



# INFORMATION ETHNOGRAPHY

INF2330 ✦ Winter 2024 ✦ Monday, 12:00–2:45 ✦ Bissell 538  
<https://q.utoronto.ca> ✦ Dr. Jenna Hartel

## INSTRUCTOR'S OFFICE HOURS

Wednesday, 3:00–4:30 in Zoom ([here](#)) OR in-person by appointment OR after class.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

*Ethnography* is the study and systematic recording of human cultures. A theoretical framework for inquiry and an associated set of research methods, ethnography originated in Anthropology, spread across the social sciences, and is now popular within Information Studies and its associated professions. This course adapts ethnography to the study of information phenomena, referred to as *information ethnography*. Over the semester, participants: learn central tenets of ethnography and then translate them to information-related questions, problems, and settings; analyze exemplar ethnographic studies of information; learn to conduct ethnographic fieldwork on information phenomena through observation, fieldnotes, interviews, visual techniques and other methods; and complete the ethnographic research cycle via analysis and writing. In addition to lectures, readings, in-class activities and discussions, students enact information ethnography first-hand, through an Information Ethnography Pilot Study in a context and population of their choice. Information Ethnography is ideal for students who wish to do original research, conduct a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, and/or continue the concatenated research career started in INF1323: The Information Experience.

## COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

By taking this course, students will gain:

- A working knowledge of ethnography as an approach to social scientific inquiry, and an appreciation for its potential within Information Studies and its associated professions.
- The ability to design and execute a small-scale, exploratory, ethnographic field study that leads to insights on information phenomena.
- Know-how to ethically implement ethnographic methods, namely observation, fieldnotes, interviews, visual techniques, document analysis, data analysis, and ethnographic writing.
- Specialized expertise in the information phenomena within the chosen context of personal interest (which varies per student) and an inkling of how to transfer discoveries to professional practice or systems/program design.
- Familiarity with an exploratory research paradigm and a vision for a personal, concatenated, research career, beyond the course timeframe.

## COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES LINKED TO PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course is an advanced methods seminar that teaches participants the fundamentals of *information ethnography*, that is, the practice of ethnographic research to answer questions about information phenomena. As a result, students achieve Program Learning Outcome PL03, because they, “develop the ability to contribute through research and publication, to the continuous expansion and critical assessment of the body of knowledge underlying the information and archives sciences.” The most vivid evidence that PL03 is

accomplished appears in the information ethnography pilot study executed by each student as a major assignment. Further, this course introduces the idea of a “concatenated research career” in which small-scale exploratory studies (ethnographic or otherwise) accumulate to substantial knowledge and expertise, a concept that aligns perfectly with PLO6: “life-long intellectual growth beyond graduation.” In this course, information ethnography is instilled with ethical principles; hence, students develop the knowledge and values appropriate to their future roles as leaders in the information professions (PLO2).

#### **ORGANIZATION AND SEQUENCING OF THE COURSE**

Information Ethnography is organized as four units:

- **Introduction.** Sessions 1–3 introduce ethnography and its central tenets; describe its application to information phenomena; and survey multiple inspiring precedents. Students are given the staging to conceptualize an Information Ethnography Pilot Study.
- **Methods Workshops.** Sessions 4–6 provide training in techniques of ethnographic fieldwork and data gathering (observation, fieldnotes, interviews, visual techniques and more). These classes begin with an instructional lecture; proceed to hands-on practice; and then the techniques are customized to one’s research project.
- **Perspectives.** Sessions 7–9 deepen understanding by viewing ethnography critically; exploring complementary research approaches; and witnessing inspiring case studies from pioneering information ethnographers. These classes are discussion-oriented and directed by student participants.
- **Synthesis.** Sessions 10–12 return to a lecture and workshop format to learn the concluding steps of information ethnography, that is, data analysis and writing.

