**ANTHROPOLOGY 170WI**

**CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY (Writing Intensive)**

**SPRING SEMESTER 2018**

**Professor**

**FIELDWORK PROJECT: PART I**

This is the first of two major parts of your fieldwork project for the course. To varying degrees, this part of the project will involve developing and cultivating skills in participating and/or observing, interpreting behavior, detailed and descriptive note-taking, and analyzing your own written data. Exercises are also designed to get you to consider your position as an insider or outsider, your perception as an observer making the familiar strange or the strange familiar, and/or reflecting on your role and nature of interaction with other people in your exercise settings. Your notes are your data that you will use to not only reflect on your fieldwork experience, but to analyze for identifying patterns.

**For this phase of the project, you will be turning in both a copy of your notes AND a typed paper (double-spaced, at least 4 pages in length, 12 pitch in Times New Roman, 1 inch margins ) where you reflect on your fieldwork experience.**

**Please note**: For revisions of Part I, you may be asked to return to this exercise setting, so select a setting that you are willing to revisit if necessary. Additionally, because Part II of the fieldwork project involves interviewing, please be sure to select an activity or setting for Part I of the project that will allow for a future interview of some kind (e.g. if selecting a restaurant experience, plan to interview a fellow patron or manager; if going to a church, plan to interview another congregant or pastor, etc.).

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**Selecting a Project:**

Select a setting or an activity that will allow you to be a participant and an observer in some way. This can be an organized group activity in which you are regularly engaged on campus or in your community (e.g. a study group, a club or other organization that has meetings, a work setting, etc.) or more informal gatherings. While attending an event, activity or gathering, participate as you normally would. Focus on this setting while taking in as much detail as you can. After the event has ended, write descriptive, detailed notes about what happened and what was said during that time, recalling as much detail (including dialogue) as you can.

**Examples of Specific Projects:**

The following are just a few possibilities for more specific participant-observation exercises. You are free to use any one of these ideas for a project or use any one of these projects as templates for designing your own participant-observation exercise. Please seek advice if you are unsure about whether or not your idea for an alternative project is acceptable.

**Family Recipe/Meal**

Many families have a particular dish or dishes that are “family favorites/traditions” that may be reserved for special occasions, events and/or as a special treat, or alternatively, something that is served often, maybe even daily. Participate and/or observe the preparation of this recipe/meal being as descriptive as possible. Discuss its broader significance to you, your family, and if applicable, your cultural or ethnic identity. Consider where this food/meal came from. Whose recipe(s) are they? Why is it important? What are the ingredients? What is the method of preparation? How is it served? If it involves an entire meal, how many courses does it involve? Are there particular table settings, seating arrangements, and order of serving that must be followed, etc.

**Restaurant Experience**

Visit a restaurant where you’d be willing to sit down and have a meal (as a participant). What were the factors that led you to select this restaurant? How would you classify this restaurant (fast food, family restaurant, sports bar, etc.). Consider as many characteristics as you can that lead you to classify in the way that you do? Consider the types of foods/meals, social interactions, atmosphere, location, layout, décor, type of background music, and other characteristics. What kinds of options are available? Do they cater to a wide variety of tastes? How do you find the food? Is there advertising for this restaurant? If so, what is the nature of advertising (e.g. television commercials, newspaper flyers, billboards, etc.? Does their advertising make appeals to health, nutrition, price, nostalgia, convenience, status, a particular lifestyle, etc.? If so, how do they do so? Does the advertising live up to the actual experience? Why or why not? Write a descriptive account of your restaurant experience.

**Gender and the Social Life of Consumer Products: A Walk Down Shopping Lanes**

Take a trip down some shopping aisles in a grocery store or visit a major department store such as Meijer, Target, K-mart, etc. and check out the gendering of all kinds of products throughout the store. Then take notes on your experience. Walk down a toy aisle and examine the deliberate gendered marketing of toys for boys and girls. Consider the layout of the aisles (e.g. sex segregated, differences in the set-ups or displays, etc.), the packaging (e.g. imagery on boxes), as well as the different types of toys that are being marketed as masculine and feminine. How are the names of products gendered (e.g. hardware products, cookware or household cleaning products, etc.).What about gendered products of the same or similar items (e.g. disposable razors for men compared with for women, male colognes next to women’s perfume, clothing, beverages, antiperspirants, etc. ). Consider differences in packaging, and even pricing of products of the same type but which are gendered. Describe the differences in these products. There are so many possibilities, so you need not confine yourself to the examples given. Write up a detailed description of these differences in gendered products, providing specific examples of actual products. Then provide some generalizations about what this communicates about the cultural construction of gender in U.S. society.

