Prof. Pope Fischer

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ANTH 1102

**SHORT PAPER PROJECT: Observation and Description Paper (22%)**

**Due Week 5**

Objectives:

Fieldwork is an important component to Anthropological research. The objective of this assignment is to introduce you to fieldwork research and to have you write up your own fieldnotes. Later, in your final paper project, you will use the data from your fieldnotes to support or test an analysis based on the themes from the course (See attached description of final paper). For this first assignment, I just want you to observe and describe. (Do not use outside sources). As you will do your observations within the New York area, what can we learn about American Culture? (Think about issues such as identity, power and inequality, or gender).

Format:

1) 5 typed pages, double spaced, word count 1600 (https://wordcounter.net/words-per-page)

2) 1 inch margins, 10 to 12 pt. font.

3) No citations or outside references -- this is pure description based on your own observations. If you should use an outside source you must provide a reference and bibliography (for example if you used an image that you found on the internet you need to list the website where you found it). Do not resort to internet sources as this paper is about what you can personally observe and describe.

Possible Research Projects:

***You must pick a public event that you can observe in person during this semester*** (not something in the past). Ideally you should pick something you can observe more than once because once you start trying to analyze your data for your final paper, you may want to go back to fill in details you might have missed. Sometimes, however, you are only able to observe an event once (such as a marriage, funeral, quinceañera, Bar Mitzvah, etc.). In this case, it is especially important to write down detailed information because you might not get another chance to fill in the gaps. If you happen to know a religious practitioner, shaman, or healer, ask permission to let you observe them (get “informed consent”). \*\* Because of the COVID19 pandemic, most public events have had to be changed to virtual formats. I think it might be especially interesting to look at an event such as this as in your final paper you can analyze it within the context of this historic period. Ideas that come to mind are a virtual church service, or a weekly virtual happy hour with friends. If you have school age children at home, perhaps explore the virtual education system and your role in it. Think about how you been interacting and meeting with friends and family since the pandemic started. The point is you want to observe a group of people that you are interacting with. For instance, I do not want you simply watching a football game on tv, but if you are watching it with a group that you can observe in person, or virtually, then it is okay. You want to focus on the people you are interacting with. A routine family gathering would be okay especially if it is for a special event such as a holiday or ritual. Try to search for “virtual social events” or “online social events” that you might attend. Perhaps you regularly play with an online gaming community. Think about “real time” meetings with groups of people perhaps on Zoom, or facetime. Focus on “virtual communities” that you may already be a part of. You are conducting what is referred to as “virtual fieldwork” and writing “virtual ethnographies.” Try to think outside the box, and if you are having trouble picking a topic be sure to email me.

When selecting something to observe, you might review the articles assigned to this course for ideas. Consider describing a sporting event as a ritual, a cultural event, festivals, parades, holidays, church services, a marriage, bar mitzvah, etc. If you have no clue as to what you should observe, please contact me during my office hours to discuss possible ideas. I have found that the best papers are about things that are of interest to you. Try to pick something that is of interest to you. Think of hobbies or activities that you like to do. Can this be something you can observe for this assignment? In your final paper you will have to come up with a complex argument using the theories from the articles we have read. As rituals are full of symbolism, consider the symbols you observe and what these symbols are telling you about the cultural environment / about US society. Therefore, for this first assignment, consider observing something where you think you might observe some symbolic representation. At this point, however, you will only need to describe, but you are welcome to perhaps consider possible symbolic identification and analysis.

Be sure to be honest with the people you are observing. Tell the people you are observing that you would like to write a paper for a course based on your observations. Ask permission to observe an event. Inform them of your intent to write a paper for a class based on your observations, that you will protect their identity, and that they have the right not to participate.

Research Purpose: what event did you observe and what is your research question? You will be observing something in the US as a way to understand American belief systems. This should be stated in your introductory paragraph.

Methodology

In this section of your paper you should describe the methods you used to gather your data. You must address the following 3 questions in detail:

1) What is the ***source*** of your research subject and what are your ***selection criteria***? (Why did you choose this group? How did this group fit the criteria for this assignment? Do you have a personal reason for choosing this group? Brief summary of group selected)

2) Describe your ***procedures*** (How did you collect your data? Are you a “participant observer”? How did you record your data? What languages were spoken and did you need an interpreter? When and where did you make your observations? Did you conduct any interviews? Etc.)

3) Describe how you addressed ***ethics*** (Ask permission, you must give “informed consent”, protect identity/pseudonym, was there any potential harm or benefit to the people you studied? Etc.)

Observations

In your descriptions you should describe everything you see, hear, smell, feel. Consider drawing diagrams or pictures. You should describe **at least three** of the following:

1) The temporal and spatial environment. (Use of time and space)

2) Language or discourse (Incl. songs, chants, ritual statements, etc.) What did you hear?

3) Gestures or body language (Incl. dance, movement, etc.)

4) Clothes or body ornaments (Incl. costumes, formal v. regular attire, makeup, etc.)

5) Colors

6) Material objects including food.

7) Emotions (happy, sad, scared, etc.) How did you feel? How did the participants appear to be feeling?

8) Describe microcultural factors such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, etc.

9) Describe explicit or implicit rules and norms.

10) If you can, try to identify possible symbols but save your analysis for your final paper.

Use detailed descriptions. Use adjectives and adverbs. (A cat sits in the sun – or -- A fluffy orange tabby cat wiggles in the warmth of the sun). Use vivid fresh language. Emphasize what makes what you observed interesting, or unique. Use specific descriptive details.

Researchers should also note their own reactions and thoughts to the experiences observed. Give an impression for the reader by describing what you see, hear, smell, taste, and feel.

