

“The mission of Tyndale Seminary is to provide Christ-centred graduate theological education for leaders in the church and society whose lives are marked by intellectual maturity, spiritual vigour and moral integrity, and whose witness will faithfully engage culture with the Gospel.”

Course	TOOLS FOR READING SOCIAL CONTEXT: ETHNOGRAPHY FOR MINISTRY CHED / PAST 0662 1S
Date and Time	JANUARY 8 – APRIL 5, 2024 MONDAYS, 2:15 – 5:05 PM SYNCHRONOUS ONLINE
Instructor	YAU MAN SIEW, PhD Phone number: 416 226 6620 ext. 6750 Email: ysiew@tyndale.ca
Class Information	This is a synchronous online course, with weekly livestream class sessions on Mondays to highlight major themes, Q&A, reflections, and breakout group discussions on assigned readings. Office Hours: Weekly on Mondays, 5:15 -5:30 PM. Email me for virtual appointments.
Course Material	Access course material at classes.tyndale.ca or other services at Tyndale One . Course emails will be sent to your @MyTyndale.ca e-mail account only.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Ethnographic research aims to equip students to “read” people in their contexts reliably and accurately. If contextualized ministry is being accountable to the hermeneutical obligations of the gospel, contextual analysis is fundamental to all Christian work. Skills of observation, in-depth interviewing, data analysis and the preparation of instruments for testing generalizations in larger or contrasting settings will be developed. This course facilitates the ability to carry out field research in the style, form and discipline of anthropological inquiry.

Ethnography is a tool that anthropologists use to better understand people groups. Ethnographers learn to attend to what people do by being a participant observer, embedded in a community of practice. Pastors and ministry leaders are “shepherds” of the people. As we

look at who is coming and going, the important questions are not just where they come from, but the cultural liturgies (formative practices) that shape them, and the contested spaces they occupied before they enter sacred space. Other important questions ministry leaders need to ask include how people are engaging with the various Christian ministries, and what the Holy Spirit is actually doing in the faith community.¹

This course seeks to meet the Master of Divinity learning outcome #2: “To acquire capacities for understanding and engaging cultural, social & global context of God’s mission in world.”

II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the fundamentals of ethnographic-qualitative research and its applications to ministry contexts.
2. Carry out accurate cultural description and evaluate sociological phenomenon as a preliminary step in strategic ministry planning and for effective assessment.
3. Write, read, and evaluate ethnographic-qualitative studies with greater depth and understanding.

Experienced teachers of ethnographic research affirm the value of fieldwork for beginning students. The best way to develop the craft of field research is through regular practice in actual social situations. This course will have a fair amount of fieldwork and students should view these as essential and complementary to class learning. With Covid-19, this field research would mainly be conducted via interviews using Zoom or MS Teams.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. REQUIRED READING

McCurdy, David W., James P. Spradley and Dianna Shandy. *The Cultural Experience: Ethnography in Complex Society*. Second edition. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2004.

¹ James K. A. Smith, *You are What You Love* (Brazos, 2016) note that “pastors need to be ethnographers of the everyday, helping parishioners see their own environment as one that is formative, and all too often *deformative*.” (p. 40). Some of the ideas for this course description are adapted from a wonderful interview with James K.A. Smith and Rev. Jay Greener, “[Pastor as Ethnographer](#),” Carl Henry Center, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Oct. 31, 2013.

Moschella, Mary Clark. *Ethnography as Pastoral Practice: An Introduction*. 2nd. Edition. Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2023.

[An eBook with multi-user license is available at the Tyndale Library.]

Selection of articles and book chapters for class discussion (about 250 pages from articles, on [the course page](#)). Completion of assigned readings prior to breakout group discussions is expected. Your completion of readings, participation, and contributions would be “graded” by your peers (grading rubric provided; see assignment #3).

