

Course Title: Ethnographic Journalism, Media Participation, and Homelessness

Lecturer: Vojtěch Dvořák, Ph.D.

Course objectives

This course provides an introduction to ethnography, ethnographic journalism, and media participation focusing on marginalized and vulnerable populations, particularly unhoused people. We will explore who are unhoused people, factors contributing to homelessness, and why understanding homelessness matters. We will see how various types of media portray unhoused people and analyze local media coverage of homelessness. We will talk about how alternative media attempt to challenge stereotypical representations of homelessness and see their limits. We will also discuss avenues for change through media participation, empowerment and ethnographic journalism. Learning ethnographic methods, we will engage in fieldwork and cooperate with people experiencing homelessness to produce media/news outcomes. Exploring the limitations and continuously challenging the process' ethics, we will strive to use media not only as a tool for empowerment but also as a responsible way of complementing media representations of homelessness.

Outcomes from learning

Students will be able to:

- Understand homelessness in its broader social context, including life trajectories and circumstances that lead to it
- Recognize how media tend to portray unhoused people with emphasis on revealing stereotypical and harmful representations
- Understand current avenues for change and their limitations – understand how alternative media approach portraying unhoused people and using their voice
- Understand and use the theory and ethnographic methods, and ethnographic journalism to challenge stereotypical representations of minorities
- Understand the theory of participation and empowerment
- Question traditional journalistic norms and values through the lens of advocacy, social equality and justice
- Critically review the ethical questions of ethnographic journalism and full media participation

Teaching Methods

Lectures

Seminars

Fieldwork

Reading

Assessment Methods

Attendance and Participation

Group Project

Written Assignments

Week 1 – February 20

Introduction to the course

Assessment methods:

Required attendance: 11/ 13 lectures/seminars/fieldwork

Written assignments:

- 1) Assignment 1 – Initial perception of homelessness – Reflective Essay (500 – 750) words
 - a. **Deadline Feb 26**
- 2) Assignment 1 – Secondary perception with theory and comparison to the first one
 - a. Details TBD
- 3) Final essay – Final perception and comparison to the first and second assignments after fieldwork
 - a. Details TBD
- 4) Group project – Details TBD

Week 2 – February 27

Lecture 1: Defining Homelessness

Who are unhoused people? What is homelessness? What is home? Causes of homelessness? Why does understanding homelessness matter?

Minimum reading:

Edgar, B. (2009). *2009 European Review of Statistics on Homelessness*. Brussels: FEANTSA (p. 6 – 16, 73)

Recommended reading:

Amore, K., Baker, M., & Howden-chapman, P. (2011). The ETHOS Definition and Classification of Homelessness: An Analysis. *European Journal of Homelessness*, 5(2), 19–37. Wellington: University of Otago.

FEANTSA (2006). *Ethos – Taking Stock*. Brussels: FEANTSA.

Serme-Morin, C., & Lamas, O. (2020). *Fifth Overview of Housing Exclusion in Europe 2020*. Brussels: Fondation Abbé Pierre - FEANTSA

Week 3 – March 6

Lecture 2: Homelessness in Media

How do mainstream media present homelessness? What stereotypes do they use? What is the impact on unhoused people's lives, on us? What are the alternatives and what are their limits?

Minimum reading:

Schneider, B. (2012). Sourcing homelessness: How journalists use sources to frame homelessness. *Journalism*, 13(1), 71–86.

Recommended reading:

Doudaki, V., & Carpentier, N. (2019). Critiquing hegemony and fostering alternative ways of thinking about homelessness: The articulation of the homeless subject position in the Greek street paper *shedia*. *Communications. Media. Design*, 4(1), 5-31.

Hodgetts, D., Hodgetts, A., & Radley, A. (2006). Life in the shadow of the media: Imaging street homelessness in London. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 9(4), 497–516.

Howley, K. (2003). A Poverty of Voices: Street Papers as Communicative Democracy. *Journalism*, 4(3), 273–292.

Hrast, M. F. (2008). Media representations of homelessness and the link to (effective) policies: The case of Slovenia. *European Journal of Homelessness*

Torck, D. (2001). Voices of Homeless People in Street Newspapers: A Cross-Cultural Exploration. *Discourse & Society*, 12(3), 371–392.

Week 4 – March 13

Seminar 1: Where do We Stand and Where do We Go?

Discussion over the first assignments. Exposing own stereotypes and bias. FAQ on homelessness. Setting up the group project.

Week 5 – March 20

Lecture 3: Ethnography and Ethnographic Journalism

What is ethnography? Ethnographic methods (observation, participation, taking fieldnotes, interviews...). What are the pros and cons? Autoethnography. Ethnographic journalism. Does it lead to more responsible reporting?

Minimum reading:

Cramer, J., & McDevitt, M. (2004). Ethnographic journalism. *Qualitative research in journalism: taking it to the streets*, 127-144.

Recommended reading:

Aktinson, P., & Hammersley, M. (1998). Ethnography and participant observation. *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 248-261.

Denzin, N. K. (1999). Interpretive ethnography for the next century. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 28(5), 510-519.

Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: An Overview. *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung*, 36(4 (138)), 273–290.

Hermann, A. K. (2016). Ethnographic journalism. *Journalism*, 17(2), 260-278.

Week 6 – March 27

Lecture 4: Participation and Media Participation

What does it mean to participate? What types of participation are there? What is power? Participation and empowerment. Enhanced and full media participation. Is it always good to aim at full participation? Public journalism, citizen journalism, participatory journalism...

Minimum reading:

Arnstein, S. R. (1969). A ladder of citizen participation. *Journal of the American Institute of planners*, 35(4), 216-224.

Recommended reading:

Carpentier, N. (2011). Media and participation: A site of ideological-democratic struggle (p. 408). Intellect.

Carpentier, N. (2016). Beyond the ladder of participation: An analytical toolkit for the critical analysis of participatory media processes. *Javnost-The Public*, 23(1), 70-88.

Cavalieri, I. C., & Almeida, H. N. (2018). Power, Empowerment and Social Participation the Building of a Conceptual Model. *European Journal of Social Science Education and Research*, 5(1), 189-199.

Croft, S., & Beresford, P. (1992). The politics of participation. *Critical social policy*, 12(35), 20-44.

Week 7 – April 3

Seminar 2: Where do We Stand?

Reflection of the second assignment. Getting ready for the fieldwork. Distribution of the tasks related to the group project.

Week 8 – April 10

Lecture 5: Advocacy, Solidarity and overall Ethics

What ethical dilemmas arise from media participation with people experiencing homelessness? How do we tackle them? What about professional codes of ethics? Should they be adopted by non-professionals too? What ethical issues occur in the field?

Minimum reading:

Atkinson, P. (2009). Ethics and ethnography. *Twenty-First Century Society*, 4(1), 17-30

Dvořák, V. (2024). But whose harm? Towards the ethics of participatory advocacy journalism with unhoused populations. *Journalism*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849241228093>

Week 9 – April 17

Fieldwork 1

Details TBD.

Week 10 – April 24

Fieldwork 2

Details TBD.

Week 11 – May 1

Seminar 3: Where do We Stand?

Working on the group project.

Details TBD.

Week 11 – May 8

Fieldwork 3

Details TBD.

Final Week 12 – May 15

Presentation of the group project.