While the intellectual roots of ethnography as a mode of social inquiry lie in anthropological explorations of distant places and peoples, American sociology has a rich tradition of focusing the ethnographic eye on the American experience. We will take advantage of this tradition to encounter urban America through the ethnographic lens, expanding our social vision and investigating the nature of race, place, meaning, interaction, and inequality in the U.S. While doing so, we will also explore the unique benefits, challenges, and underlying assumptions of ethnographic research as a distinctive mode of acquiring and communicating social knowledge. As such, this course offers both an immersion in aspects of the American experience and an inquiry into the craft of ethnographic writing and research.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology has specified six student learning outcomes we want students to acquire before graduating. The relevant outcomes for this course are:

- Articulating the complexity of contemporary socio-cultural phenomenon in their many dimensions (e.g., temporal, structural, spatial, and symbolic).

- Applying sociological theory to analyze socio-cultural phenomena.

- Drawing upon your understanding of historical and contemporary socio-cultural phenomena to engage the world.

- Selecting appropriate sociological and/or anthropological research methods to study socio-cultural phenomena.

**Course Materials**

There are four required books for the course, which are available at the Carleton bookstore. Other required readings will be made available on the Moodle course website.
Course Requirements

Your final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

Participation 15%  
[Due each class session]

Reading Questions 15%  
[Due each class session]

Discussion Leadership Assignment 10%  
[TBD]

Response Paper #1 14%  
[Due Wednesday, 4/11]

Response Paper #2 14%  
[Due Sunday, 4/29]

Response Paper #3 14%  
[Due Wednesday, 5/16]

Final Response Paper 18%  
[Due Wednesday, 5/30]

A = 100-93; A- = <93-90; B+ = <90-87; B = <87-83; B- = <83-80; C+ = <80-77; C = <77-73; C- = <73-70; D+ = <70-67; D = <67-60; F = <60

Policy on Late Work: Late work will be penalized one grade increment (e.g., A to B, B to C) per day in the absence of clear and demonstrable extenuating circumstances (e.g., extended illness, family emergency, letter from dean’s office, etc.).

Readings: To do well in this course, it is imperative that you commit to several hours of active, focused reading prior to each class meeting in order to complete the readings and reading questions and be prepared to engage dynamically in class discussions.

Some questions to keep in mind while reading: What is the main argument of the section/text? Key concepts and definitions? What methods & evidence are used to support the authors’ arguments? Make a note of concepts/arguments you find difficult to understand (to bring up in class). Make a note of things you agree/disagree with, or find plausible/implausible, exciting/problematic, etc. (to bring up in class discussions).

Reading Questions: In order to facilitate active, critical engagement with the readings, and to stimulate discussion & debate with one another (through which much of our learning will occur), each student is required to upload via Moodle at least two reading questions prior to each class meeting:

(1) One observation, question, or critique about an ethnographic scene, quotation, finding, or argument in the text (Examples: Do cops really hang out at hospitals to make arrest quotas? Or What exactly does Tavory mean by a “sociology of summoning”? Or Is eviction or surveillance of the sort seen in
Goffman and Desmond typical of other U.S. cities and neighborhoods? Or I think Gonzales’s ethnography-based policy recommendations regarding DACA expansion is persuasive, here’s why …

(2) One observation, question, or critique about the author’s method and approach to writing ethnography. (Examples: Is it ok for white sociologists to conduct ethnographic research in disadvantaged black neighborhoods? Or Did Goffman commit conspiracy to commit murder? What ethical issues are raised by the appendix of On the Run? Or I think first-person as opposed or third-person ethnographic voice is preferable, here’s why … Or I think ethnographers should (always/sometimes/never) report the actual names and places involved in their research.)

Reading questions should be posted by 11am before each class session. You may miss two session’s worth of reading questions without consequence; beyond that, each failure to upload reading questions will incrementally lower your reading question grade (e.g., A to A-, A- to B+). Reading question submissions can range from a couple sentences up to a single paragraph in length. The key is to demonstrate substantial, thoughtful engagement with each day’s readings.