#### **THE RHYTHM OF CLASS**

Please aim to arrive by 12:00 to gather handouts and get settled; class will begin at 12:10 sharp and end at 2:45. There will always be a short break in the middle (or thereabouts) of class. Assigned materials should be engaged in advance of meeting. A course website will be maintained on [Quercus](#), where “Introduction and Links” pages serve as portals to weekly topics, a contextual essay, links to readings, links to videos, and guiding questions. In this course we will watch many videos on YouTube, and so, I highly recommend a free Ad Blocker. [This one](#) functions in Google Chrome and is very effective. There will also be a Discussion Board on Quercus, with graded elements. Selected presentations slides will be provided at the start of class (on paper) and the full PowerPoint deck will be uploaded to the course website after class.

#### **IN-CLASS LAPTOP AND PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY USE**

Please do not be in this classroom with your laptop open for multi-tasking, that is, doing non-course relevant activities such as reading news, engaging in social media, checking email, etc. Such behaviour is disrespectful and not suitable to a professional environment. It is detrimental to me (as a lecturer), to you (as a learner) and to your fellow course participants. Research in the field of education has definitively established that student learning declines because of the in-class use of laptops and other computing and communication devices. Not only are understanding and retention inhibited for the user of these tools, *but positive outcomes are significantly diminished for everyone within sight, too.* (Put differently, it is a personally and socially damaging to multi-task on personal technology in any classroom.) Therefore, to enable the best learning experience for all, laptops should only be used if they are necessary for your success in the course.) Smart phones should be placed on silent and put away during class time. Anyone engaging in disruptive use of technologies will be asked, respectfully, to stop. A break will be provided, mid-afternoon, to manage personal computing and telecommunications.

## **POLICY ON GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS**

The use of generative artificial intelligence tools or apps for assignments in this course, including tools like ChatGPT and other AI writing or coding assistants, is prohibited. The knowing use of generative artificial intelligence tools, including ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants, for the completion of, or to support the completion of, an examination, term test, assignment, or any other form of academic assessment, may be considered an academic offense in this course. Representing as one's own an idea, or expression of an idea, that was AI-generated may be considered an academic offense in this course. Students may not copy or paraphrase from any generative artificial intelligence applications, including ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants, for the purpose of completing assignments in this course. The use of generative artificial intelligence tools and apps is strictly prohibited in all course assignments unless explicitly stated otherwise by the instructor in this course. This includes ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants. Use of generative AI in this course may be considered use of an unauthorized aid, which is a form of cheating. This course policy is designed to promote your learning and intellectual development and to help you reach course learning outcomes.

## **RESOURCES AND ASSIGNED MATERIALS**

The materials for this course are drawn mainly from seminal and more contemporary research methods textbooks of ethnography, from the fields of Sociology or Anthropology. All participants in the course are encouraged to explore the methods literature of ethnography on their own. Excellent print resources include a [bibliography](#) (by Noha Firky of the University of Toronto Ethnography Lab) and the [Sage Research Methods database](#) available through the University of Toronto Libraries. Recommended multimedia resources are [Helen Kara's YouTube channel](#) and my own Youtube Channel, [INFIDEOS](#); installing a (free) YouTube adblocker is highly recommended at the start of the course to avoid distracting advertisements when viewing assigned materials on YouTube.

## **STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL LAND**

*I (we) wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years, it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.*

## **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the [Accessibility Services Office](#) as soon as possible. Accessibility Services staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let us know your needs, the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course. To book an appointment with an Accessibility Advisor, please connect with the Accessibility Services front desk via email at [accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca) or call (416) 978-8060. Consultation appointments are available to discuss any questions about the Accessibility Services registration process and/or potential accommodation support. The on-location Accessibility Advisor at the Faculty of Information is Michael Mercer.

## **EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

**STUDENT BEHAVIOUR**

All students registered at the University of Toronto are still required to conduct themselves in a respectful manner whilst undertaking studies online. The Code of Student Conduct applies and will be enforced regardless of the physical location where students are undertaking their studies. Offenses against other persons will not be tolerated whether committed in person or online.

**GRADING**

Please consult the Faculty of Information's resources that will form the basis for grading in the course, namely: [Grade Interpretation Guidelines \(PDF\)](#), [University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy](#), and [Guidelines on the Use of Incomplete \(INC\), Standing Deferred \(SDF\), & Withdrawal \(WDR\)](#). See also the [grading policy on the governing council website](#).

