This methods module focuses on the advantages of combining two distinct social-scientific approaches that seldom go together: “small-n” comparisons and (multi sited) ethnography. Both have origins in different disciplines, and both command growing attention. In addition to their explicit focus on multiple contexts, what unites them is that they leverage the relative boundedness of their objects of study to maximum effect, making a virtue out of paying attention to process, context, and detail. Contemporary work in this vein can be just as theoretically ambitious, if not more, than work that is less bounded. This module consists of two tracks, one for students who have not yet defined a research project and seek an introduction to comparative ethnography, and the other for students with well-defined individual research projects who wish to explore how a small-N comparative or multi-sited perspective could enrich their work. Participants with projects in hand are asked to send a written summary of their project to the instructors ahead of time. This could be a grant proposal, paper for DEVL 2010, or a dissertation prospectus. We also ask these participants to submit at least one article or book chapter that is an excellent example of work that combines comparative analysis and ethnographic research and that could serve as a feasible model for your own work.

What is Multi-Sited Ethnography?

Ethnography is, at its most basic definition, the observation of people over time in their natural settings (a methodology). More broadly, ethnography can also mean a logic of inquiry that emphasizes culture and/or meanings in a particular context (a method). Ethnography is also a genre, a way of presenting work that is defined by particular conventions. We can make three general observations about ethnography – first, is that while it has been the dominant method in anthropology, it has often sat uneasily with dominant epistemological assumptions in sociology and political science; second, that there has been growing attention and excitement around ethnography especially as an interdisciplinary endeavor; and third, that multi-sited ethnography (or its cognates like global ethnography, ethnography of global connection, ethnography of assemblages) constitutes an exciting area of research, theory development, and engagement with the problematics of development and inequality.

If we borrow from Alford and take the idea seriously that studies can have more than one logic at the same time, one way to think of multi-sited ethnographies or comparative ethnographies as making arguments based on different logics. In fact, many ethnographies do explicitly and implicitly compare, whether by alluding to theoretical expectations, the global, or to different sites. This methods module works with the assumption that many of the most exciting studies today operate with different logics (ethnographic and comparative), and we will work with students on their projects provoking them to exploit these different possibilities.
This module will accomplish several goals, and is aimed at different audiences, in addition to introducing and discussing some excellent exemplars of the genre of multi-sited ethnography. At the most basic level, this module will help you make sense of the thicket of terms related to these studies – methods, case, concept, design, epistemology, while helping you think about the value of ethnography and multi-sited ethnography. For those wholly unfamiliar with the approach this module will, at the very least, make you an informed reader of the genre and point you to ways to learn to do it. We have some excellent suggested readings that can give some guidance, though it is our position that ethnography is learned by doing, ideally under the guidance of someone more experienced.

A second, more ambitious goal for those familiar with ethnography (but perhaps not settled on a project) will be to help you critically evaluate the value-added – as well as the limits, of ethnography for your interest areas and for development debates more generally. You should leave this module having a clearer sense of how ethnography can contribute to your research and what this might look like; in other words you should leave here with a clear sense of research design, field sites, and the type of ethnography to pursue. For example, you should also have a sense of the challenges and issues related to your type of ethnography.

A third goal is for those already settled on a project: we will challenge you to augment the other logic of inquiry. For ethnographers, we will challenge you to think about comparative or multi-sited logic; for comparativists, we will challenge you to increase the ethnographic component. For those participants with defined research projects we will work with the exemplary article you have brought to the course. For students new to ethnography, this workshop element will partially open up the black box of ethnography.

**Class Meetings and Readings.**

We list below the readings for each session under “required” and “recommended.” We will discuss before each class meeting what the ideal readings for you might be. For those with a disciplinary background in ethnography, many of the basic readings might be familiar. All o the readings are available electronically to you.

**Meeting 1: Introduction to the module and people’s projects.**

Meeting 2: What is Ethnography anyway, and What does it bring to the social sciences? (And what is Multi-Sited Ethnography?)

- Lisa Weeden ‘political ethnography’ in Schatz ed.

Meeting 3: How do we justify Ethnography? What are its epistemological bases? (ie. The Philosophy of Science meeting)


Recommended:
Some ethnographers reflect on their own choices:


The basics of philosophy of science:

- Editors. “Glossary.” In Richard Boyd, Philip Gasper, and J.D. Trout (eds), The Philosophy of Science

Meeting 4: Cases, Concepts, Comparisons

This session is about Getting Some Things Down: What is a Concept, What is a Theory, What is a unit of analysis? So, if you have a concept and a theory, what is a Case? And should you Compare?

- George, Alexander L. and Andrew Bennett, Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), Ch. 1. “Case Studies and Theory Development,” and Ch. 10, on “Process-Tracing and Historical Explanation.”
- Becker, Chapter 5.


Recommended:

- Shively, *The Craft of Political Research*, Ch. 3, on “Importance of Dimensional Thinking.”
What is all this science nonsense, anyway?


Theory and theory construction:

Meeting 5: The Ethnographer and the Assemblage
- Holmes and Marcus. ‘Cultures of Expertise and the Re-Functioning of Ethnography.’ Chapter 13 in Ong and Collier. Global Assemblages.
Recommended:


Some How-To Stuff:

- Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz & Linda Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Ch. 1-2

- Van Maanen, John - *Tales of the Field*, pg. 45-125

**Meeting 6: After the Field – Departures, Representations, and Reprisals?**


Recommended:

On the IRB:


- “Bureaucracies of Mass Deception”

**Additional Topics and Resources:**
On the Ethnographic Interview (ie. “can I talk to people?” or “How Many People do I need to interview”?)


On Comparative-Historical Sociology

- Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, “The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 2, 1980.
- Pierson, Paul. “Big, Slow-Moving, and … Invisible,” pp. 177-207, in James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (eds.), *Comparative Historical Analysis in