**Attending a Religious Service (Unfamiliar)**

Attend a religious service for a religion, a denomination of a religion, or a church that you have never attended before. Demonstrate respect by dressing appropriately, finding out ahead of time if you are unsure of the proper attire to wear for the service, or about any other behaviors to observe. Do not take notes during the service, but take in as much detail of the service as you can for writing up notes immediately after the service. Consider, but do not necessarily confine yourself to answering the following questions, where applicable,while conducting your observations: About how large is the congregation? What is the class, racial/ethnic background and sex composition of the congregation and what factors contribute to the demographics of this congregation? How often are there meetings and at what times? What is the organization of this religious organization (i.e. what kinds of positions are held and what are their functions?) Who are the religious leaders, what is their role, and how are they dressed? What is the organization of the service itself? What are any noted orders of seating/standing? How do congregants participate (singing, prayer, etc.)? How involved are children in the service (or is there childcare during service)? What rituals, symbols and other features of the service come into play and what can you learn of their meanings? What kind of music, if any, is involved in the service? Note and describe such features of material culture as the building or location in which the service is being held. What is the layout of the building and/or the actual room in which the service is held? What decorations are used? Are there printed service programs handed to congregants? What do these programs look like? What other functions, roles and services does this religious institution play in the lives of its members?

**Attending a Religious Service (Familiar)**

Attend a religious service of a church or religious institution to which you belong or that you have attended before, now as an observer. Conduct your observations in the same manner as in the description for the options above (as if you were observing in an unfamiliar religious service), observing with the intention of answering the same types of questions.

**Attending Religious Services of Two Different Institutions but Same Religion**

Attend a religious service of two separate institutions of the same religion, denomination, etc. e.g. two separate Baha’i temples, two Methodist churches, etc.) for comparison purposes. Conduct your observations in the same manner as the first religious service option above**,** but for this exercise, make special note of similarities and differences between the two religious institutions and their services (e.g. What is the bases for any differences that you can determine from location of the institution, demographics of the membership, etc.?)

**Attend Religious Service in Interfaith Religious Institution**

Attend a religious service in a religious institution that is identified as an “interfaith” religious institution. Conduct your observation in the same manner as the first option on a religious service, but for this exercise, make special note of what unifies the members of this service amidst their diverse religious affiliations? How is community created? What rituals and symbols are invoked? How are services conducted? What is the structure of the service and the church itself? What activities and services are provided to promote a sense of community?

**Genderlect in the Classroom/Study Group/Dorm Room, etc.**

Choose one meeting of a class where there is a fair amount of participation, or alternatively a study group, and pay careful attention to the connections between gender and language in this setting. Note the proportion of men and women in the class or study group. Keep a tally of how many times men speak and how many times women speak. Who speaks more often? How long, on average, do men speak? How long do men speak? What, if any, tendencies do you notice in the way that men and women present themselves when speaking, or differences in “ways of speaking”? Are there any patterned differences in vocabulary, tonal qualities (e.g. volume or loudness in voice, etc.)? Take note of “body language” and general styles of speaking of men and women in the class/group. Does the instructor/study group facilitator have any impact on the level and type of participation? If so, how? (For example, who gets called on more [males or females] with or without volunteers?) This exercise can be adapted to a dorm room setting or other informal social gatherings. After taking detailed notes, write up a summary of your general observations and impressions about any differences between males and females in communication patterns in this setting.

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**General Tips and Suggestions for Being a Participant-Observer:**

1. Do not use any recording devices without the permission of the person/people being recorded.
2. It should be stressed that for all exercises/activities, you should make sure that you do not use actual names or any other personal details that would reveal the identity of other persons involved in these exercises.
3. Where appropriate, seek permission to do participant-observation in the exercise setting.
4. The conduct of any exercises should not be excessively intrusive or cause any discomfort, harm, or undue risk to you or to others.
5. Stay as long as you can in your exercise setting to get a good sense of things and get enough data, but not so long that you wear out your welcome.
6. Make sure that you take extensive, detailed, and descriptive notes if possible while in the exercise setting, but if not, immediately after leaving the setting, recalling as much detail as possible. Take note of details even if they seem unimportant at the time, as they may turn out to be important later during your write-up.
7. For some exercises, you will strive to be a “fly on the wall” or inconspicuous, avoiding asking questions, engaging or intervening in what is happening around you. Be as concrete as possible, closely describing what the people are doing. Describe rather than summarize and avoid making impressionistic generalizations (e.g. words like “strange” “bad,” etc.). Also, do not describe people’s internal states or emotions (i.e. how the person feels, what they think, etc.) unless they have indicated this on their own. Jot down any actual words, phrases or statements that the person uses later.
8. In certain venues, you want to conduct your observations at a time when there is activity taking place so that you have enough to observe. Position yourself at a vantage point that allows you to observe what you would like to observe. If anybody asks what you are doing, tell them, but otherwise do not interact with others in this setting. Focus on observing and jotting down detailed, descriptive notes. In your observations and description, consider the layout and features of the physical setting, what people are doing, and even if and how people are responding to you. Be as concrete as possible in your descriptions, capturing the sights and sounds of your setting in the write-up of your notes. If there are details that you recall later after you leave the scene, incorporate them as soon as you recall them.
9. Where appropriate, be sure to thank any participants or anyone who has allowed you to use their venue as a setting for participant observation.