## COURSE SCHEDULE

SESSION	THEMES & TOPICS	ASSIGNED MATERIALS <small>(ACCESS THESE MATERIALS AT "INTRODUCTION AND LINKS" PAGES OF QUERCUS)</small>	ASSIGNMENTS
#1. January 8	<b>WELCOME TO INFORMATION ETHNOGRAPHY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Welcome and Introductions</li> <li>▶ "The Red Thread of Information"</li> <li>▶ Information Ethnography</li> <li>▶ Ethnography of Infrastructure</li> <li>▶ Week-to-Week Course Tour</li> <li>▶ Review of Assignments</li> <li>▶ Research Ethics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ The Invisible Substrate of Information Science (Bates, 1999) OR <i>What Makes This Paper Great? (#1): The Invisible Substrate of Information Science</i> [INFIDEOS video] OR The Red Thread of Information (Hartel, 2020)</li> <li>→ Ethnography of Infrastructure (Star, 1999)</li> <li>→ Studying Students, Introduction (2007) OR House Proud (Cooper, 2015) OR Notes on Fridge Surfaces (Swan and Taylor, 2005) and <i>Hear! Here! An Exemplar Thematic Narrative</i> [INFIDEOS video] or Managing Documents at Home (Hartel, 2010)</li> <li>→ Starting Where You Are (Lofland &amp; Lofland, 1995)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▣ A. PHOTO AND SHORT BIOGRAPHY posted to Quercus Discussion Board, in "Introductions" by Friday, January 12th, at 6:00 pm. Graded complete/incomplete.</li> <li>▣ I. DISCUSSION BOARD CONTRIBUTION (post a greeting to two peers)</li> <li>▣ B. Begin <a href="#">TCPS 2: CORE-2022 (Course on Research Ethics)</a></li> </ul>
#2. January 15	<b>TENETS OF ETHNOGRAPHY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Exploratory Research</li> <li>▶ Survey of Major Tenets in Ethnography</li> <li>▶ Research Ethics, cont'd</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ What is Exploration? (Stebbins, 2011)</li> <li>→ <i>Hear! Here! Introduction to the Series</i> [INFIDEOS video]</li> <li>→ <i>Hear! Here! Your Dissertation</i> [INFIDEOS video]</li> <li>→ <i>Hear! Here! Exploratory Research</i> [INFIDEOS video]</li> <li>→ Exploring (Stebbins, 2011)</li> <li>→ <i>Hear! Here! The Valley of the Universe</i> [INFIDEOS video]</li> <li>→ <i>Understanding Ethnography</i> (video) OR <i>Ethnographic Research</i> (video) OR <i>Ethnography</i> (video)</li> <li>→ Introduction to Ethnography (Harrison, 2018) OR Walking in Rhythm, Anthropological Concepts (Fetterman, 2010)</li> <li>→ Finding the Field (Pole &amp; Hillyard, 2016) OR Ethnographic Fields: Home and Away (Madden, 2018) OR Sites, Cases &amp; Participants (Coffey, 2021)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▣ B. Continue <a href="#">TCPS 2: CORE-2022 (Course on Research Ethics)</a></li> </ul>
#3 January 22	<b>TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES OF INFORMATION ETHNOGRAPHY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The Ethnographic Research Cycle</li> <li>▶ The Ethnographic Record</li> <li>▶ Revisiting Information Ethnography</li> <li>▶ Data-gathering Toolkit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ The Ethnographic Research Cycle (Spradley, 1980)</li> <li>→ Making Descriptive Observations (Spradley, 1980)</li> <li>→ Preparing for Research (Bernard, 2006)</li> <li>→ The Construction of Primary Data (Pelto et. Al, 1986)</li> <li>→ Tools for the Field (Pole &amp; Hillyard, 2017) OR In the Field: Observation, Conversation and Documentation (Coffey, 2018) OR The Fieldwork Tradition (McCall, 2011)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▣ B. Upload the TCPS 2 <i>Certificate of Completion</i> to Quercus by Sunday, January 21<sup>nd</sup> at 6:00 pm</li> </ul>