B. SUPPLEMENTARY / RECOMMENDED READING AND TOOLS

Van den Hoonaard, Debra K. *Qualitative Research in Action: A Canadian Primer*, 3rd edition. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2018

[A good introduction in qualitative research at Canadian universities with many Canadian examples.]

Mary Clark Moschella and Susan Willhauck (Editors), *Qualitative Research in Theological Education: Pedagogy in Practice*. SCM Press, 2018

[Interesting insights on qualitative research in theological education by various contributors.]

Denzin, Norman K. and Yvonna S. Lincoln. Editors. *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 5th Edition. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 2017

[This handbook is housed in the ABBA Resource Centre Stacks, Tyndale Library, and is an amazing collection of articles by renowned scholars in the discipline.]

Patton, Michael Q. *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. 4th. Edition. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 2014

[Patton is a lucid, creative, and dynamic scholar. We will discuss one chapter from this book.]

Baker, Dori Grinenko. Editor. *Greenhouses of Hope*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2010

[A compilation of inspiring stories of congregations which helped young leaders discern their gifts and pastoral calling. We will read a chapter from this book.]

Tyndale recommends www.stepbible.org – a free and reputable online resource developed by Tyndale House (Cambridge, England) – for word searches of original-language texts, as well as for topical searches, interlinear texts, dictionaries, etc. Refer to the library for other [online resources for Biblical Studies](#).

C. INTERACTIVE LIVESTREAM AND/OR HYBRID COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Livestream attendance for the entire duration of the class at announced times

- Headphones (preferred), built-in microphone, and web-camera
 - Well-lit and quiet room
 - Stable high-speed internet connection, preferably using an Ethernet cable over Wi-Fi
 - Full name displayed on Zoom and Microsoft Teams for attendance purposes*
 - A commitment to having the camera on to foster community building*
- *exceptions with permission from professor

D. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

1. Breakout Group Discussions (12.5 % of grade)

This assignment fulfills learning outcome #1 & #2

You will be assigned to a breakout discussion group each week. You will complete assigned required readings and be prepared to engage meaningfully with fellow students in your group. Students will take turns to lead and be note taker-time keeper each week. Group leaders will email a grade for yourself and each member of your group at the end of the discussion directly to the instructor. These grades will be kept confidential. A grading rubric will be provided.

2. An Exercise in Getting to Know Ethnographic-Qualitative Research (12.5 % of grade)

This assignment fulfills learning outcomes #1 & #2

Front Burner (CBC Podcast), “Guns, gangs and racism in a Prairie city” (Jan. 3, 2020), link on the course page.

Listen together in class (20 mins.) in Week #3

Take notes on how the reporter, Duncan McCue, went about collecting data for his report on why there was such a high gun crime rate in North-Central Regina.

Note: Duncan McCue is Anishinaabe, from Ontario, a member of the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, was trained in law and journalism. This report in no way stereotypes this community in North-Central Regina, and I am using it to better understand qualitative research and bases of findings about this issue.

Discuss in small groups:

Who did the reporter talk to?

What events did he visit? What did he see?

What follow up events did he attend? How did this add to his data?

Write a one-page report, using these headings:

a) "Clear the Mind"

What were some ideas and feelings that you had about the situation associated with the "title" of this report (before you began this exercise)? What did you need to put aside so as not to "color" what you see/hear?

b) "Patterns"

Who did McCue talk to? What "events" did he observe? What "patterns" did he notice (recurring behavior; repeated phenomena, themes)? What "artifacts" (things people use in daily life) were highlighted?

c) "Interpretation"

What possible meanings ("hypothesis/es") did McCue draw about why there is such high incidence of gun violence here? Do you agree/disagree? What other people (or records) may add important information to this report?

Length: one-page, single space.

Due: Jan. 31, 2024

Evaluation: clear and concise report, detailing the three headings.

