



**Sociology 497: Interactions of Institutions and Individuals
Summer 2015**

Professor: Yvonne Villanueva-Russell
Class Times: study abroad June 1 – June 24
Office: Social Sciences 307
Office Hours: as needed June - August
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Online resources:

Pearson learning studio course shell: <http://online.tamuc.org>
Regents Scholar Blog: <https://rsptavel.wordpress.com/>

COURSE INFORMATION

Required Textbooks:

- 1) Reserve readings (posted on Pearson Learning Studio course shell and the Regents Scholar Blog)

Other Required Materials:

- 1) Students will need materials to gather fieldnotes—notebook paper, pens, multi-colored highlighters or tape flags. Students may find a smart phone with audio recording ability to be useful, but not required.
- 2) Students will be required to produce a poster or PowerPoint presentation with a summary of their research findings at the end of the semester. Posters are relatively inexpensive (between \$10-\$25) and can be prepared by hand, or purchased at Latson's.

Optional Materials:

- 1) Although not required, I would highly recommend keeping a journal throughout our time in Europe, particularly as we begin the process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data. Being conscientious of your personal experience, feelings, challenges and growth over the course of the semester is an essential part of qualitative methodology.

Course Description:

This course is designed to provide you with an interdisciplinary understanding of the relationships between individuals and the social environments in which they live. The goals of this course are threefold:

- 1) Provide an experiential learning environment in Europe as the capstone course of the Regents Scholar Program.
- 2) Investigate the dilemma of determinism/structure as manifest as “institutions” versus free will/agency manifest in the form of “individuals” in society. This philosophical backdrop will be illustrated by lectures and learning experiences centered around:
 - a) religion/secularization
 - b) art/music
 - c) death/memorialization
 - d) education
- 3) Engage in ethnographic research on a topic of a student’s choosing that illustrates some element of the relationship between the four focal institutions of our course and the ways they influence or are influenced by individuals.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- 1) Students will demonstrate competence in collecting, transcribing and coding ethnographic data.
- 2) Students will demonstrate their ability to synthesize data in memo writing assignments.
- 3) Students will demonstrate the ability to interpret and apply their qualitative data to larger sociological, historical, or psychological concepts and theories
- 4) Students will demonstrate the ability to be reflexive of the qualitative research process.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

I. Instructional Methods

We will utilize experiential learning by travelling, exploring and experiencing Europe. Supplemental lectures will be provided—some of them formal, such as guest lectures in Munich by Dr. Jasmin Siri and those in London by Dr. Ann Richards and Dr. Browyn Williams. Dr. Dobbs will provide important lectures of historical context in Bayeux, France and Munich, Germany. Other lectures will be informal and spontaneous, provided by Drs. Dobbs, Tabettha Shato, Shonda Gibson and myself to connect particular events and experiences to larger theories and concepts in the disciplines of history, literature, psychology and sociology.

The course will be more formally assessed using 5 types of assignments, detailed below:

A. Coded Fieldnotes (6 @ 40 points each)

This assignment has been designed to meet student learning objective #1

Students will collect data on their chosen topic utilizing the ethnographic methods of: observation, interviews, secondary/archival data or content analysis. Students will be required to complete one set of fieldnotes on our initial day of arrival in Bayeux. After that day, students will collect data throughout the trip, turning in a total of six sets of fieldnotes for feedback and as a reliability/validity check by the professor. As a rough guideline, students should try to submit two sets of fieldnotes per country visited, but this may vary depending on the student's individual research topic.

Each set of fieldnotes will contain the following sections:

- Jottings: (Initial notes taken during the event. May be handwritten, partial, taken in shorthand)
- Full transcription of event (More complete summary of event completed in retrospect, but shortly after the event)
- Initial coding
- Analytical hunches/highlights
- Reflexivity
- Reminders/Suggestions for future fieldnotes

[Students collecting artifacts for content analysis may not need to complete all of these steps in compiling fieldnotes, but the documents should be analyzed according to the last four steps in the process outlined above]

There is no due date for fieldnotes, as they should be completed and submitted over the course of our time in Europe. Ideally, all coded fieldnotes should be submitted to the professor before departing Europe but no later than 2 weeks after returning home from our trip abroad.

B. Memos (3 @ 20 points each)

This assignment is designed to measure student learning outcomes #2.

Students will submit three memos that detail tentative findings or a tentative analysis of their data over the course of our time in Europe. Ideally, all memos should be submitted to the professor before departing Europe but no later than 2 weeks after returning home from our trip abroad.

C. Research Presentation (1 @ 160 points)

This assignment is designed to measure student learning outcomes #2 and #3

Students will present a poster or preside over a PowerPoint presentation that summarizes the highlights of their research project. This event will be held on [Date TBA], modeled on what would be done for an academic conference.

Introduction: (worth 20 points)

Students will provide a discussion of the background of the topic they have chosen. Specifically, students will provide documentation of the size, nature, prevalence and/or significance of this topic.

Research Question: (worth 10 points)

Students will present clear, explicit research questions that narrow the focus of their research.

Methodology (worth 30 points)

Students will discuss the qualitative research method most appropriate to investigating their chosen topic of study.

Findings (worth 75 points)

Students will interpret their qualitative data in light of the concepts and theories presented in our European lectures and in light of prior research done by others.

Limitations & Suggestions for Future Research (worth 25 points)

Students will assess the strength of the method(s) chosen, and clearly and explicitly note shortcomings and flaws with their research. Lastly, students will provide suggestions to improve research on the topic should it be carried out by other researchers in the future.

