Experience Studio

PCIX-SHU 102

J-Term 2025

Making a "Good Life" in Rural Guangdong Province
Project-based Ethnographic Fieldwork Course
2 credits

Saturday 4 January - Tuesday 14 January

Subject to Change Statement

The syllabus and course schedule may be subject to change. Changes will be communicated via email and in NYU LMS (Brightspace). It is your responsibility to check email messages and course announcements to stay current in the course.

Instructor Information

Instructor: Prof. Liangliang Zhang
Contact: lz777@nyu.edu
Office: N811, Qiantan Campus, NYU Shanghai
Office Hour: By appointment via email

Course Information

Course Number: PCIX-SHU 102
Course Title:
Experience Studio: Making a "Good Life" in Rural Guangdong Province
Course Description:

Experience Studio engages students in an immersive learning experience that brings them outside the classroom and into the community. This project-based course provides students with an opportunity to learn about ethnographic fieldwork in practice, and in doing so, support the reflective development of one of China's first self-proclaimed "eco-village" communities (taking shape since 2014).

Students will acquire embodied knowledge of this small but vibrant grassroots community and explore its connections to projects and processes beyond the village boundaries. Guided by theoretical resources from anthropology and allied disciplines, students will explore different modes of living in the Kei Kai village, interacting with stakeholders of diverse backgrounds. In doing so, they will learn about the aspirations, possibilities, tensions, and contradictions that are reshaping China's rural environments and rural existences.

This course empirically revolves around the lived experiences of Kei Kai villagers, and theoretically revolves around a holistic research question: **How do people strive to make a "good life" in a rural environment undergoing rapid structural transformations?**

Students will (1) explore the theoretical and practical foundations of community-engaged ethnography through readings, field-based seminars, and reflective practice in consultation with local stakeholders. Through self-reflection and in-depth interactions with classmates and community partners, students will (2) gain firsthand experience of the processes, challenges and rewards that constitute both ethnographic fieldwork and community engagement. Drawing on their immersive ethnographic fieldwork and adopting a team ethnography approach, students will (3) co-design and co-produce short ethnographic films that document the diverse living practices encountered in Kei Kai, with the aim to address the holistic research question stated above and to facilitate the outreach of the village community.

This course can be taken repeatedly as it will be offered by different instructors in collaboration with different course partners each semester. Given the intensive and immersive nature of this course, in-person attendance throughout the course period is mandatory for enrollment.

Instruction Mode: This project-based ethnographic fieldwork course is taught **in-person at the designated learning site**.

Prerequisites: Advanced Chinese 2 or native speaker of Chinese

Course capacity: 15

Course Overview and Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Listen and learn from diverse perspectives with curiosity, open-mindedness, humility, and compassion;
- Articulate and apply key theoretical concepts of community-engaged ethnographic research;
- Practice qualitative ethnographic research skills (participant observation, qualitative interview, field-note taking), as well as describe and reflect on innovative approaches to participatory ethnographic research;
- Demonstrate competence for designing and implementing complex collaborative research project and express team ethnographic research findings through creative, impactful communication;
- Develop multi-layered reflective thinking to evaluate their ongoing learning journey and engagement with diverse communities.

Course Requirements

I. Preparations

Prior to arrival at the designated learning site (**by 4:00pm on Sunday 5 January 2025**), students must:

- Complete the readings/media viewing as listed in the course materials, and <u>create a one-page mind map (A4 size, hand-drawn strongly recommended) that summarizes each reading/media viewing</u>. Note that each independent chapter should be summarized by a separate mind map. Be prepared to share these with your classmates during the field-based seminars. **Students will submit the photos of these Reading/Viewing Mind Maps <u>as a single PDF file via BrightSpace</u> by 11:59 pm China Standard Time on Saturday 4 January 2025**.
  - Howell, S. (2018). "Ethnography". In *The Open Encyclopaedia of Anthropology*, edited by Felix Stein. Online: http://doi.org/10.29164/18ethno.
  - Ingold, T. (2017). "Anthropology contra ethnography." *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 7(1), 21-26.

