

Discipline: Business Research

1. Language

English

2. Title

Ethnographic Research

3. Lecturer

Prof. Dr. Jana Costas, Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder)

Prof. Dan Kärreman, Copenhagen Business School

Jana Costas is Professor of Business Administration, in particular People, Work and Management at the European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder). She holds a PhD from the University of Cambridge, and has been awarded an EU Marie Curie Fellowship, which she conducted at the Copenhagen Business School. Jana has also been Assistant Professor (Juniorprofessorin) for Qualitative Methods in Management Research at Freie Universität Berlin. Her research interests lie in the area of organization studies, in particular secrecy, creativity, control, identity, culture, leadership, violence, and new work and organizational arrangements. She has published in and reviews for various journals, such as Organization Studies, Journal of Management Studies, Human Relations. She is the author of the monograph "Secrecy at Work: The Hidden Architecture of Organizational Life" (with Chris Grey), Stanford University Press, as well as the ethnographic book "Dramas of Dignity – Cleaners in the Corporate Underworld of Berlin", Cambridge University Press (EGOS Book Award 2023, Distinguished Award for Responsible Research in Management 2024) and "Im Minus-Bereich – Reinigungskräfte und ihr Kampf um Würde", Suhrkamp (Kurt-Rotschild Preis für Wirtschaftspublizistik 2024).

Dan Kärreman is Professor in Management and Organization Studies at Copenhagen Business School, and Professor in Business Administration at Lund University. His research interests include critical management studies, knowledge work, identity in organizations, leadership, organizational control and research methodology. He received his PhD, based on an organizational ethnography, in 1997, and has held position at Gothenburg University, Lund University, Copenhagen Business School and Royal Holloway, University of London. His contributions to organizational methodology includes articles and books on organizational discourse analysis, mystery as method, theory creation and critical inquiry. He has contributed to more than 40 journal articles in peer review publications and has published in most top ranked journals in organization studies.

4. Date and Location

22. - 25.9.2025

Berlin

5. Course Description

5.1 Abstract and Learning Objectives

The course is designed for doctorate students in business administration who want to learn about and conduct ethnographic research. The aim of the course is to provide students with methodological foundations and advanced knowledge on ethnographic research in business studies. After attending this course, participants should be able to

- understand the methodological foundations of ethnographic research
- differentiate between different approaches to ethnography and be able to assess their strengths and weaknesses
- plan an ethnographic research design as well as be prepared for methodological challenges in their field research
- understand ways of analyzing ethnographic data and judge ethnographic research according to quality criteria

5.2 Content

The first workshop day will provide an overview of the history of ethnography as well as introduce the participants to different approaches in ethnographic research. The second workshop day focuses on research ethics, quality criteria and publishing ethnographic research. On the third workshop day, the process of doing ethnographic research in the field as well as the issues of access, roles and forms of engagement will be discussed. The fourth day looks at different strategies for analyzing ethnographic data. The session will be hands-on and offer participants the opportunity to gain practical experience with analyzing ethnographic data.

5.3 Course format

The course format will be an interactive one so that exchanges between the lecturers and participants as well as amongst the participants can take place. The lecturers will draw on their own experiences as ethnographers as to illustrate what it means to conduct ethnographic research. Participants will be encouraged to actively participate in classroom discussions as well as share their methodological insights, questions and problems.

6. Schedule and Reading Material Day I (Prof. Dr. Jana Costas)

Workshop Day I: Introduction to and Overview of Ethnographic Research in Management		J. Costas
		22.9.2025
Morning session 1		9.00 - 10.30
Historical overview of ethnography		
Different approaches to ethnography		
Classic ethnographic research		
<i>Coffee Break</i>		10.30 - 11.00
Morning session 2		11.00 - 12.30
Ethnographic research in management		
Strengths and weaknesses of ethnographic research		
<i>Lunch</i>		12.30 - 13.30
Afternoon session 1		13.30 - 15.00
<i>Group presentations and discussions</i>		
Digital ethnography		
Video ethnography		
<i>Coffee break</i>		15.00 - 15.30
Afternoon session 2		15.30 -17.00
<i>Group presentations and discussions (continued)</i>		
Global-team based ethnography		
Multi-sited ethnography		
- Autoethnography		

6.1 Preparation

Please read the essential reading in advance (Cuik et al. & Geertz). Before the workshop, the participants will be assigned to different groups. Please read the text assigned to your group and prepare a presentation of it (10 – max. 15 min).