3. Critique of One Ethnography (25 % of grade)

This assignment fulfills learning outcome #3

You will select and read three ethnographies in Part II of McCurdy et al. (2004). Select ONE of these ethnographies and write a critique in which the purpose, method, findings, and quality of the work are evaluated.

The criteria for this evaluation come from major topics covered in this course. In addition, the "ethnographic sequence" provided by Prof. Ward (Syllabus, pp. 6-7) would be supplement criteria.

Length: 2-3 pages, single-spaced.

Due: March 20, 2024

Evaluation: Your critique should demonstrate a clear outline of the author's purpose, method (data collection, analysis, triangulation) and findings. The main question is whether these findings were supported by the data, as well as areas the work could be improved.

4. Major Project & Presentation (50 % of grade)

This assignment fulfills learning outcomes #1, #2 & #3

Major Project (40 %)

The major project would involve about 12-15 hours of fieldwork (three interviews, transcription, data analysis). Your written project should demonstrate the following components:

(a) Introduction and field work: brief description of group; major research question; gaining entry and working with participants; list of interview questions; fieldnotes.

(b) Data analysis and triangulation: strategy for organizing and coding of data for analysis; triangulation for accuracy. You need to provide one page of sample fieldnotes and one page of interviews (with markings/codes).

(c) Conclusion: findings, implications, and issues for further study.

Throughout this paper, you should make references to the required readings (with direct referenced quotations) and lectures in this course. This demonstrates your major project is well-grounded theoretically.

Length: 8-10 pages, single-spaced (excluding sample pages of fieldnotes and interviews).

Due: Apr. 8, 2024

Evaluation: Criteria posted on the course page.

Presentation (10 %)

Students will share their research project with the whole class on the last day of class (Apr. 1). Use of MS PowerPoint, with a clear outline of main research question, data collection, analysis and findings are expected. You would likely not have completed writing up the whole project, but you should have completed substantial data analysis for this presentation (max. 15 mins).

Note about all written assignments: I use the “review and track changes” feature in MS Word to grade all papers and find it easier when assignments are in single-spaced documents.

Tyndale has an institutional license for MS Office 365, and all students can have a complimentary copy (contact IT). Please submit all your work in MS Word, with 12 font size (Word is preferred; PDF acceptable), and single-spaced.

Ethnographic Sequences

As you embark on fieldwork, you will begin the research process with the following ethnographic sequences in mind:²

1. Clear the mind (as much as possible) of presuppositions, expectations, and predictions, which can so easily become self-fulfilling prophecies. In contrast, watch or ask with an openness to see and hear things as they really are.
2. Search for patterns—look out for recurring behaviors, sequences, or any other (observable) phenomena, which seem not to be random or coincidental.
3. Document—write or commit to memory (for prompt audio recording) the essential elements of the encounters and transactions.
4. Interpret—while suppressing the temptation to jump to conclusions, it is necessary to propose meanings (often several possible meanings) inferred from the interactions. These too must be reduced to writing.
5. Reexamine—look and ask again in order to seek corrections and to note possible alternatives to the previous observations, to what you heard, and judgments made.
6. Report—with the objectivity and clarity of a data-based journalist and the reflective depth of a philosopher, to set forth the most reasoned and insightful conclusions that the data will support.

Research Ethics

All research at Tyndale University involving interaction with human subjects, where data is systematically collected for a research paper or presentation is subjected to rules governing such research and reviewed by the [Research Ethics Board \(REB\)](#). However, in class projects like this, a general review by the chair of REB is sufficient, to ensure steps are taken to protect the anonymity of participants, preservation of the confidentiality of the information, and the safe keeping and disposal of the information after the research. Students would be working with the instructor to complete this review by the chair of REB; no research or fieldwork can begin before this is done. With help from your instructor, you should have a clear idea of what project

² These insights were from Ted W. Ward, Professor Emeritus at Michigan State University and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School (TEDS), my doctoral mentor who first taught me the delight of living the ethnographic life.

you want to do by Week #4 and develop your proposal by Week #5. This would allow for a good “turn-around” time, so you can begin fieldwork by Week #7.