Participation: Your personal success in this course (as well as its collective success) depends on your active and sustained engagement throughout the entire term. I expect everyone to participate at a high level; however, I recognize we don’t all have the same personalities or learning styles. While participation includes asking questions and contributing vigorously (yet respectfully) to class discussions, it also involves consistent presence and attentiveness to others throughout the term. Active participation also means refraining from non-course related use of electronic devices during class time. You may miss two class sessions without consequence; beyond that, each missed class will incrementally lower your participation grade.

Civil Discourse at Carleton: At Opening Convocation, President Poskanzer challenged us as a community to pursue the difficult task of developing habits and skills of civil discourse across difference and disagreement. Let’s work together to ensure that classroom discussions throughout the term reflect our shared commitment to academic and democratic norms of mutual respect, tolerance, and civility. This does not mean engaging in “tone policing” or mandating emotionless argument: sometimes authentic intellectual-democratic discourse across deep difference and disagreement can become heated! Rather, it involves the difficult task of combining our passionate personal, intellectual, moral, political, and religious convictions with “intellectual humility,” defined as “the owning of one’s limitations,” a “willingness to improve one’s knowledge of the world,” and “low concern for intellectual domination” over others. It is “closely allied with traits such as open-mindedness, a sense of one’s fallibility, and being responsive to reasons. Thus, intellectual humility advocates for conviction through critical self-reflection” (humilityandconviction.uconn.edu).

Please keep these guidelines in mind, revisiting them at times throughout the term to aid our collective effort at promoting civil discourse and learning across difference (http://www.crlt.umich.edu/examples-discussion-guidelines):
• Listen carefully to what others are saying even when you strongly disagree with what is being said. Comments that you make (asking for clarification, sharing critiques, expanding on a point, etc.) should reflect that you have paid attention to the speaker’s actual points.

• Respect others’ rights to hold opinions and beliefs that differ from your own. When you disagree, challenge or criticize the idea, not the person.

• Don’t interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking.

• Support your statements. Use evidence and provide a rationale for your points.

• Share responsibility for including all voices in the discussion. If you have much to say, try to hold back a bit; if you are hesitant to speak, look for opportunities to contribute.

• Recognize that we are all still learning. Be willing to change your perspective, and make space for others to do the same.

Discussion Leadership Assignment: Those who have a say in how and what they learn tend to learn more and enjoy the process better. As such, each student will have the opportunity to facilitate class discussion for roughly one half of one class period (~25-35 minutes) during the term. This means you will be “extra familiar” with the required reading assignments, arrive with discussion questions and/or other prepared discussion format, and be the primary discussion facilitator for a segment of one class period. You will email me a brief outline of your plan/discussion questions by 10pm the day before you lead discussion.

Response Papers #1-3: 5-6 page papers, due 4/11 (On the Run), 4/29 (Evicted), and 5/16 (Lives in Limbo), describing and assessing the findings and methods of a major sociological ethnography.

Final Response Paper: An 8-page paper, describing and assessing the findings and methods of a major sociological ethnography (Summoned)—and assessing various approaches to writing sociological ethnography based on our course readings—due the last day of class, Wednesday, 5/30, at 11:59pm.

Paper Formatting: All papers must be uploaded to Moodle in either a Microsoft Word or PDF file format and use APA, MLA, Chicago, or ASA citation styles.

Important Note: If at any point in the term you become concerned about your grade, a particular assignment, classroom participation or classroom climate issues, falling behind, or anything else, please don’t wait to come visit me during office hours or otherwise contact me! The sooner we identify potential problems and concerns, the more effectively we will be able to work together to address them.