6.2 Essential Reading

Ciuk, S., Koning, J. & Kostera, M. (2018) Organizational ethnographies. In Cassell, C., Cunliffe, A. L. & Grandy, G. (eds.) *The sage handbook of qualitative business and management research methods*. London: SAGE, 270-285.

Geertz, C. (1972) Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight. *Daedalus*, 101(1), 1-37.

Group 1

Akemu, O. & Abdelnour, S. (2018) Confronting the Digital: Doing Ethnography in Modern Organizational Settings. *Organizational Research Methods*.

Group 2

Alvesson, M. (2003) Methodology for close up studies – struggling with closeness and closure. *Higher Education*, 46(2): 167-193.

Group 3

Jarzabkowski, P., Bednarek, P. & Cabantous, L. (2015) Conducting Global Team-based Ethnography: Methodological Challenges and Practical Methods. *Human Relations*, 68(1): 3-33.

Group 4

Delgado, N. A. & Cruz, L. B. (2014) Multi-event ethnography: doing research in pluralistic settings, *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*, 3(1), 43-58.

7. Schedule and Reading Material Day II (Prof. Jana Costas)

Workshop Day II: In the Field – Access, Forms of Engagement, Roles		J. Costas
		23.9.2025
Morning session 1		9.00 - 10.30
Entering the field: access and facing the strange		
<i>Coffee break</i>		10.30 - 11.00
Morning session 2		11.00 - 12.30
How to generate data: interviews, observations, documents		
<i>Lunch</i>		12.30 - 13.30
Afternoon session 1		13.30 - 15.00
Leaving the field: signals of saturation		
<i>Coffee break</i>		15.00 - 15.30
Afternoon session 2		- 17.00
Q&A based on participants' projects		

7.1 Preparation – Please read the following texts in advance

Cunliffe, A. L., & Alcadipani, R. (2016). The politics of access in fieldwork: Immersion, backstage dramas, and deception. *Organizational research methods*, 19(4), 535-561.

Garsten, C. & Sörbom, A. (2018) *Discreet Power: How the World Economic Forum Shapes Market Agendas*. Stanford. Stanford University Press. Introduction & Chapter 1.

Gold, R. L. (1958). Roles in Sociological Field Observations. *Social Forces*, 36(3), 217–223.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2573808>

Spradley, J.P. (1979) *The ethnographic interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, ch. 1 & 2.

8. Schedule and Reading Material Day III (Prof. Dan Kärreman)

Workshop Day III: Data Analysis, Theory Building, Mystery as a Method		D. Kärreman
		24.9.2025
Morning session 1		9.00 - 10.30
	Gaps, problems, and theoretical contributions	
	<i>Coffee Break</i>	10.30 - 11.00
Morning session 2		11.00 - 12.30
	Generating theory from data: Mystery as method	
	<i>Lunch</i>	12.30 - 13.30
Afternoon session 1		13.30 - 15.00
	Generating theory from data: Coding, data structure, and models	
	<i>Coffee break</i>	15.00 - 15.30
Afternoon session 2		- 17.00
	Q&A based on participants' projects	

8.1 Preparation

Please read the two articles in the reading list and reflect on your own planned research with particular focus on the research question, data analysis and theory generation. In addition, please read and prepare a presentation of the text your group has been assigned to (10 – max. 15 min).

8.2 Essential Readings

Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2007) Constructing mystery: Empirical matters in theory development. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(4), 1265-1281.