Your midterm paper should be a cleaned up form of your original fieldnotes. It should be typed and written in full sentences. ***Remember – focus on the details. Detailed descriptions are important***. \* Yes, you can change the event that you observed. I do not recommend doing this as it is extra work for you, but if you come up with a better idea you can change if for your final paper. The bottom line is, just turn in something by the deadline. UPLOAD PAPERS ON BLACKBOARD VIA “TURNITIN.” See instructional manual on Blackboard or video – remember to upload AND submit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogu55Hhk6CU>

***No late papers will be accepted.***

PAPER OBSERVATION IDEAS: This must be a group of people participating in an event or common activity that you can observe in person. (You must observe and gather data from a live event where you can be present, such as a live virtual event). Think about public places where groups of people might gather.

Observe a festival, parade, or holiday event.

Observe a wedding, a funeral, a quinceñera, or a bar mitzvah.

Observe a routine activity such as a church service. Try to observe a service other than your own. If you know a priest or priestess, consider asking permission to observe the service.

Consider looking at “ritual spaces” or “liminal spaces” – places that contain groups of people that form a particular group identity or belief.

POINT BREAKDOWN:

The main purpose is to push you to start working on your final paper. Basically, if you write a good methodology and describe what you observed, you will do well. I use this assignment to help give suggestions for your final paper – so I will have daily point deductions for late papers to encourage you to turn this in on time.

1. Format: 5 full written typed pages (word count 1600), 10-12 point font, 1-inch margins. (5 points)

2. A draft **introduction** with a description of research purpose, perhaps a preliminary statement on your overall findings (5 points)

2. Description of your **methodology** – how did you gather your data? (15 points)

3. Must observe first-hand in the first 5 weeks of class. (Not something from the past)(5 points)

4. **Detailed descriptions of at least 3 out of the 10 points listed above**. (35 points)

5. **Conclusion** -- Overall impression of what you observed. Try to tie to themes from the course (25 points)

6. Overall spelling, grammar, style (10 points)

7. Plagiarism will result in an automatic “F.” Do not resort to cutting and pasting from the internet.

GRADING RUBRIC FOR 5 PAGE OBSERVATION PAPER

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| DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENT REQUIREMENTS: | POINTS | POOR/ WEAK | FAIR/ OKAY | EXCELLENT/AMAZING | COMMENTS |
| *1.Introduction* – Consider starting with an interesting quotation or anecdote from your observation. Briefly introduce the topic, the theme from course, goals of this paper/ research purpose. What did you learn about belief systems in the US from your observations? And why is this important? Last sentence that describes the underlying meaning or your interpretation (or your thesis statement). | **5pts** |  |  |  |  |
| 2. *Description of your methodology:* You must address the following 3 topics in detail:  a. Selection Criteria: Why did you choose this group? (Must observe public event in NY during semester). How will this group answer your questions about belief systems in USA? Do you have a personal reason for selecting this group?? etc. How did you find this group?). One sentence summary (# of people, age range, gender, ethnicity, class).  b. Procedures: State where you conducted your research. How did you observe the event? (length of time, # of times, etc.). How did you record your data? (fieldnotes, photos, audio recordings, etc.). Are you a “participant observer”  c. Ethics: Describe if there was any potential harm or benefit to the people you studied. Describe how you handled confidentiality and your use of pseudonyms. \*You must state that you gained informed consent or explain why it was not necessary.  *Other/optional*: Participant Observation – are you a member of the community that you are studying? Describe research problems (issues of microculture, culture shock, technical problems, etc.). Was the event in English or another language? (Are you fluent in that language or did you use a translator?). If you conducted interviews: describe interview type (Informal, semi-structured, structured), describe type of questions, and type of person interviewed and how you handled ethics. (Save responses from interview for your data description). | **15 pts** |  |  |  |  |
| 3. Detailed description of event or observation you have done within the first 5 weeks of class. (First hand observation – a live event) | **5 pts** |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Detailed descriptions of at least 3 (At least ½ page description of each) out of the 10 points listed below.  1) The temporal and spatial environment. (Use of time and space).  2) Language or discourse (Incl. songs, chants, ritual statements, etc.) What did you hear?  3) Gestures or body language (Incl. dance, movement, etc.).  4) Clothes or body ornaments (Incl. costumes, formal v. regular attire, makeup, etc.).  5) Colors.  6) Material objects including food.  7) Emotions (happy, sad, scared, etc.) How did you feel? How did the participants appear to be feeling?  8) Describe microcultural factors such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, etc.  9) Describe explicit or implicit rules and norms.  10) If you can, try to identify possible symbols but save your analysis for your final paper. | **35 pts** |  |  |  |  |
| 5. *Brief Summary Conclusion:* Overall impression of what you observed. What theme from the course do you wish to explore further in relation to what you observed (ritual, symbols, worldview, identity, etc.)? Can you relate your observations to your own personal experience? What is the underlying meaning or interpretation of what you saw? (Go back to introduction, and put 1 sentence that reflects this) | **25 pts** |  |  |  |  |
| 6. Format: 5 full written typed pages, 10-12 point font, 1-inch margins. (1600 words) | **5 pts** |  |  |  |  |
| 7. Overall spelling, grammar, style, proper citation format | **10 pts** |  |  |  |  |
| \*\* THIS OBSERVATION PAPER IS YOUR RAW DATA. USE OF OUTSIDE SOURCES FROM THE INTERNET WILL RESULT IN DEDUCTIONS; UNCITED MATERIAL WILL RESULT IN AN “F”.  \*\* Daily point deductions for late papers (1 pt per day) |  |  |  |  |  |
| TOTAL (Out of 100 possible points):  \*Plagiarism may result in an automatic F |  |  |  |  |  |