This assignment will be completed in parts, with the most important “findings” section formulated during our time in Europe. The other sections will be completed upon our return to the United States in preparation for display in August.

D. Reflexivity Essay (25 points)

Students will reflexively assess their role as researchers, and how the experience of conducting research evolved over the course of the semester. Part of this assignment will be conducted on our first initial day in Bayeux, France. The rest of the assignment will be completed upon our return to the United States, but before the final poster presentation in August.

II. Grading Procedures

Grading:

Individual assignments in the course include the following

Coded Fieldnotes (6 @ 40 points each)	240 points
Memos (3 @ 20 points each)	60 points
Research Presentation	160 points
<u>Reflexivity Exercise</u>	<u>25 points</u>
TOTAL	485 points

****Quizzes may be added as needed throughout our study abroad experience. As quizzes are added, the point totals for the course will be adjusted.***

Grades on individual assignments will be decided in the following manner:

- A 90%-100%
- B 80%-89%
- C 70%-79%
- D 60%-69%
- F 59% and below

Final grades will be calculated according to the following scale:

- A = 436 – 485 points
- B = 388 – 435 points
- C = 339 - 387 points
- D = 291 – 338 points
- F = 0 – 290 points

Grades of Incomplete:

I do not assign grades of incomplete in this course. All coursework must be handed in to me by [date TBA]. Your grade will be assigned based on the points you have earned from all completed work at that time. It is your responsibility to finish assignments prior to their due dates, or to make alternate arrangements for their completion. Do not assume I can or will extend due dates or course requirements for your individual needs or preferences.

Late work

Assignments cannot be re-done. Extra fieldnote assignments cannot be done for extra credit.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES
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ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library
Room 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Statement on Student Behavior

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See *Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook*).

Statement on Nondiscrimination

A&M-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Course handouts, instruction assignments, PowerPoint lectures will be posted on eCollege as a supplement. In order to access eCollege, student will need the following:

Ability to open Adobe Acrobat files (.pdf), PowerPoint files (.ppt) and Word files (.doc)

Our campus is optimized to work in a Microsoft Windows environment. This means our courses work best if you are using a Windows operating system (XP or newer) and a recent version of Microsoft Internet Explorer (6.0, 7.0, or 8.0).

Your courses will also work with Macintosh OS X along with a recent version of Safari 2.0 or better. Along with Internet Explorer and Safari, eCollege also supports the Firefox browser (3.0) on both Windows and Mac operating systems.

It is strongly recommended that you [perform a "Browser Test" prior to the start of your course](#). To launch a browser test, login to eCollege, click on the 'myCourses' tab, and then select the "Browser Test" link under Support Services.

For those of you who are not familiar with eCollege, I suggest you take the tutorial offered online. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact the folks in Technology Services.

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

eCollege technical concerns: Please contact the eCollege HelpDesk, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by sending an email directly to helpdesk@online.tamuc.org. You may also reach the HelpDesk by calling 1-866-656-5511, or through online chat by clicking on the "Live Support" tab within your eCollege course.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Interaction with Instructor Statement:

I expect each of you to be active and thoughtful participants within our classroom and learning community. You are to expect the same of me. This includes completing our readings related to course topics, individual written assignments, and completion of exams.

Email [Yvonne.VRussell@tamuc.edu] is the best way to reach me, as I check it daily. You can expect to receive a reply to any inquiry within 24 hours (M-F)

In case of emergency, you may leave word for me through the Sociology & Criminal Justice department, who can forward your message to me: 903-886-5332.

Check your MyLeo email account regularly for announcements about our class!!!

I. COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Dates of written assignments are scheduled tentatively at this time. They may be changed but advanced notice will be given in class. You are expected to read any assigned material prior to its discussion in class.

Date	Topic	Assignment/ Notes
May 26	Boot Camp	Tentatively decide upon research question/topic
May 27	Boot Camp	Sociological concept exercise
June 1 (M)	Bayeux, France Bayeux Tapestry	1) Reflexivity exercise 2) Fieldnote jotting exercise
June 2 (T)	Bayeux, France Sainte-Mere-Eglise & cemeteries	<p align="center">Students should complete 5 additional sets of coded fieldnotes + 3 memos</p>
June 4 (Th)	Paris France Guided tour- Montmartre	
June 5 (F)	Paris France Guided tour- Jewish Paris	
June 8 (M)	Munich, Germany Lecture- Education Tour – Dachau Concentration Camp	
June 9 (T)	Munich, Germany: Lecture- TBA Guest lecture by Dr. Jasmin Siri	
June 10 (W)	Day trip to Salzburg, Germany Others stay behind to complete White Rose Walk	
June 11 (Th)	Day trip to Rothenberg-ob-der-Tauber Others stay behind to complete White Rose Walk	
June 15 (M)	London, England Walking tour with Dr. Keith Cowlard Museum of London-Docklands	
June 16 (T)	Open Society Foundation	
June 17 (W)	Lecture/project workday	
June 18 (Th)	Lecture/project workday Memo writing	
June 19 (F)	Lecture/project workday	
June 20 (Sa)	Tour of Parliament	
June 23 (T)	Education & Religion: 1) Guest lecture by Dr. Bronwyn Williams 2) Guest lecture by Dr. Ann Richards	

Date	Topic	Assignment/ Notes
July 8 ^{***}		All fieldnotes & memos should be turned in within 2 weeks of returning from Europe
Date TBA ^{***}		Reflexive Essay Due
Date TBA ^{***}		Working on Findings section of the Research Presentation
August ^{***}		Final Research Presentation

***Although we will not have class lecture between June 24 and August, your professor will be available in her office or online to meet with you should you have any questions particular to your own research project.