## SESSIONS 4-6, METHODS WORKSHOPS

<p style="text-align: center;">#4 January 29</p>	<p><b>OBSERVATION &amp; FIELDNOTES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Accessing the Field</li> <li>▶ The Practice of Observation</li> <li>▶ Jottings and Fieldnotes</li> <li>▶ Documents from the Field</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Logging Data (Lofland &amp; Lofland, 1995) OR Ethnographic Fieldnotes: The Foundations of Ethnography (Delamont, 2019) OR Fieldnotes: How to Take Them, Code Them, Manage Them (Bernard, 2011)</li> <li>→ Fieldnotes in Ethnographic Research (Emerson, Fretz &amp; Shaw, 1995)</li> <li>→ In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes (Emerson, Fretz &amp; Shaw, 1995)</li> <li>→ Writing Up Fieldnotes 1: From Field to Desk (Emerson, Fretz &amp; Shaw, 1995)</li> </ul>	
<p style="text-align: center;">#5 February 5</p>	<p><b>INTERVIEWS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Sampling and Recruiting</li> <li>▶ Types of Interviews</li> <li>▶ The Semi-structured Interview</li> <li>▶ The Information Horizon Interview</li> <li>▶ The Guided Tour</li> <li>▶ Practice Interview Session</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Interviewing: Unstructured and Semistructured (Bernard, 2011)</li> <li>→ Interviewing an Informant (Spradley, 1979)</li> <li>→ The Guided Tour: A Research Technique for the Study of Situated, Embodied Information (Thomson, 2018)</li> <li>→ Information Horizons (Sonnenwald, 2005) OR <i>What Makes This Paper Great? (#2) The Information Horizon Interview</i> [INFIDEOS, video]</li> <li>→ <i>Hear! Here! Write! To Scholars</i> [INFIDEOS video]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▣ D. TOPIC STATEMENT uploaded to Quercus by Friday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6:00 pm</li> <li>▣ I. DISCUSSION BOARD PARTICIPATION (post constructive feedback to two peers)</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;">#6 February 12</p>	<p><b>VISUAL METHODS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Introduction to Visual Methods</li> <li>▶ The Photographic Inventory</li> <li>▶ The Information Horizon Interview</li> <li>▶ The Draw-and-Write Technique</li> <li>▶ Mapping and Diagramming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Introducing Visual Methods (Prosser &amp; Loxley, 2008, pp. 1-35)</li> <li>→ The Cultural Inventory (Collier &amp; Collier, 1986) OR An Introduction to Visual Approaches and Photography for the Study of Immediate Information Space (Hartel &amp; Thomson, 2011)</li> <li>→ Ethnographic Mapping (EME, Martin, pp. 46-54)</li> <li>→ Draw-and-Write Techniques (Hartel, 2019) OR <i>Pictorial Metaphors for Information</i> [INFIDEOS, videos]</li> <li>→ Using Visual Images in Research (Weber, 2012)</li> <li>→ <i>Hear! Here! Beautiful Ideas</i> [INFIDEOS, video]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▣ E. RESEARCH DESIGN uploaded to Quercus by Friday, February 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm</li> <li>▣ I. DISCUSSION BOARD PARTICIPATION (post constructive feedback to two peers)</li> </ul>