○ Pink, S. (2010). "[What is Sensory Ethnography](#)?" Presentation at the 4th ESRC Research Methods Festival, Oxford, UK (Video).
○ Schrock, R. D. (2013). "The methodological imperatives of feminist ethnography." *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*, (5), 48-60.
○ Pandian, A. (2019). *A Possible Anthropology*. Duke University Press. Read at least:
    ■ "Introduction: An ethnographer among the anthropologists"
    ■ "The world at hand: Between scientific and literary inquiry"
● Complete a CITI Program Training on Social & Behavioural Research – Basic/Refresher (including 7 required units and 3 elective units on "**Introduction to Community-Engaged Research**," "**Introduction to Community-Based Participatory Research**," and "**Ethical and Practical Considerations in Community-Engaged Research**"). **Students will submit [the CITI Training Certificate AND CITI Completion Report as a single PDF file via BrightSpace](#) by 11:59 pm China Standard Time on Saturday 4 January 2025**.

II. Experience and Engagement

Throughout the course period (**5 January - 15 January**), students will:
● Be fully present at the designated learning site and demonstrate their active participation and respectful engagement, including completing fieldnotes, asking questions, interacting with diverse stakeholders, and contributing to discussions.

III. Fieldnotes Portfolio

During the course period, students will develop a fieldnotes portfolio composed of three parts:

● **Daily Fieldnotes Entries** (7 daily entries in total required, each entry no more than 500 words). These entries will document their daily learnings and fieldwork experiences. **Please hand-write these entries during the course of each day in the notebook provided. Feel free to use diagrams or other creative expressions.** Make sure you:
    ○ Describe the details of the daily activities and encounters with stakeholders;
    ○ Document assumptions, surprises, key learnings, and questions;
    ○ Document new concepts and theories learnt during field-based seminars;
    ○ Demonstrate their understanding of how to apply theories and concepts covered during the seminars to guide and explain fieldwork experiences.
    ○ Students are encouraged to develop a dialogical sensibility, which means (1) perceiving a constant interaction between theory learning and empirical learning, and (2) using first-hand fieldwork experiences to critique and reflect on existing theories.

- **Individual Research Process Notes** (2 entries required, each entry no more than 500 words). These entries will document their reflections on the process of their research interest development and team project creation. **Please write these as mini-essays and type them up**. Make sure you:
  - Describe how your research interest developed in the process of field-based theoretical learning and empirical fieldwork;
  - Document your individual contributions and experiences in the team-ethnography project;
  - Reflect on each stage of the research process: what went well? Which aspects can be improved? And why?
- **Final Reflection and Self-Evaluation** (1 entry required, no more than 800 words). Use this entry to reflect on your learning journey throughout the course. **You may write this as a letter to Liangliang or a regular reflection paper.** Make sure you:
  - Review the key concepts and theories learned during the course;
  - Review the key ethnographic research skills developed during the course;
  - Reflect on the key insights into community-engaged ethnographic research gained through the course;
  - Document any further theoretical and practical issues you wish to explore through future coursework and research practice;
  - Describe how you would like to apply what you learned from this experience to your future personal and professional growth.

The fieldnotes portfolio will be completed and submitted on the following schedule:

1) **7 Daily Fieldnotes Entries**
   a) Ungraded individual check-in on day 2 (appointments will be scheduled beforehand)
   b) Graded final submission on day 10 (please submit your physical notebook by **9:00 am on Tuesday 14 January**; you can pick up your notebook at the beginning of spring semester from the CEL office)
2) **2 Individual Research Process Notes Entries**
   a) Process Note 1 due by **11:59 pm on Tuesday 7 January** (BrightSpace)
   b) Process Note 2 due by **11:59 pm on Friday 10 January** (BrightSpace)
3) **1 Course Reflection and Self-Evaluation Entry**
   a) Due by **11:59 pm on Thursday 16 January** (BrightSpace)