Academic Integrity

In line with Carleton’s policy on academic integrity, it is assumed that a student is the author of all coursework submitted by that student. Please refer to Carleton’s full policy for additional information or see me if you have questions. http://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/integrity/
Academic Support

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Carleton College is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Services office (Burton Hall 03) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, autism spectrum disorders, chronic health, traumatic brain injury and concussions, sensory, or physical), please contact Chris Dallager, Director of Disability Services, by calling 507-222-5250 or sending an email to cdallager@carleton.edu to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

Technological Resources for Students with Disabilities: The Assistive Technology program brings together academic and technological resources to complement student classroom and computing needs, particularly in support of students with physical or learning disabilities. Accessibility features include text-to-speech (Kurzweil), speech-to-text (Dragon) software, and audio recording Smartpens. If you would like to know more, contact aztechs@carleton.edu or visit go.carleton.edu/aztech.

Library: Ask a librarian for help with your research in this class. You can drop by the library’s Research/IT desk to ask any question you have, at any point in your process. Librarians help students find and evaluate articles, books, websites, statistics, data, government documents, and more. For more information, visit the Gould Library website at go.carleton.edu/library.

The Writing Center: The Writing Center, located in 420 4th Libe, has peer writing consultants who can work with you during any stage of the writing process (brainstorming to final proofreading). Hours and more information can be found on the writing center website. You can reserve specific times for conferences in 420 4th Libe by using their online appointment system. Walk-ins are welcome, though writers with appointments have priority.

Writing Assistance for Students Whose First Language Is Not English: If you are a second language writer and believe you might benefit from working individually with a writing consultant on a regular basis this term, email Renata Fitzpatrick, Multilingual Writing Coordinator, call her at x5998, or stop by her office in 420D 4th Libe. She can arrange once- or twice-a-week meetings between you and a specific writing consultant throughout the term.

Class Presentations and Public Speaking: Speech coaching is a student-staffed resource designed to assist you with class presentations, comps talks, and other speech-related events. Your coach can assist you with speech & communication skills including clarity, organization, articulation, projection, body language, eye contact, and effective use of aids (e.g., notes, PowerPoint, Keynote, etc.). Depending on your goals, your coach can also work with you on the content of the presentation: organization, voice, clarity, and, ultimately, persuasive impact. For more information: go.carleton.edu/speakeasy.

Time Management, Test-Preparation Strategies, and Study Skills: All Residential Life Area Directors are trained to work with you to improve your time management and academic skills. Their goals are to heighten your awareness of your personal strengths and skills and to offer different ways you can
approach your academic work so you're more efficient and effective. Meetings are by appointment; you simply need to email one of them to arrange a visit. For details and resources: Academic Skills Coaching website.

**Course Outline and Reading Schedule**

* Please read the selections in order as they are listed on the syllabus, and be sure to bring the day’s readings with you to class. Stop and start your reading at the obvious place (section beginning/end, first/last paragraph, etc.) unless otherwise noted.

**INTRODUCTION**

**Mon 3/26 (Week 1)**

Introduction, The Craft of Urban Ethnography

- “Voices from the Sidewalk: Ethnography and Writing Race,” Mitch Duneier and Les Back

**ON THE RUN: FUGITIVE LIFE IN AN AMERICAN CITY**
**(CHICAGO SCHOOL ETHNOGRAPHY)**

**Wed 3/28**

*On the Run* (1)


**Fri 3/30**

*On the Run* (2)

- Alice Goffman, *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*, Chapters 3-4

**Mon 4/2 (Week 2)**

*On the Run* (3)

- Alice Goffman, *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*, Chapters 5-6

**Wed 4/4**

*On the Run* (4)

- Alice Goffman, *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*, Chapter 7, Conclusion, Epilogue
Fri 4/6

*On the Run* (5)

- Alice Goffman, *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*, Appendix
- Review of *On the Run* (Steven Lubet, *The New Republic*)
- Alice Goffman, “A Reply to Professor Lubet’s Critique”

Mon 4/9 (Week 3)

*On the Run* (6)