## READING WEEK, PLAN AND CONDUCT FIELDWORK!

## SESSIONS 7 - 9, PERSPECTIVES

<p>#7 February 26</p>	<p><b>CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ETHNOGRAPHY</b> ▶ Specific topics will be selected and announced at Session 4.</p>	<p>→ Specific topics will be selected and announced at Session 4. Check back!</p>	<p>■ C. CLASS PARTICIPATION Come to class to engage in small group activities and discussions. Participation will be registered by roll call in class. Additional guidance will be provided in the "Introduction and Links" page nearer to the date of class.</p>
<p>#8 March 4</p>	<p><b>FESTIVAL OF COMPLEMENTARY APPROACHES</b> ▶ Arts-Informed Research ▶ Autoethnography ▶ Contemplative Inquiry ▶ Critical Ethnography ▶ Sensory Ethnography ▶ Internet/Virtual Ethnography</p>	<p>→ Arts-Informed Research (Knowles &amp; Cole, 2012) AND Draw-and-Write Techniques (Hartel, 2019) AND Pictorial Metaphors for Information (Hartel, 2015) OR <i>Pictorial Metaphors for Information</i> [INFIDEOS, video] → Autoethnography: An Overview (Ellis, Adams &amp; Bochner, 2011) OR Representing Ourselves in Information Science Research: A Methodological Essay on Autoethnography (Guzik, 2013) → About Zen and Contemplative Inquiry (Janesick, 2016) OR Contemplative Inquiry (Samson, 2020) → Critical Ethnography (Kay &amp; Fitzpatrick, 2019) OR Doing Critical Ethnography (Thomas, 2011) → Sensory Ethnography (Drysdale &amp; Wong, 2019) OR <i>What is Sensory Ethnography</i> [SAGE Research Methods Video (Pink,2011)] → Internet Ethnography (Haverinen, 2015) OR Virtual Ethnography (SAGE, 2012) OR Virtual Ethnography (Lenihan &amp; Kelly-Holmes, 2016)</p>	<p>■ C. CLASS PARTICIPATION Come to class to engage in small group activities and discussions. Participation will be registered by roll call in class. Additional guidance will be provided in the "Introduction and Links" page nearer to the date of class.</p>
<p>#9 March 11</p>	<p><b>ETHNOGRAPHER'S BROUHAHA</b> ▶ Consolidation of Ideas ▶ Survey of Ethnographic Studies ▶ Discussion/Q&amp;A Period</p>	<p>→ No assigned readings. Work on your research!</p>	<p>■ C. CLASS PARTICIPATION Come to class to engage in small group activities and discussions. Participation will be registered by roll call in class. Additional guidance will be provided in the "Introduction and Links" page nearer to the date of class.</p>

## & CONTINUE TO CONDUCT FIELDWORK (SESSIONS 7 - 9)

## SESSION 10-12, SYNTHESIS

<p>#10 March 18</p>	<p><b>ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Coding Strategies</li> <li>▶ Coding Workshop</li> <li>▶ Bring Ethnographic Record to Class</li> </ul>	<p>→ Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing (Emerson, Fretz &amp; Shaw, 1995)          → Developing Analysis (Lofland &amp; Lofland, 2006) OR Finding Your Way Through the Forest: Analysis (Fetterman, 2010) OR Managing and Analyzing Ethnographic Data (Coffey, 2018) OR Analysis to Interpretation: Writing 'Out' Data (Madden, 2019) OR The Process of Analysis (Hammersley &amp; Atkinson, 1993)</p>	<p>▣ F. FIELD DATA uploaded to Quercus by Friday, March 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm          ▣ I. DISCUSSION BOARD PARTICIPATION (post constructive feedback to two peers)</p>
<p>#11 March 25</p>	<p><b>ETHNOGRAPHIC WRITING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The Thematic Narrative</li> <li>▶ Excerpt-Commentary Units</li> <li>▶ Writing Workshop</li> <li>▶ The Final Paper Template</li> <li>▶ Bring Ethnographic Record to Class</li> </ul>	<p>→ <i>Hear! Here! Writing-Up</i> [INVIDEOS video]          → Writing an Ethnography (Emerson, Fretz &amp; Shaw, 1995)          → Writing-up Ethnographic Research as a Thematic Narrative: The Excerpt-Commentary Unit (Hartel, 2020) OR <i>Writing-up Research as Thematic Narrative</i> [INVIDEOS video]          → One Right Way (Becker, 1986) OR Interpretation to Story (Madden, 2019) OR Writing Reports (Lofland &amp; Lofland, 2006) OR Representation and the Writing of Ethnography (Coffey, 2021) OR Recording the Miracle: Writing (Fetterman, 2010)</p>	<p>▣ G. MEMO uploaded to Quercus by Friday, March 22<sup>h</sup> at 6:00 pm          ▣ I. DISCUSSION BOARD PARTICIPATION (post constructive feedback to two peers)</p>
<p>#12 April 1</p>	<p><b>COURSE CONCLUSION</b></p>	<p>→ No assigned readings. Work on your research!</p>	<p>▣ H. FINAL PAPER uploaded to Quercus by Sunday, April 7<sup>th</sup> by 6:00 pm</p>

