**The Relatedness Project: Overview**

Upper Level Kinship Course

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The major assignment of this course is structured around a mini- ethnographic research project called The Relatedness Project (TRP). For this project, you will decide with your group (3-4 people) on a theme that you would like to discuss with three members of one family (care, parenting, sex, adolescence, gender roles, politics, marriage, kinship, aging, obligations, conflict resolution etc) and you will design a research project that compares different families’ approaches to these topics. This family can be your family or another family and the idea of “family” can be loosely interpreted. The most obvious choice is for each person to interview their own family members, but for some of you this may not be possible and desirable. In this case, you can choose to interview another family with whom you are close. Think about your topic and who you might want to interview (men, women, teens, elderly family members, married family members etc). With your group you will come up with a set of questions and themes to discuss with your research participants which will give you a body of data to analyze. The end result will be a research project where you will combine research with your interview data and you will learn something about different families, comparing family experiences and perspectives, in order to make an argument that helps us to better understand what the idea of family means.

Parts of this project must be done as a group, but other parts can be done individually or with your group. For this project you will conduct interviews, analyze your data, write a research report on your findings, and present your findings to the class. More details to follow throughout the semester.

**PROJECT COMPONENTS**

This entire project is worth 30% of your grade in this class. The project will consist of the following components (more details TBA):

* **Topic Proposal and Plan** (3%): As a group, you will decide on a topic for your research, and come up with a plan about who you are going to interview, what you will ask them, and write up a schedule to make sure it gets done in a timely manner. (\*If you are interested in presenting or publishing on this work, the structure and format of your Proposal and Plan would follow the university IRB guidelines. Please talk to me further if you are interested in potentially doing this).
* **Annotated Bibliography** (2%): Each student will find 2 academic sources on the topic you are studying and submit an annotated bibliography. You should discuss what aspects of this topic you will be responsible for researching with your group members, and try to come up with a plan so that you are not replicating each others’ work.
* **Interview Transcripts** (raw data) (3%): Each student will be responsible for conducting and transcribing (typing up from an audio recording) 3 interviews. On the same day you conduct each interview, if you have any thoughts or observations you should type up your observations, reflecting on your conversation with the person, the context of the interview, or any historical context you have with the person you are interviewing, any initial interpretations or analyses you might have.
* **Coded Transcripts** (5%): We will be spending a good deal of time in class learning how to group code qualitative research, and the coding will take place during class time and outside of class time as well. You will be working together to come up with codes that emerge from your data, learning processes for coming to consensus, and learning how to draw conclusions from your findings based on these codes. We will be learning about interrater reliability and theoretical saturation. Coding methods and technology options will be discussed further.
* **Research Presentations** (5%): Your team will present a 15-20 minute presentation on your findings. If you did your analysis individually, your team can present an overview together of the theme/topic and then each person can present a short overview of their particular research question and findings. Be sure to time your presentation to ensure you don’t go over time.
* **Peer and Self Evaluations** (2%): Because a good portion of the work in this class is group work, you will be evaluating your group members to ensure accountability to your peers. Your peers’ evaluation of you will be calculated into your grade on this project.
* **Relatedness Project Final Report** (10%): The final product of this mini-ethnographic project will be an 8-10 page report for groups and a 4-5 page report for individual papers. Forthcoming guidelines for this report will lay out the specific sections and expectations for this assignment.

**\*\*A note about the work\*\*** Keeping up with deadlines and getting things done in advance is key to success in this project. Set up your interviews as early as possible. The transcribing, coding and interpretation will take the most time, so you do not want to leave that until the last minute. (Transcribing a 30 minute interview takes approximately 2 hours). I have built in many deadlines into the syllabus to keep you on task, but have also made suggestions on the Canvas schedule as a guide for when to have the work done so you are able to complete the project on time, and so you can use the class time provided wisely.

**The Relatedness Project**

**Topic Proposal and Plan** (3%): As a group, you will decide on a topic for your research, and come up with a plan about who you are going to interview, what you will ask them, and write up a schedule to make sure it gets done in a timely manner.

Your Topic Proposal and Plan should contain the following sections.

1. Group members: please list all group members’ names.
2. Project Title: Please include a creative project title, it’s ok if it changes later based on the way the project develops.
3. Topic overview: please write a short paragraph describing the topic you would like to explore during your research, and what kinds of problems or issues you are going to investigate, and what kinds of general questions you will seek to answer through your investigation.
4. Research plan: please describe the research procedures, including how you will recruit participants, how you will conduct the interview, who you will interview, how you will record the interviews (ie. what technology or app will you use), and the schedule for each of your interviews. Please see Canvas for relevant deadlines and suggested timeline.
5. Interview Question Guide: Please list the questions you plan to use as your guide when conducting the interview. You should have about 15 questions. Remember, with open-ended qualitative interviews, you don’t need to stick to a strict list of questions, but each interviewer should be working from the same guiding questions, following up as needed. See QRM pages 41-45 for useful tips about designing questions and how to effectively use probes.
6. Informed Consent: Please write out a short script that you will either read or use as a guide before conducting an interview to ensure confidentiality and privacy. The script should include:
7. Introduce yourself (when relevant)
8. Describe your research topic or interest
9. Share the practical considerations a potential interviewee should be aware of (i.e. how long the interview will take, that you would like to audio record the interview, and that they can decline to participate with no hard feelings)
10. Ask the potential interviewee if they are willing to participate in the interview.
11. Ask the potential interviewee if they are willing to have the interview recorded.

Things to consider when designing questions:

* If you don’t know your interviewee, use initial questions to build trust and rapport (i.e. have your interviewee tell you about their background)
* Questions need to make sense *to the interviewee*
* Avoid yes/no questions
* Avoid vague questions
* Avoid multi-part questions
* Construct unbiased or non-leading questions
* Have interviewees walk you through different time periods (past, present, future)
* Ask interviewees to narrate their experiences related to your research topics (i.e. Could you talk me through what your job as a \_\_\_\_ entails? What is a normal day like at your work?)

**Annotated Bibliography** (2%): Each student will find 2 academic sources on the topic you are studying and submit an annotated bibliography. You should discuss what aspects of this topic you will be responsible for researching and try to come up with a plan so that you are not replicating each other's work. You will submit one annotated bibliography per group with 6-8 sources (depending on the number of group members), but **it should be clear which students completed which annotated sources** as you will be graded individually.

***What’s in an Annotated Bibliography?***

An entry in an annotated bibliography should be about four sentences and it includes 1) the citation for your source, just like in a regular bibliography, followed by 2) a short paragraph that describes the source, and answers the four questions (see below).

**Your description may include the following:**

1. A **summary** of the material (its main points or arguments in a few sentences)
2. An **evaluation** of the source (its strengths or weaknesses)
3. How recent is it? An old article can be a strength (if you’re looking for a historical perspective) or a weakness (if you’re researching a contemporary issue).
4. Is it a reputable author/journal?
5. Any other obvious weaknesses? Strengths?
6. **How it fits in with your other sources** (if it supports your other materials or brings up new questions, highlights new evidence, or introduces a different point of view)
7. **An assessment of its value** to your research (its importance or usefulness)
8. What aspect of your argument are you using this piece to support?
9. What part of your research question does it help you answer?