- “The Stoop isn’t the Jungle,” (Dwayne Betts, *Slate*)
- “The Society of Fugitives,” (James Forman Jr., *The Atlantic*)
- “Black Life, Annotated,” (Christina Sharpe, *The New Inquiry*)
- “On the Ropes,” (Philip Cohen, Family Inequality blog)
- “The Ethics of Ethnography,” (*Slate*)
- “The Trials of Alice Goffman,” (*NYT Magazine*)
- “3 Lingering Questions from the Alice Goffman Controversy,” (*The Cut*)
- “Slumming It,” (Claude Fischer, *Boston Review*)

Wed 4/11

*** Paper #1 Due 11:59pm ***

*On the Run* (7)

- “Fulsome Prison Blues,” (*On Wisconsin*)

**Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City**
*(Relational Ethnography)*

Fri 4/13

*Evicted* (1)

- Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, Prologue, Chapters 1-4

Mon 4/16 (Week 4)

*Evicted* (2)
- Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, Chapters 5-8

**Wed 4/18**

*Evicted (3)*

- Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, Chapters 9-12

**Fri 4/20**

*Evicted (4)*

- Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, Chapters 13-16

**Mon 4/23 (Week 5)**

*Evicted (5)*

- Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, Chapters 17-21

**Wed 4/25**

*Evicted (6)*

- Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, Chapters 22-24, Epilogue

**Fri 4/27**

***Paper #2 Due Sunday, 4/29, 11:59pm ***

*Evicted (7) (Midterm Feedback)*

- Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, “About This Project”
- Review of *Evicted* (David Harding, *American Journal of Sociology*)
- “Review: In ‘Evicted,’ Home is an Elusive Goal for America’s Poor,” (*The New York Times*)
- “Who Profits from Poverty?” (David Adler, *Current Affairs*)
- “The Great Expectations of Matthew Desmond” (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*)

**Mon 4/30 (Week 6)**

Midterm Break

**Wed 5/2**

Relational Ethnography

- Matthew Desmond, “Relational Ethnography,” *Theory and Society*
LIVES IN LIMBO: UNDOCUMENTED AND COMING OF AGE IN AMERICA

(LONGITUDINAL ETHNOGRAPHY)

Fri 5/4
Lives in Limbo (1)
- Roberto Gonzales, Lives in Limbo, “Memoir” poem (before Table of Contents), Foreword, Preface, Chapter 1

Mon 5/7 (Week 7)
Lives in Limbo (2)
- Roberto Gonzales, Lives in Limbo, Chapters 2-3

Wed 5/9
Lives in Limbo (3)
- Roberto Gonzales, Lives in Limbo, Chapters 4-5

Fri 5/11
Lives in Limbo (4)
- Roberto Gonzales, Lives in Limbo, Chapters 6-7

Mon 5/14 (Week 8)
Lives in Limbo (5)
- Roberto Gonzales, Lives in Limbo, Chapters 8-9

Wed 5/16
*** Paper #3 Due 11:59pm ***
Lives in Limbo (6)
- “Struggle in the Shadows,” (The Harvard Gazette)
- “Lives in Limbo: Undocumented Youth’s Limited Opportunities,” (NBC News)
- Annette Lareau, “Reflections on Longitudinal Ethnography …”
**Summoned: Identification and Religious Life in a Jewish Neighborhood**  
(Pragmatist Ethnography & Abductive Analysis)

Fri 5/18

*Summoned (1)*


Mon 5/21 (Week 9)

*Summoned (2)*

- Iddo Tavory, *Summoned: Identification and Religious Life in a Jewish Neighborhood*, Chapters 3-4

Wed 5/23

*Summoned (3)*

- Iddo Tavory, *Summoned: Identification and Religious Life in a Jewish Neighborhood*, Chapters 5-6

Fri 5/25

*Summoned (4)*

- Iddo Tavory, *Summoned: Identification and Religious Life in a Jewish Neighborhood*, Chapters 7-8

Mon 5/28 (Week 10)

*Summoned (5)*

- Timmermans and Tavory, “Theory Construction in Qualitative Research: From Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis,” *Sociological Theory*

Wed 5/30

***Paper #4 Due 11:59pm***

Conclusion, Assessing Sociological Ethnographies (TBA) *(Final Course Evaluations)*