**FINAL PAPER IS DUE SUNDAY, APRIL 7<sup>TH</sup> BY 6:00 PM**



## ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

ASSIGNMENT	%	REQUIREMENTS	SUBMISSION DETAILS
A. Photo and Short Personal Statement	5%	A recent photo (headshot) and short (<200 word) personal statement	Post these two items to the Quercus Discussion Board, in the area marked with your name, by Friday, January 12 <sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm. Graded complete/incomplete.
B. TCPS 2: CORE-2022 Online Course on Research Ethics	5 %	Complete the online course, <a href="#">here</a> .	Upload the <i>Certificate of Completion</i> to Quercus by Sunday, January 21, 6:00 pm. Graded complete/incomplete.
C. Class Participation (Sessions 7, 8, & 9)	3 x 5% = 15%	Come to class to engage in small group activities and discussions.	Participation will be registered by roll call in class. See Professor Hartel if the case of anticipated absence (a make-up writing activity will be assigned). Graded complete (present) / incomplete (not present).
<b>MAJOR ASSIGNMENT: INFORMATION ETHNOGRAPHY PILOT STUDY</b>			
D. Topic Statement	5%	<500 word posting	Posted to Quercus Discussion Board by Friday, February 2 at 6:00 pm. Letter graded.
E. Research Design	5%	<500 word posting	Posted to Quercus Discussion Board by Friday, February 16 <sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm. Letter graded.
F. Ethnographic Record Sample	5%	Various formats	Posted to Quercus Discussion Board by Friday, March 15 <sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm. Graded complete/incomplete.
G. Memo	5%	<500 word posting	Posted to Quercus Discussion Board by Friday, March 22 <sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm. Letter graded.
H. Final Paper	45%	3000 word paper	Uploaded to Quercus by Sunday, April 7, 6:00 pm. Letter graded.
I. Discussion Board Contributions	5 x 2% = 10%	Make 10 constructive comments upon the work of your peers, for elements A, D, E, F, & G [2 comments each]	Posted to Quercus Discussion Board by Sunday, 6:00 pm in advance of Sessions 4, 6, 10 and 11. Letter graded.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>		

## ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENT DETAILS

### A. PHOTO (HEADSHOT WITH A CLEAR FACE VIEW!) AND SHORT PERSONAL STATEMENT

Posted to Quercus Discussion Board by Friday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 pm.

I will be using the photos and biographies to learn more about all of you, especially, your names. This assignment also begins the process of becoming a supportive learning community.

◆ After posting your Photo and Short Biography (<200 words) to the Quercus Discussion Board in the thread with your name, post greetings to two peers, as a reply.

### B. TCPS 2: CORE-2022 (COURSE ON RESEARCH ETHICS) [10%]

Upload the *Certificate of Completion* to Quercus by Sunday, January 21 by 6:00 pm. Graded complete/incomplete.

This assignment is an online course on research ethics, produced by the Government of Canada's Panel on Research Ethics, and is accessed [here](#). All active researchers in Canada are strongly encouraged to complete this course. For the purposes of grading, submit a copy of the course's *Certificate of Completion* to Quercus.

Additional background from the Tri-Council website: The Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2) provides ethics guidance that applies to all research involving human participants – including their data and/or biological materials – conducted under the auspices of an institution eligible for funding by the federal Agencies (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC). The online tutorial CORE-2022 (Course on Research Ethics) is an introduction to the TCPS 2 for the research community. It focuses on the TCPS 2 ethics guidance that is applicable to all research involving human participants, regardless of discipline or methodology. The Panel on Research Ethics highly recommends that all researchers who intend to engage in research involving human participants, as well as REB members and administrators, successfully complete the new CORE-2022. Institutions may also have policies in place that make its completion mandatory. CORE-2022 consists of nine modules and a knowledge consolidation exercise:

