

**Talking to Farmers and Fishermen: Social Science Field Methods for Environmental  
Policy Research**

**ENV 2314 – Spring 2019, Fall 2019**

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**Course Overview**

**Course Description**

Natural resource users—like farmers and fishermen—possess intimate knowledge of the complex socioecological systems where they live and work. How can researchers appropriately and ethically engage individual and community stakeholders as participants in environmental research? Through assignments, activities, and class excursions (lab), students will gain competence in collaborative field research skills, including the ethical conduct of research with human subjects, participant observation, conducting interviews and focus groups, writing up field notes, developing metadata, and establishing protocols for data management. Students will also practice preliminary data analysis—transcription and text analysis of field collected data, descriptive statistics, and identification of future research questions. Field excursions/lab on most Friday afternoons. Students are expected to be available from 1:15-4:10 pm to participate in these excursions.

**Assignments and Grading**

The final course grade will be determined by:

- Participation: attendance at all class meetings and field visits is expected.
- Revised positionality statement.
- Completed write up of field notes from all field interviews.
- Transcripts written up from at least one independently conducted interview, along with audio recording archived in the Co-Lab.
- Final research paper, analyzing participant observation and interview data. This can be done individually or in pairs.

**Participation:** Attendance and contributions to small and large group discussions are required for the course. Coming prepared having seriously considered the readings will be important to

ensuring that every field visit and in-class discussion is successful and meaningful—to both students and community stakeholders.

### **Readings and Blackboard**

There are two primary books for this course.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw (2011). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. University of Chicago Press.

Weiss, Robert S. *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. Simon and Schuster, 1995.

Additional readings for the course will be posted to Blackboard in folders labeled for the topic that is the focus for each class period. It will be helpful for students to bring paper copies of readings to class in order to better engage with material and participate in activities.