

Unit III: Ethnography Portfolio

Length: see below for each stage's specific requirements

Final Portfolio Due: April 27th

Follow MLA Conventions*

(See below for each stage's due dates)

*Double-spaced with one-inch margins, in Times New Roman, 12 pt. font. See sample paper on Canvas.

For the third unit, you will move from personal narrative into writing about a community. In this unit, you will select a local culture of which you are not part. You will then explore it in a variety of ways: first, an essay describing a place important to the culture; second, a profile of someone who is part of the culture and who, in some way, exemplifies the culture; and finally, an ethnography/literary journalism essay that may combine elements of the other two essays, with the addition of other individuals and outside research. After turning in the final essay/portfolio, you will articulate your cultural findings in a 5-7 minute class presentation. All of these assignments should concern the same culture, with an end goal of you being able to describe distinctive aspects of the culture and derive meaning from these aspects for an audience unfamiliar with the culture. You must do so in thoughtful and respectful ways, as you are an outsider to the culture you are explicating.

Stage 1: Topic Proposals (due 3/16)

First, you should identify at least two potential local cultures you would be interested in exploring for this project. By this point, you likely know generalities about the larger culture of Baylor and Waco, but consider what microcultures make up this community (or another community with which you are familiar). Think about clubs, teams, and communities that come together to a common area for a common purpose. Keep in mind that you must have access to this culture for fieldwork, as you will need to visit a place important to this microculture and interview someone from this microculture for the preliminary essays of this project. You will want to avoid any cultures you have extensive knowledge of or preconceptions about – you should enter this project with an open mind, so that you are able to represent the culture based on the research you conduct.

You will turn in at least two proposals to me, and each proposal should be 1-2 paragraphs long. Outline what you know about your potential subject: who are the participants? What do they do? Where do they meet? How frequently? What is their common goal? What are distinctive aspects of their culture that you would be interested in exploring? How will you get into contact with members of the group? What is a place of significance to this group? Who would be a person to interview who is in some way representative of the group? How will you conduct additional research, beyond the interview and fieldwork? And finally, why this group? Why do you think this would be an interesting project? What are you most curious about, regarding this group? What will your research question be?

Please number the proposals according to preference. I must approve your proposal before you can continue with your project. If you decide to change your subject to a different microculture, you must turn in a new proposal to me and I must approve it. You can change your subject at any point before you begin work on the final ethnography, but in that case, the preliminary essays will no longer be pertinent to your final ethnography. This may set you back significantly.

Stage 2: Essay of Place (due 4/1) – *worth 20% of ethnography project grade*

Next, you will write a 3-4 page essay of place for the microculture you are exploring. This place will most likely be a physical location (though there are a few exceptions). If you have questions about the suitability of the place you identified, ask me before getting too far into the essay. You will need to visit this place in order to be able to describe it effectively. You may wish to show action/events happening and objects of significance located within the place. If it is a multi-purpose space, then show how it is used specifically by this particular group of people, including patterns of behaviors and rituals that occur within this setting. You will be calling upon your finest descriptive skills to “describe thickly” the place. You must show the meaning that this place has for this particular microculture, providing some sort of analysis or understanding of your culture’s values, priorities, and needs, in regards to the space it inhabits. The readers should feel like they are present in that place and understand its significance.

You will turn in a folder with a hard copy of this assignment, as well as turn it in on Canvas.

Stage 3: Profile (due 4/13) – worth 20% of ethnography project grade

For this assignment, you must interview a member of the microculture. This individual, or informant, should represent the culture in some way. We know that individuals cannot fully speak for an entire culture, as groups are composed of individuals who bring their unique backgrounds, personalities, and perspectives. Even so, there should be a reason you selected this person to profile. Your profile should display how this individual is an insider to the culture you are exploring. Your informant will be the center of this narrative, as you explore how an individual participates within the microculture.

You will need to identify this person as soon as possible so you can schedule an interview. The interview should take place face-to-face, as a key component of the profile is experiencing and communicating the essence of the individual. If a face-to-face interview cannot be conducted, you should conduct a Skype or video chat interview. Much less preferred would be a phone interview, and an email interview is not appropriate for this profile.

Be prepared for the interview, with compiled questions and your goal in mind, but feel free to follow where the interview takes you. We will discuss interview techniques and etiquette, as well as how to craft good questions. You may want to record the interview you conduct, though you will also want to take notes as you interview your informant.

After the interview, you will write a 3-4 page profile of this individual, crafting a narrative about the individual that involves description, background, context, and participation in the culture you are exploring. You should include *at least one anecdote and three short quotes* that provide insight into your informant. Remember, you are writing about a real person. It is important that your profile is both respectful and truthful.