Module A1 – Introduction  
Module A2 – Scope of TCPS 2  
Module A3 – Risks and Benefits  
Module A4 – Consent  
Module A5 – Fairness and Equity

Module A6 – Privacy and Confidentiality  
Module A7 – Conflicts of Interest  
Module A8 – Research Ethics Board Review  
Module A9 – Research Involving Indigenous Peoples  
Knowledge Consolidation Exercise

The modules are numbered in the suggested order. However, they can be completed in any order and can be used to review individual topics. Each module ends with 4-5 quiz questions for you to test the knowledge that you have acquired. CORE-2022 also includes a knowledge consolidation exercise consisting of 25 multiple-choice questions randomly selected from a larger question bank. To obtain a CORE-2022 Certificate of Completion, you will need to correctly respond to 20 questions (80%). Those who do not correctly respond to at least 20 questions will not obtain a Certificate of Completion. However, they will have the opportunity to retake the knowledge consolidation exercise. Completing CORE-2022 should take approximately 4 hours. The course is self-paced. It is therefore possible to complete the different modules over multiple sessions. All the modules must be completed before taking the knowledge consolidation exercise.

### C. CLASS PARTICIPATION (SESSIONS 7, 8, & 9)[3 x 5% = 15%]

In class at Sessions 7, 8, & 9. Graded complete (present)/incomplete (not present).

Come to class to engage in small group activities and discussions. Participation will be registered by roll call. Contact Professor Hartel if the case of anticipated absence (a make-up writing activity will be assigned).

## MAJOR ASSIGNMENT: INFORMATION ETHNOGRAPHY PILOT STUDY [65%]

The major assignment of the course is an Information Ethnography Pilot Study that consists of multiple components, submitted and graded separately over the semester. It is an opportunity to conduct original ethnographic research on a topic of personal interest of concern. The several elements of the assignment (D, E, F, G, & I) are synchronized with lessons in the course and are the staging for one's own unfolding research project. A collaborative feature of this assignment entails constructively commenting on the work of peers.

Quercus' Discussion Board will be the site for posting elements of the assignment and providing feedback to fellows. Everyone is encouraged to overcome any discomfort with the public viewing of their work-in-progress, since much is to be gained by sharing. As stated in the Summary of Assignments table, above, elements A, D, E, F, G, & I are to be posted on the Quercus Discussion Board by 6:00 pm on the Friday prior to Sessions 2, 4, 6, 10, and 11, respectively.

### D. TOPIC STATEMENT [5%]

Posted to Quercus Discussion Board by Friday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> at 6:00 pm. <500 word posting.

The Topic Statement is an initial specification and expression of your research project. The ethnographic tradition I was trained in treats the Topic Statement *lightly*, and as *direction* for beginning the research process. The Topic Statement is *not* a detailed Research Proposal, as shown [here](#). Keep in mind that it is the nature of exploratory research to *evolve* along the way, hence what appears in your Topic Statement may change as you learn more in the course.

Select a topic—which means a context, population or setting and its information phenomena—that is of personal interest or relevance to you; it may pertain to your work, studies, or everyday life. For inspiration, see readings *Starting Where You Are* (Lofland & Lofland, 1995) and *The Ethnographic Research Cycle (Selecting an Ethnographic Project)* (Spradley, 1980). Your setting and/or population should be accessible locally and feature a site for fieldwork; online or digital ethnography is not an option in this course.

Examples of topics from prior offerings of INF2330 include studies of information behaviour at a rock-climbing gym; origins and operation of a local (“grassroots”) 2SLGBTQI+ archive; understanding the information dimension of an office or work space for a population (e.g. nutritionists, artists, indigenous studies scholar); content and organization of a personal library of a famous Canadian author; avatar formation in a video game; information phenomena in collaborative home gardening; information at a heavy metal concert; the role of information when purchasing a diamond anniversary ring; see also examples in the *Faculty of Information Quarterly*, ([January/February, 2011](#)). *Note that all these topics focus centrally on information!*

Topics may not involve vulnerable or at-risk populations such as children, prisoners, or people experiencing homelessness or addiction. Likewise, avoid relationships with uneven power dynamics, such as conducting research on one's staff or students. All topics require the instructor's approval. You may consult with the instructor as needed. The Topic Statement should include the elements below in <500 words:

- A description of a context, population or setting to be studied
- A description of a location (“the field”) where ethnographic data-gathering (“fieldwork”) will occur
- The information phenomena of particular interest in the study
- 1-3 guiding research questions
- Any relevant sensitizing concepts and cutting points

◆ After posting your Topic Statement to the Quercus Discussion Board, leave constructive comments on the work of two peers.

