

# Cool Anthropology

...or so we seem to think.

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## *Ethnography Matters: the Real, the Fake and the Ethnographic Process*

In a world where information freely flows, it may seem impossible to determine what is real from what is inconclusive, opined, or just plain made up. This installation invites participants to consider the anthropologist's role in data collection and dissemination through an examination of the ethnographic process. By engaging in an ethnographic data collection about their own ethnographic methods, participants explore the question of why anthropology matters and how. The experience is designed to provoke and inspire positing that the rich detail provided by the lived experience of the ethnographer captures a level of reality that is difficult to replicate in other ways and using other methodologies.

Narrating their own experiences as ethnographers, participants also become the studied, providing their account of why anthropology matters in the context of a world where determining what is real and what is not becomes more and more difficult each day. Do ethnographic narratives matter in a world where words and numbers are calculated, manipulated and truncated with ease? Do we have the time to produce knowledge in the way that ethnographic methods demand? Can our methodologies be what matters most? Interacting with these critical questions through an interactive ethnographic experience, participants contribute to a growing body of evidence to support how the subjective experience of the ethnographer can produce the most "real" data.

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*“Cultural anthropology is not valuable because it uncovers the archaic in the psychological sense.*

*It is **valuable** because it is constantly **rediscovering the normal.**”*

— Edward Sapir

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## There is information everywhere.

How do we know who to listen to? How do we know what is real?

The media and governments around the world collect and utilize information, transforming and re-disseminating it for popular consumption. Through this process, these voices of power are the most likely to be heard.

Cultural anthropology has its disciplinary roots in illuminating the lived experiences of communities, which have historically been silenced by power structures. In a world of today, where information freely flows, can we use ethnographic methodologies for those same ends?

The ethnographic process is designed to reveal reality and support truth. Most would agree that there is an element of subjectivity in the process, but we ask if the relationship between the ethnographer and the people in the communities where they work actually reveals reality in a way in which it doesn't exist in our newsfeeds.

### **How does ethnography matter?**

**What would it take for society to respect and utilize ethnographic methodologies?**

**In which ways can ethnographers and their research inform the popular narrative beyond the academy?**

*Tweet your answers @coolanthro @americananthro and our favorites will win a Cool Anthropology t-shirt!*

***Ethnography Matters*** is a project of Cool Anthropology, a collaborative organization dedicated to breaking down the closed-circuits of academic and artistic circles to bring the benefits of the anthropological perspective to a wide and public audience. We are dedicated to translating credible anthropological research into accessible forms. We work with anthropologists conducting research around the world in addition to students, multi-media artists, activists and public participants from our in-person installations and on our website at [www.coolanthropology.com](http://www.coolanthropology.com) where the content and materials from this installation are available for download at no cost.

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## *Curriculum Guide*

The Ethnography Matters materials are designed to promote conversation. They can be used in multiple ways depending on your circumstances and needs.

### *What can I do?*

Use the introductory poster to discuss the ideas behind the project-consider having participants check our Twitter feed from the first event @coolanthro #AmAnth17 to get the conversation started.

Hang the posters around your classroom and have students write on them in the first class as an icebreaker. Consider repeating at the end of the course.

Have students choose a poster and interview other students in the course and/or the department. Share their results with the others.

Hold an event in the department or college and hang or place posters for “drop-by” visitors.

Hang posters in the department lounge or common areas for a more extended period of time and then have a class or club discussion about the answers added.

Have students answer questions directly on our website - we can send you the data!!

### *How do I do this?*

Download the zip folder here:  
<http://coolanthropology.com/ethnography>

Open zip folder and choose the files you need.

Use jpeg files to have your institution print posters.

Use jpeg files to print your own posters.  
(11X17 posters are \$1.40 at Fedex)

Print the PDF on regular printer paper anywhere.

Use the webform as a class or group and send an email to [victoria@coolanthropology.com](mailto:victoria@coolanthropology.com) requesting your data.  
We promise we will send it to you!