ready

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Part Two:  
The Exercises

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Part Three:  
Moving Forward

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Christena Nippert-Eng

# WATCHING CLOSELY

*a guide to ethnographic observation*

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Welcome to my companion website for *Watching Closely: A Guide to Ethnographic Observation* with Oxford University Press. This website features a collection of sample reports and field notes for each of the exercises in the book, along with a brief introduction designed to draw your attention to specific aspects of a given response.

For each exercise, I have selected between five and ten responses produced by previous students from the course on which this book is based. Each student gave me permission to share their work in this way, in order to encourage others to try their hands at this challenging way of working. I think these examples not only show how lucky I have been to work with such talented and fearless researchers, but also how remarkably creative and rigorous we should all strive to be when it comes to fieldwork.

Like the broader population of students with whom I've worked over the years, the authors of these sample reports have wonderfully diverse backgrounds. Some had previous experience with fieldwork, some did not. Some were wordsmiths by training, some were expert in the visual arts. About half were raised in the U.S. and about half in other, non-English-speaking countries. Most of these students were studying to be designers or architects, but many also had degrees in the social and behavioral sciences as well as the performing and fine arts. In one respect they were quite homogenous, though: almost none of them had experience studying any primates other than humans.

For all these reasons, mistakes abound in these homework assignments. None of these mistakes matter, however. Each report you see here has been selected because it beautifully exemplifies exactly what I hope readers will focus on in these exercises: process, effort, and the rich possibilities of communicative forms that await us.

My curatorial efforts are designed to show elements that are common in students' responses as well as those that are truly unique and innovative. The samples are arranged so that they build on each other, generally – but not always -- starting with the simplest, clearest, and most straightforward of these

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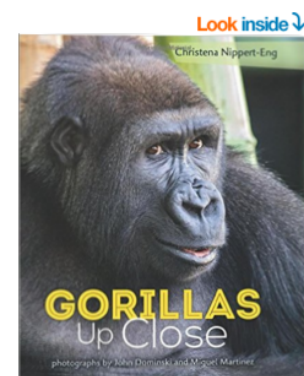
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