Welcome Letter  
EER 7880: Fundamentals of Ethnographic Research  

Dear Students,  

Welcome to EER 7880, a graduate class on the Fundamentals of Ethnographic Research. Thank you so much for choosing to be in this class this semester.  

Put simply, ethnography is the study of culture. Even though this definition contains few words, it simultaneously holds many possibilities within it—most of which are not so simple after all. I think that is part of what makes ethnography so interesting. Like culture itself, ethnography is complex, nuanced, thought-provoking, and constantly changing. It is a field marked not only by traditions that have held over time, but also by some of the most exciting and innovative turns in methodological thinking. I really enjoy ethnography, and hope you will, too.  

In this course, we will focus on becoming ethnographic. In other words, it could be argued that ethnography is not something that we turn on and off—it can be a way of thinking that encourages us to be present in the world. It is a set of habits and skills that, once we build them, can stay with us. Ethnography helps us to pay more attention to the world in which we live, both in relation to the places we travel and the places in which we already are. Ethnography helps us to better understand those around us, and, in the process, to better understand ourselves.  

The main focus in this class will emphasize doing ethnography. We will learn how to do some of the mainstays of ethnographic research, such as participant observations, fieldnotes, and interviews. We will practice designing ethnographic projects of interest in educational settings. We will keep research journals, and we will carefully attend to ethics in fieldwork along the way.  

After that, the next portion of the class will take a particular interest in everyday ethnography. We will begin this segment by exploring what some might call Slow anthropology. Although we will talk more later about what it is, what it means, and how it has been useful in research for scholars such as Sarah Pink, Marcus Banks, and Liza Grandia, for now, I want to share two brief quotations for you to potentially start thinking with:  

“If we think we already know what is out there, we will almost surely miss much of it.”  

“I also hope that when you next go walking in the landscape, whether terrestrial or textual, it will open you up in ways that give cause for curiosity and care. Perhaps you will be inspired to search, and then search again.”  
(Tim Ingold, *Anthropology and/or Education*, 2018, p. 83)  

We will then consider how other forms of ethnography intersect with the everyday, including those that are sensory, critical, and place-based. And, in the process, we might find ourselves not only adopting ethnographic techniques in this particular course, but in our research experiences yet-to-come.  

I am looking forward to a wonderful semester with you all.  

Warm regards,  
Jasmine B. Ulmer