IV. Community-Engaged Participatory Ethnographic Project

Adopting a team ethnographic approach, students will co-design and co-produce short ethnographic films that document the diverse living practices encountered in Kei Kai, with the aim to address the overall research question: **How do people strive to make a "good life" in a rural environment undergoing rapid structural transformations?**

Throughout the course, we will learn and gain firsthand knowledge about community-engaged participatory ethnography research, and apply these newly acquired skills to address the research question through innovative methods and inclusive processes.
- During the first stage of course, students will form research teams of 2-3 individuals based on their shared interests.
- During two of the research workshops, each team will create 1) a participatory ethnography research experience design poster and 2) a final project concept map.
- By Day 9, the entire course research team will co-create a final project deliverable, and present their final project to the community stakeholders during a research sharing event.
- As part of the final project, each student will complete a peer review of group members' contribution using rubric provided by the instructor. Note that your group members will be evaluating your contribution from the beginning of the project. The peer review will be submitted via BrightSpace by **11:59 pm on Wednesday 15 January**.
- Finally, each student will write an individual reflection on the final project (no more than 500 words), which will be submitted via BrightSpace by **11:59 pm on Wednesday 15 January**.

Grading

The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

Assignment/Activities	% of Final Grade
I. Preparatory Work (15%)	
- Readings/Media Viewings Mind Map Summaries	10
- CITI Program Training on Social & Behavioural Research	5
II. Experience and Engagement (15%)	
- Engagement and Full Presence	15

III. Fieldnotes Portfolio (40%)	
- 7 Daily Fieldnotes Entries	21 (3 each)
- 2 Individual Research Project Process Notes	10 (5 each)
- 1 Course Reflection and Self-Evaluation Entry	9
IV. Community-Engaged Participatory Ethnographic Project (30%)	
Part 1: Preparation and Design	
- Participatory Ethnographic Research Experience Design Poster (Group Grade)	5
- Final Project Concept Map (Group Grade)	5
Part 2: Final Project and Presentation	
- Final Ethnographic Deliverable (Group Grade)	5
- Peer Review of Group Members' Contribution (Individual Grade)	5
- Community-Facing Final Project Presentation (Individual Grade)	5
Part 3: Reflection	
- Final Project Reflection (Individual Grade)	5

Students must engage in all aspects of the course (preparation, experience and engagement, development of the fieldnotes portfolio, production of the team-ethnography project) in order to pass the course. **Non-participation in any of the four areas will result in a failing grade.**

Course Schedule (subject to revisions)

Day	Date	Agenda
Day 0 - Arrival	Sat 04 Jan	**Submit 1) Mindmap Summaries as a SINGLE PDF file and 2) CITI Training Certificate AND CITI Completion Report as a SINGLE PDF file via BrightSpace by 11:59 pm China Standard Time on Saturday 4 January 2025.** **By 4:00 pm:** Arrival in Kei Kai village and moving into accommodations **5:00 pm - 6:00 pm:** Course Syllabus and Schedule Review **6:00 pm - 7:00 pm:** Group Dinner **7:30 pm - 8:30 pm:** Welcome Circle: Intention Setting
Day 1 - Introduction to Community-Engaged Ethnography	Sun 05 Jan	**6:45 am - 8:00 am:** Walking Meditation in Kei Kai Herbal Living Farm **8:00 am - 8:45 am:** Group Breakfast **9:00 am - 10:15 am:** Introduction to the Practice of Community-Engaged Ethnography **10:30 am - 12:00 pm**: Village Walking Tour and Local Experiences **12:00 pm - 1:00 pm:** Group Lunch **1:00 pm - 2:30 pm**: Rest **2:30 pm - 5:30 pm**: The Transformation Game **6:00 pm - 7:00 pm:** Group Dinner **7:30 pm - 8:30 pm**: Evening Sharing Circle

