

Project One: Mapping and Describing a Block

Due the day before session 9 at 6pm. Two weeks to complete the assignment (!)

Submit a copy of your fieldnotes and your paper that describes a block.

The project is very straightforward. Find an interesting and unfamiliar block. “Interesting” means that it should have something (buildings, landscaping arrangements, movements of people and/or traffic) sufficiently arresting to be worth venturing out of your customary space. The block may be defined either as a chunk of land bounded on four sides by streets, or as the two facing sides of one block of a single street plus the side street back to the alley (if any) on either side.

Without interviewing the people you encounter, describe that block building by building, lot by lot. Draw a map of the block, annotating it as Heather Danielkiewicz does in the accompanying paper. Details are crucial, but explain why the details you choose are worth noting.

Visit the block at different times of the day, to see you use differs. Some blocks change their character drastically from morning to evening.

Please take into account that you will be returning to that block for your second projects, so choose one that is intriguing and not merely convenient to campus.

Avoid

Judging (i.e. ugly fence or cute child)

In-descriptive words (i.e. “middle-class couple”)

Avoiding judgment is hard. If you succeed, you will be practicing cultural relativism.

Nostalgia – the project is meant to exercise your eyes only (1) not memory. Do not describe a block that you already know well.

The paper needs to have introduction, conclusion, and enough descriptions (examples) to back up your idea. The use of sources from the class readings is highly encouraged although not required. Paper should be four-pages long, double spaced. Notes will vary.

The intended outcomes from this project:

1. Identify a fieldsite
2. Practice observation
3. Exercise in taking notes
4. Practice writing skills
5. Exercise description and making choices of which details matter the most
6. Understand that space is culturally and socially constructed
7. Sense that human actions take place in a particular place, time, and under specific conditions.
8. Sense that humans (ourselves included) are products and creators of social cultural differences.

Remember the following:

Anthropologists “build their own archives.” (Franz Boas)

Anthropologists “do not study villages, but study in villages.” (Clifford Geertz)

Anthropologists describe “the imponderabilia of everyday life.” (Bronislaw Malinowski)

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