### **E. RESEARCH DESIGN [5%]**

Posted to Quercus Discussion Board by Friday, February 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm. <500 words.

Next, articulate a Research Design for a small-scale, exploratory, ethnographic field study. The Research Design delineates how you will employ the “toolkit” or data-gathering techniques taught in the first half of the course to learn more about your topic or answer your research questions. Do not attempt to design a grand research project! Your study should entail 6–8 hours of fieldwork with 2–3 interviews. The Research Design should include the elements below in <500 words:

- A revised or refined distillation of the Topic Statement
- An access plan to conduct observations and other fieldwork
- A recruiting strategy to enlist interview informants
- Data gathering techniques (e.g. semi-structured interviews, information horizon interviews, unobtrusive observation, fieldnotes, photographic inventory, diagramming/mapping, document analysis)
- Data management plan
- A project timeline
- Ethical considerations for all of the above

◆ After posting your Research Design to the Quercus Discussion Board, leave constructive comments on the work of two peers. Once your Research Design is complete and approved, conduct your data-gathering; fieldwork should occur during sessions 7–11.

### **F. ETHNOGRAPHIC RECORD SAMPLE [5%]**

Posted to Quercus Discussion Board by Friday, March 15<sup>h</sup> at 6:00 pm. Graded complete/incomplete. Various formats.

Once executed, your research design will generate an ethnographic record of evidence in different formats (e.g. interview transcripts, photographs, diagrams, fieldnotes, etc.). Post a sample of your ethnographic record to the Quercus Discussion Board; aim for a representative glimpse of your research project. Do not post more than 6 items/pages.

◆ After posting your work to the Quercus Discussion Board, leave constructive comments for two peers.

### **G. MEMO [5%]**

Posted to Quercus Discussion Board by Friday, March 22<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm. <500 words.

During data gathering and into the analysis stage of a study, researchers capture insights and ideas in short written statements called memos. See descriptions and examples of memos in Emerson, Fretz & Shaw's (1995) chapter on *Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing* (pp. 155–157); or Lofland & Lofland's (1995) chapter on *Developing Analysis* (pp. 193–197).

◆ After posting your Memo to the Quercus Discussion Board, leave constructive comments for two peers.

### **H. FINAL PAPER [40%]**

Uploaded to Quercus by Friday, April 7, 6:00 pm.

Discoveries from your Information Ethnography Pilot Study will be reported in a 3,000 word Final Paper. Your text must follow the template (provided at Session 11) and the “fieldnote-commentary unit” format outlined in the Emerson, Fretz & Shaw reading *Writing an Ethnography* (and [video series](#)) which will be practiced in class.

The grading Criteria for Final Paper include: the extent to which information phenomena have been identified and described; the application of concepts presented in lectures, readings, and in-class activities; proper implementation of ethnographic field methods; application of ethnographic writing style; clarity, depth, originality, and engaging delivery of findings.

### **I. DISCUSSION BOARD CONTRIBUTIONS [5 x 2% = 10%]**

Posted by Sunday at 6:00 pm. Comments should be about 150 – 200 words in length. Letter graded as a set at the end of the semester.

As stated in the Summary of Assignments table, above, elements A, D, E, F, G, & I are to be posted on the Quercus Discussion Board by 6:00 pm on the Friday prior to Sessions 2, 4, 6, 10, and 11, respectively. Then students of the course will make two constructive comments on the work of their peers, as well. A way to think about this is: “I will post my work by Friday, and then over the weekend, leave comments for two members of the class.” Comments should highlight positive features, convey potentially helpful insights, or make comparisons and contrasts.