E. EQUITY OF ACCESS

Students with permanent or temporary disabilities who need academic accommodations must [contact](#) the [Accessibility Services](#) at the [Centre for Academic Excellence](#) to [register](#) and discuss their specific needs. *New students* must self-identify and register with the Accessibility Office at the beginning of the semester or as early as possible to access appropriate services. *Current students* must renew their plans as early as possible to have active accommodations in place.

F. SUMMARY OF ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation is based upon the completion of the following assignments:

“An exercise”	12.5 %
Critique of Ethnography	25 %
Breakout Group Discussions	12.5 %
Major Project (40 %) & Presentation (10 %)	50 %
Total Grade	100%

G. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN WORK

All assignments will be submitted via the course page by 11:55PM on the due dates. Late work will be penalized, with the reduction of 1 mark per day, inclusive of Saturdays and Sundays. Late work will be graded but will not receive any comments from the instructor. All assignments will adopt the Turabian/Chicago (footnotes) or APA style. Students are encouraged to consult [Writing Services](#). Citation and other [tip sheets](#).

For proper citation style, consult the [tip sheet, “Documenting Chicago Style”](#) (Tyndale e-resource) or the full edition of the [Chicago Manual of Style Online](#), especially ch. 14. For citing scripture texts, refer to sections 10.44 to 10.48 and 14.238 to 14.241 from the *Chicago Manual of Style* or reference the [tip sheet, “How to Cite Sources in Theology”](#).

The [APA Style Guide](#) is a helpful web site for all questions regarding APA style.

Academic Integrity

Integrity in academic work is required of all our students. Academic dishonesty is any breach of this integrity, and includes such practices as cheating (the use of unauthorized material on tests and examinations), submitting the same work for different classes without permission of the

instructors; using false information (including false references to secondary sources) in an assignment; improper or unacknowledged collaboration with other students, and plagiarism (including improper use of artificial intelligence programs). Tyndale University takes seriously its responsibility to uphold academic integrity, and to penalize academic dishonesty. Please refer to the [Academic Integrity website](#) for further details.

Students should also consult the current [Academic Calendar](#) for academic policies on Academic Honesty, Gender Inclusive Language in Written Assignments, Late Papers and Extensions, Return of Assignments, and Grading System.

H. COURSE EVALUATION

Tyndale Seminary values quality in the courses it offers its students. End-of-course evaluations provide valuable student feedback and are one of the ways that Tyndale Seminary works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student's learning experience. Student involvement in this process is critical to enhance the general quality of teaching and learning.

Before the end of the course, students will receive a MyTyndale email with a link to the online course evaluation. The link can also be found in the left column on the course page. The evaluation period is 2 weeks; after the evaluation period has ended, it cannot be reopened.

Course Evaluation results will not be disclosed to the instructor before final grades in the course have been submitted and processed. Student names will be kept confidential and the instructor will only see the aggregated results of the class.

IV. COURSE SCHEDULE, CONTENT AND REQUIRED READINGS

<u>Date/Session</u>	<u>Readings/Assignments</u>
Jan. 8 Course overview & assignments Covenant, community & culture of learning Discussion: McCurdy et al. (2004), 1-3; Video; Baker & Belzer (2018) article ⁴	McCurdy et al. (2004), 1-3 ³ Dori Baker & Tobin Belzer, "Holy Listening Helps Connect Young Adults," <i>Faith & Leadership</i> , Oct. 2018)

³ Numbers after author refer to chapters.

⁴ Prereading and preparation for breakout group discussion are expected, and can impact your grade. See Assignment 1.