Locke, K., Feldman, M., & Golden-Biddle, K. 2022. Coding Practices and Iterativity: Beyond Templates for Analyzing Qualitative Data. *Organizational Research Methods*, 25(2): 262–284.

Group 1

Cornelissen, J., Höllerer, M. A., & Seidl, D. (2021). What theory is and can be: Forms of theorizing in organizational scholarship. *Organization Theory*, 2(3), 1-19.

Group 2

Cloutier, C., & Langley, A. (2020). What makes a process theoretical contribution? *Organization Theory*, 1(1), 1–32.

Group 3

Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Hamilton, A. L. 2013. Seeking qualitative rigor in inductive research: Notes on the Gioia Methodology. *Organizational Research Methods*, 16(1): 15–31.

Group 4

Kremser, W., & Blagoev, B. 2021. The Dynamics of Prioritizing: How Actors Temporally Pattern Complex Role–Routine Ecologies. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 66(2): 339–379.

Optional

Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2011) *Qualitative research and theory development: Mystery as method*. Sage Publications.

Eisenhardt, K. and Graebner, M. E. 2007. Theory building from cases: opportunities and challenges, *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(1): 25-32

Grodal, S., Anteby, M., & Holm, A. L. 2021. Achieving Rigor in Qualitative Analysis: The Role of Active Categorization in Theory Building. *Academy of Management Review*, 46(3): 591–612.

Eisenhardt, K. M., Graebner, M. E., & Sonenshein, S. 2016. Grand Challenges and Inductive Methods: Rigor without Rigor Mortis. *Academy of Management Journal*, 59(4): 1113–1123.

9. Schedule and Reading Material Day IV (Prof. Dr. Jana Costas)

Workshop Day IV: Writing Up and Publishing Ethnographic Research		J. Costas
		25.9.2023
Morning session 1		9.00 - 10.30
Ethnographic writing		
Quality criteria in ethnographic research		
<i>Coffee break</i>		10.30 - 11.00

Morning session 2	11.00 - 12.30
Group presentations and discussions of ethnographic texts	
<i>Lunch</i>	12.30 - 13.30
Afternoon session 1	13.30 - 15.00
Group presentations and discussions of selected ethnographic texts	
<i>Coffee break</i>	15.00 - 15.30
Afternoon session 2	- 17.00
Moral dilemmas	
Reflexivity	

9.1 Preparation

Please read the texts in the reading list (Golden-Biddle & Locke as well as Van Maanen & de Rond) and reflect on your own planned research with particular focus on quality criteria and research ethics. In addition, please read and prepare a presentation of the text your group has been assigned to (10 – max. 15 min).

9.2 Essential Readings

Golden-Biddle, K. & Locke, K. (1993) Appealing Work: An Investigation of How Ethnographic Texts Convince. *Organization Science*, 4(4), 595-616.

Van Maanen, J. & de Rond, M. (2017) The making of a classic ethnography: Notes on Alice Goffman's *On the Run*. *Academy of Management Review*, 42(2), 396-406.

Group 1

Florian, M., Costas, J. & D. Kärreman (2019). Struggling with meaningfulness when context shifts. Volunteer work in a German refugee shelter. *Journal of Management Studies*, 56 (3), 589-616.

Group 2

McPherson, C. M. & Sauder, M. (2013) Logics in Action: Managing Institutional Complexity in a Drug Court. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 58(2), 165-196.

Group 3

Costas, J. (2022) *Dramas of Dignity: Cleaners in the Corporate Underworld of Berlin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ch. 4.

Group 4

De Rond, M. (2025) *Dark Justice: Inside the World of Paedophile Hunters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ch. 1 & 2.

10. Administration

10.1 Max. number of participants

20 participants

10.2 Exam

Group presentations on the first and last workshop day.

10.3 Credits

The course corresponds to a scope of 6 LP/ECTS.

11. Working Hours

Working Hours	Hours
<i>Preparations</i>	99 h
<i>Active participation</i>	30 h
<i>Preparation for exam</i>	50 h
<i>Exam</i>	1 h
TOTAL	180 h