You will turn in a folder with a hard copy of this assignment, notes taken from your interview, a copy of your interview questions, and your essay of place. You will also turn in the profile on Canvas.

Stage 4: Ethnography Portfolio (rough draft due 4/25, final draft due 4/27) – worth 45% of ethnography project

After completing the two initial essays, you will write an 8-10 page ethnography/narrative journalism essay about the culture you have been exploring. Included in this essay can be pieces of the previous two essays, though you will want to make modifications. Do not simply jam together the previous essays and consider yourself nearly there; the goal is to modify your previous fieldwork for the goals and structure of this longer ethnography.

Your goal is to describe this culture: its distinctive aspects and its significance, for both its participants and the larger culture. Why does this culture exist? How does it fit within the larger cultures of both this area and this nation? What are some benefits of participating in this culture? What are some challenges? To answer these questions, you will have to describe the culture, its participants, its rituals, and its goals. Learning this information will require talking to cultural participants (beyond your initial informant) and experiencing this culture for yourself.

Much of the structure/format of the ethnography is up to you. You can describe a typical meeting of the culture or a particular event, or simply follow various individuals as they engage in the culture. You will want to be as descriptive as possible, and at some point you will need to provide analysis and interpretations of the culture. What does it all mean, for them and for us? You may also decide the tone, level of formality, and where you will stand on the personal/public continuum. How do you as writer and ethnographer want to present yourself within the text? How will that change your essay?

You will also need to incorporate three outside sources beyond the interviews you will conduct (though these interviews should also appear on your works cited page). These sources can be from the library or online, but they must be reputable sources, given your subject. Wikipedia and other online information compilers are not reputable for this project. If you are uncertain whether your sources are reputable, feel free to ask me or Baylor reference librarians. The works cited page must be formatted in MLA style. We will discuss this, and there is citation assistance available online (*not* EasyBib or other citation engines, but rather the OWL at Purdue, etc.). Any information about the culture learned from outside sources must be cited appropriately. The works cited page does not apply toward the overall page count for this essay (8-10 pages).

Of all of the essays we have done this semester, this will be the most like a traditional argument, though it still may be more informal than traditional academic essays. In many ways, you are presenting an argument about this culture, persuading an unfamiliar audience of the accuracy of your interpretation of a particular culture. Thus, you will need to support any assertions and conclusions you make about this culture with clear data: from your own experiences, from interviews, or from outside data. A combination of all three types of research will be the most compelling and persuasive.

This project will be compiled as a portfolio, meaning you will include all previous essays for this project, as well as any notes taken. Please combine everything into a binder, with a title page (with interesting and appropriate title) and a table of contents. Organize the portfolio with the ethnography project first, followed by the works cited page and the other essays/notes/drafts.

You will turn in a binder with a hard copy of this assignment, the rough draft/peer review sheet, the two previous essays, and any notes or materials used as research (not found online or in published mediums). You will also turn in the ethnography project on Canvas.

Stage 5: Presentation of Research (4/29 & 5/4) – worth 15% of ethnography project grade

The final stage will be a 5-7 minute oral presentation to the class of your research. You will want to both describe the microculture and its significance, but you will need to focus in on a certain aspect of the microculture since you will not have time to discuss your entire report. How you do this is up to you.

You are encouraged to do your presentation in a creative manner that will keep your audience engaged and interested. Consider incorporating within your presentation a visual argument related to the microculture. This may be a handout, a poster, a demonstration, the use of music, visual clips, a PowerPoint presentation, audience participation, etc. If you choose to include multimedia elements in your presentation, you will be responsible for ensuring that those elements work properly before your presentation (arrive early to set up, etc.). Also, you must be able to set up/tear down the equipment quickly. Any clip of video, audio, etc. must be less than 30 seconds in length.

Your tone should be casually formal. This presentation should be prepared; it should sound like it was practiced and polished. You do not need to memorize your presentation, but also please do not simply read off of your ethnography, skipping over pages for which you do not have time. You may present from a manuscript, notecards, an outline, a PowerPoint, a Prezi, etc. You must stay within the time limit.

You will also evaluate each of your classmates' presentations. On presentation days, you will lose points for being absent, late, or sleeping through your classmates' presentations.

There will also be a final essay due during the final exam period, worth 10% of your course grade. More information will follow regarding this final essay. Do not miss the final period.

FINAL UNIT III PORTFOLIO CHECKLIST

Canvas upload:	Ethnography
Binder in class:	Title page (including portfolio title, student name, course name, date, and professor name) Table of contents Ethnography (8-10 pages) Works cited Rough draft/peer review sheet Essay of place (graded copy is fine) Profile (graded copy is fine) Any additional notes or materials