

“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 0662 1S / PAST 0662 1S
Date and Time	JANUARY 13 – APRIL 9, 2025 WEDNESDAYS, 6:45 PM TO 9:35 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 Wednesdays to highlight major themes, Q&A, reflections, and breakout group discussions on assigned readings. Office Hours: Weekly on Wednesdays, 9:45 -10:15 AM. 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 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.
4. Outline the basic components of a simple Likert-scale survey instrument.
5. Present findings of one’s research with clarity.

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.]

Moschella, Mary Clark. and Susan Willhauck. *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. Eds. *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. Ed. *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. GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTIONS

Tyndale University prides itself in being a trans-denominational community. We anticipate our students to have varied viewpoints which will enrich the discussions in our learning community. Therefore, we ask our students to be charitable and respectful in their interactions with each other, and to remain focused on the topic of discussion, out of respect to others who have committed to being a part of this learning community. Please refer to “Guidelines for Interactions” on your course resource page at classes.tyndale.ca.

E. 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 the required readings assigned and be prepared to engage meaningfully with fellow students in your group. Students will take turns leading 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?

What was his conclusion (hypothesis) and do you agree? Why?

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: Feb. 7, 2025

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 28, 2025

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 where 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; field notes.
- b) Data analysis and triangulation: strategy for organizing and coding 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 reference 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 field notes and interviews).

Due: Apr. 18, 2025

Evaluation: Criteria posted on the course page.

Grading Rubric (Major Project, 40%). This would be uploaded on Moodle.

Note on Ethics

All research involving human subjects is governed by the Tyndale University's Research Ethics Policy Manual. Course-based research does not need a full review of individual assignments by the Research Ethics Board (REB), provided the course assignment meets these criteria.²

- research must be no more than minimal risk
- participants must be members of the general population capable of providing free and informed consent themselves
- there should be a small number of participants
- projects must be non-controversial (e.g., they should not collect personal, sensitive or incriminating data)
- methods of data collection must be non-invasive
- projects cannot include deception

Your course assignment (major project) meets these criteria. You would be learning about these criteria in one of the class sessions before you begin field work and data collection. See also "Research Ethics" later.

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 the 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).

Due: April 9, 2025

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.

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

² Course-based research policy is listed in this link, pp. 12-13. <https://www.tyndale.ca/sites/default/files/2022-08/Tyndale-University-Research-Ethics-Policy-Manual-November-2019.pdf>

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 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.

F. 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.

G. 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%

H. 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.

I. 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

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
Jan 15	Course overview & assignments	McDurdy et al. (2004), 1-3 ³ Baker & Belzer (2018), article ⁴	

³ Numbers after author refer to chapters.

⁴ Articles to be read are provided in the class Moodle page.

	Covenant, community & a culture of learning Discuss: Baker & Belzer (2018)	Video: "Pastor as ethnographer," Carl Henry Center, TEDS, 2013	
Jan 22	Psalm 19 Ethnography: nature & applications Discuss: Moschella (2023) & Ketelaars (2018)	Moschella (2023), Introduction & 1 Ketelaars (2018) article	
Jan 29	An exercise in getting to know ethnographic-qualitative research Discuss: Patton (2014), 1	McCurdy et al. (2004), 4-6 Patton (2014), 1	
Feb 5	Joshua 1-2 Qualitative research design: What's your question? Discuss: Moschella (2023) 2-3; Siew (2022)	Moschella (2023), 2-3 Siew (2022), chapter	Assignment #2 (Feb 7)
Feb 12	Reading days (no class)		
Feb 18-21	Phil. 2:5-11 Doing fieldwork: ground rules for observation Research ethics Discuss: Moschella (2023), 4	Moschella (2023), 4 McCurdy et al. (2004), read one ethnography	Guidelines for research plan (use Fig. 1, Moschella [2023], 99, as guide)
Feb 26	Phil 2:1-11 Doing fieldwork: ethnographic interview Researcher role/relationships	Moschella (2023), 6 Singh & Southcourt (2019), article	

	Discuss: Moschella (2023), 6; Singh & Southcourt (2019)		
Mar 5	Acts 17:16-34 Doing field work: Rudiments of field notes Discuss: Moschella (2023), 5 Firmin et al. (2019)	Moschella (2023), 5 Tagwirei (2022), article	
Mar 12	Field work ⁵		
Mar 19	Field work		
Mar 26	Data analysis (bring one transcript, field notes) Research-ministry balance Discuss: Moschella (2023), 7	McCurdy et al. (2004), read one ethnography Moschella (2023), 7	Assignment #3 (Mar 28)
Apr 2	Joshua 3-8 Writing the report Likert-type instrumentation & generalizability of findings Discuss: Moschella (2023), 8-9 Lee (2023)	Moschella (2023), 8-9 Siew (2024), chapter (to be published)	
April 9	Project presentations (15 mins. Each) Review of learning journey		Assignment #4: Project presentation Assignment #4: Major project (April 18)

⁵ Learning the basic skills of ethnographic-qualitative research is most effectively acquired when one is engaged in field work, applying theoretical principles acquired in lectures and readings. About 25% of class time would be devoted to field work, which means significant class learning happens in the field. Field work can only begin when all ethics requirements are fulfilled. Note these two weeks for field work and preschedule your interviews early. Interviews, about 45 mins to 1 hours, can be done via MS Teams.

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

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 doctoral mentor, 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, ed. *Greenhouses of Hope*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2010.

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