	Video: "Pastor as Ethnographer," Carl Henry Center, TEDS, 2013
Jan. 15	
Psalm 19	
Ethnography: nature & applications	Moschella (2023), Introduction, 1
Discussion: Moschella (2023), Intro., ch. 1; Ketelaars (2018)	Ketelaars (2018)
Jan. 22	
An exercise in getting to know ethnographic-qualitative research	McCurdy et al. (2004), 4-6
Discussion: Patton (2014), 1; <i>Front Burner</i> Podcast	Patton (2014), 1
	<i>Front Burner</i> , CBC Podcast (Jan. 2020)
Jan. 29	
Joshua 1-2	
Qualitative Research Design; What's Your Question?	Moschella (2023), 2-3;
Discussion: Moschella (2023), chs. 2-3; Siew (2022)	Siew (2022)
	Due: Assignment #2 (Jan. 31)
Feb. 5	
Phil. 2: 5-11	Moschella (2023), 4
Doing fieldwork: Ground rules for observation	McCurdy et al. (2004), read one
Research Ethics	ethnography
Discussion: Moschella (2023), 4	Due: Research Plan for Ethics Review (Fig. 1, Moschella, p?)
Feb. 12	
Phil. 2: 1-11	
Doing fieldwork: ethnographic interview	Moschella (2023), 6
Researcher role/relationships	Singh & Southcourt (2019)
Discussion: Moschella (2023), 6; Singh & Southcourt (2019)	
Feb. 19 (Family Day, no class)	Reading days (no classes)
Feb. 20-23 (Reading Days, no class)	McCurdy et al. (2004), 7-8;
	read one ethnography
Feb. 26	
Acts 17: 16-34	
Doing fieldwork: Rudiments of good field notes	Moschella (2023), 5
Discussion: Moschella (2023), 5; Firmin et al. (2019)	Firmin et al. (2019)

Mar. 4 & 11Fieldwork⁵

Transcribe interviews; review field notes

Mar. 18

Data analysis (bring your transcripts & field notes)
 Discussion: Moschella (2023), ch. 7
 Research-ministry balance

McCurdy et al. (2004), read one ethnography; Moschella (2023), 7;
Due: Assignment #3 (Mar. 20)

Mar. 25

Joshua 3-8
 Writing the report
 Likert-type instrumentation & generalization of findings
 Discussion: Moschella (2023), 8-9; Siew (2013)

Moschella (2023), 8-9;
 Siew (2013)

Apr. 1

Project presentations (each 15 mins.)
 Review of Learning Journey

Due: Project presentation (Apr. 1)
Due: Assignment #4 (Apr. 8)

V. ONLINE RESOURCES

Ethnographic research is gaining respect in the academic world and you will find many such articles in established journals in education, health and social sciences. Here are some journals.

The Qualitative Report (online journal)

Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research

Teachers College Record (Journal of Teachers College, Columbia University)

International Journal for Qualitative Studies in Education

Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry

Religious Education (Journal of the Religious Education Association)

Ethnography and Education

Harvard Educational Review

Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion

Review of Religious Research

Sociology of Religion

⁵ Learning the basic skills of ethnographic-qualitative research is most effectively acquired when one is engaged in fieldwork, keeping in mind the theoretical principles acquired in readings and class learning. About 25% of class time would be devoted to fieldwork, which means significant class learning happens in the field. Fieldwork can only begin when all ethics requirements are fulfilled. Note these two weeks for fieldwork, and preschedule your interviews early. Interviews can be done via MS Teams or Zoom.

Acknowledgment

This course is adapted from an ethnographic research course by Ted W. Ward, Professor Emeritus of Education at Michigan State University and Professor Emeritus of Educational Studies and Mission at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, IL., USA. Prof. Ward, my mentor in the PhD program, first taught me the delight of living the ethnographic life.

VI. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

([Tyndale Library](#) supports this course with [e-journals, e-books](#), and the [mail delivery of books](#) and circulating materials. See the [Library FAQ page](#).)

Books

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Baker, Dori Grinenko. Editor. (2010). *Greenhouses of Hope*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute.

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