Course Description:
This course will focus on one particular essayistic genre that occurs across many of the
disciplines that comprise both the humanities and the social sciences: the ethnographic
essay. As Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater explain, ethnographers “study the customs of
groups of people in the spaces they inhabit” (2). In short, ethnographers are interested in
culture, the “invisible web of behaviors, patterns, rules, and rituals of a group of people
who have contact with one another and share a common language” (3). What makes
ethnographic essays so invigorating is that they require authors to draw on a variety of
writing conventions such as description, narration, and analysis. Moreover ethnographers
draw from a variety of research methodologies, including direct observation,
interviewing, and library research. While this course presupposes that students have
demonstrated competence in academic writing, including how to navigate Internet and
library-based research, this course will be most appealing to anyone who is interested in
expanding their understandings of academic style and research. Students in this course
will select a “culture” to observe, study the art of fieldwork, and compose a variety of
shorter essays that at the end of the course will be synthesized into a formal ethnographic
essay.

Required Text:
Sunstein, Bonnie Stone and Elizabeth Chiser-Strater. *Fieldworking: Reading and Writing