

## Major Assignment 2 – English 1101 Mini-Ethnography

For our second major writing assignment, we will be researching and writing a mini-ethnography. Ethnography involves studying and writing about a particular group, community, or subculture.

This assignment allows you to do primary (first-hand) research. The point of ethnography is to watch, to try to understand what's going on from the perspective of an insider, and to ask questions to test your observations. Your goal is to become an expert on the community—how it works and its relation to society; you are teaching your peers, and therefore, you are teaching me.

There is no one way to write an ethnography. As a writer, this assignment pushes you to synthesize the information you have received, and make determinations about its importance, relevance, and placement in the body of your paper.

There are several steps in the process of ethnographic research, and it takes some time (you won't be able to do it all in one day). You are responsible for budgeting your time *in advance*. You are required to work *with* your community, and around their meeting times and rules. *You should not change anything about the community for the benefit of this assignment.*

**Step one:** Choose a community that you want to research. You should choose a community with which you are already somewhat familiar. Here are some examples to generate ideas:

Barber shops, nursing homes, firefighters, church groups, self-help groups, emergency medical squads, athletic teams, day care centers, businesses of all sorts (fast food restaurants, stores, bars), farmers and farm families, hang-outs with regulars (coffee houses, etc.), fraternities, sororities, clubs, exercise groups, fringe groups (punk rockers, hipsters, etc.)

The most important factor in your choice should be access to the community to complete your observations and interviews (i.e. ability to complete the assignment on time).

**Step two:** Prepare for your observations and interview. This step has multiple aspects that may vary based on what you have decided to study, but could include: contacting a member of the community for permission to observe, writing down your initial thoughts about the community, preliminary research on your community, interview preparation and gaining permission to interview, and familiarizing yourself with ethical issues in research.

**Step three:** Observe your chosen community for at least **two hours—one hour at a time on two separate occasions**--without interruption. As you observe, write down *everything* you see (you will have to turn in your notes with your final draft). While you may not recognize something as important when you first see it, your observation may reveal more as you revisit your notes. Your job is to 1) notice what is interesting about this community and the way community members interact with each other and 2) to attempt to understand how the people you are observing view their world. This means you must observe closely, take profuse notes, and distance yourself from the site you are observing. Remember: you are an observer, not a participant.

**In addition to observing the community, interview at least one participant of the group,** taking notes throughout. We will spend some time in class brainstorming interview questions. *\*As a rule, individuals being observed or interviewed should be kept anonymous in your writing.*

Once you have your field notes and interview complete, try to organize them into a brief report on your community. This research will serve as the foundation of your Ethnography. Also, keep track of interview and observation information, as you will need it for documentation purposes.

**Step four:** At this stage, you record your findings in the form of an academic paper based on your observations. First, choose a focus. Instead of giving a comprehensive overview, you should concentrate on specific points. *Consider yourself an expert in this paper.* You should not only restate what others have told you, but should **develop your own conclusions from your observations.** However, all of these conclusions *must* be supported by observation or other research. *Detailed descriptions and quotes must be included for your Ethnography to be complete.* **You also must bring in at least one additional, reliable, academic, secondary source to help position your research in relation to an academic conversation.**

While it is up to you how to position the content in the body of your paper, you should still have an introduction with a thesis statement as the last sentence, body sections in which you explain and support your thesis statement, and a conclusion. You need to cover all *important* aspects of the community that relate to your thesis or focus. If you cover only one aspect of your community, you must adequately research that aspect and ask interview questions that relate to it. Be sure to include an original title that reflects the content of your ethnography.

Your final draft must be **1000-1500 words**, but if you do the assignment properly, you might struggle to keep it under 1500.

### Expectations and Due Dates

#### Criteria and Set-up

- 1000-1500 words (MINIMUM 1000, maximum 1600)
- Correctly use MLA conventions.
- Formatting: double-spaced, Times New Roman, and 12 pt. font (formatting rules in your syllabus)

#### Content Requirements

- Academic tone
- Introductory paragraph that includes a thesis statement providing your stance and three supporting points at the end
- The body sections of the paper will develop and support your thesis statement
- You will give a final conclusion in your essay's last paragraph which reinforces your argument and gives a final statement reiterating your observations and conjectures discussed in the body, while not introducing new information

#### Due Dates:

- Write-up on ideas about groups you might want to research due on **Monday, Oct 2.**
- Thesis statement/Outline due **Wednesday, Oct. 11.** bring one hard copy to class, and put one in iCollege drop box
- 1<sup>st</sup> Rough draft due **Monday, Oct. 16.** bring two hard copies to class for peer review, and put one in iCollege drop box
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Rough draft due **Wednesday, Oct. 18.** bring two hard copies to class for peer review, and put one in iCollege drop box
- **Final Draft due** at 11:59 PM on **Sunday, October 22** at 11:59 pm via iCollege dropbox.