Day 2 - Introduction to Sensory Ethnography	Mon 06 Jan	**8:00 am - 8:45 am**: Group Breakfast **9:00 am - 10:15 am:** Introduction to Participant Observation and Sensory Ethnography **10:30 am - 12:00 pm:** Practicing Sensory Ethnography: Sensing the Village **12:00 pm - 1:00 pm**: Group Lunch **1:00 pm - 2:30 pm:** Rest **2:30 pm - 5:30 pm:** Life Apprenticeship Experiences with Community Partners ● Participating in the real-life activities of people with real needs **6:00 pm - 7:00 pm**: Group Dinner **7:00 pm - 9:00 pm:** Individual Fieldnotes Check-in (10-minute appointments with Liangliang)
Day 3 - Introduction to Ethnographic Interviewing	Tues 07 Jan	**8:00 am - 8:45 am**: Group Breakfast **9:00 am - 10:15 am:** Introduction to Ethnographic Interview: The Method of Deep Listening **10:30 am - 12:00 pm:** Practicing the Art of Listening: Debriefing Life Apprenticeship Experience through Peer-to-Peer Interview **12:00 pm - 1:00 pm**: Group Lunch **1:00 pm - 2:30 pm:** Rest **2:30 pm - 5:30 pm:** Exploring the "Real Question": Small Group Preliminary Interview with Community Partners **6:00 pm - 7:00 pm:** Group Dinner **7:30 pm - 8:30 pm**: Evening Sharing Circle

		First individual Research Process Note due by 11:59 pm
Day 4 - Introduction to Facilitation Methods	Wed 08 Jan	**8:00 am - 8:45 am**: Group Breakfast **9:00 am - 12:00 pm:** Introduction to Facilitation Methods **12:00 pm - 1:00 pm**: Group Lunch **1:00 pm - 2:30 pm:** Rest **2:30 pm - 5:00 pm**: Final Project Team Formation Consultation ● Students will form project teams of 2 individuals ● Each team will indicate the community partner(s) they would like to collaborate with for the final project **No scheduled activity in the evening. Take care of your own dinner.**
Day 5 - Designing Participatory Ethnographic Research	Thurs 09 Jan	**8:00 am - 8:45 am**: Group Breakfast **9:00 am - 12:00 pm:** Participatory Ethnographic Research Design Workshop ● Each project team will design participatory ethnographic research experiences with their community partners ● Each project team will brainstorm the ethnographic data they need to collect for the final project (observation data/video footage/photos/interview recording etc) and plan accordingly ● Keep in mind how these research processes can be *of value to the research participants* as well as the research project **Each project group will produce a hand-drawn community-engaged participatory ethnographic research experience design poster during this session.** **12:00 pm - 1:00 pm**: Group Lunch **No scheduled activity in the afternoon. Take care of your own dinner.** **Project teams will prepare for/begin participatory ethnographic research with their community partners.**

Grading Evaluation Scale

Written assignments will be evaluated in accordance to this grading rubric:

Level	Description of Accomplishment	Grade
Critical Reflection	- Presents thoughtful and detail-oriented observation of activities, events, and processes - Shows significant effort in critical investigation, analyzing and synthesizing experiences by identifying patterns and opportunities for connecting theoretical and empirical learning - Uses clear, concise language and employs effective multimodal communication	A / A-

Descriptive Reflection	• Describes events but lacks critical investigation and deeper consideration of the connections between events and theories • Language and multimodal communication are sometimes unclear and ineffective	B+ / B / B-
Incomplete Reflection	• Lacks substance • Is incomplete and/or incomprehensible	C+ / C / C- / D
No Reflection	No response submitted	F

Letter grades for the entire course will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Points	Percent
A	4.00	92.5% and higher
A-	3.67	90.0 – 92.49%
B+	3.33	87.5% - 89.99%
B	3.00	82.5% - 87.49%
B-	2.67	80% - 82.49%
C+	2.33	77.5% - 79.99%
C	2.00	72.5% - 77.49%
C-	1.67	70% - 72.49%
D+	1.33	67.5% - 69.99%
D	1.00	62.5% - 67.49%
D-	.67	60% - 62.49%
F	.00	59.99% and lower