

Your final paper for Social Psychology is your opportunity to apply the concepts that you learn in class to a particular social setting. The paper should be at least 8 pages double-spaced and it is worth 30% of your final grade. The essay is to be based on your observations of a specific off-campus setting that is new to you. (I am willing to consider a familiar location but you should consult with me first.) The ideal setting would be one you have never been in before where you can watch behavior you do not usually see, or perhaps a setting you have been in before but in which you take on a different role. Your observations should be made over the course of at least four visits to the field. (i.e., the place you plan to observe.) Each visit should last 2 hours so that in all you spend a minimum of 8 hours observing your social setting. Each time you visit the field you should take a small notebook with you where you can take notes.

I recommend waiting to observe your social setting until mid-September so that you have enough course material to apply to what you see around you. I also urge you to select a stimulating setting that presents a wide range of behaviors that you can analyze based on a range of course concepts. There are of course many potential settings to choose from. Some to consider: a religious service of a denomination you know nothing about; a basketball game if you never attend sporting events; a crowded Saturday night movie by yourself if you've never gone to a movie alone; a session of the legislature or a court; a political rally; a downtown coffee shop; a long-distance bus trip; a cafeteria if you generally eat alone; a gym if you do not frequently workout; Walmart, etc.

Your paper should:

- (a) Provide an introduction in which you introduce an argument based on your observations. (i.g., "Based on my ethnographic observations, I argue that a great number of people that lift weights do so in order to conform to social norms projected by wider society. In my essay I provide examples of observations that I made at a local gym to support my position.")
- (b) Describe the setting, the people who are part of it, and the behaviors you observe (i.e., use lots of adjectives and adverbs!;
- (c) Analyze the behavior in terms of relevant course concepts (this analysis should be the main part of the paper);
- (d) Relate the situation and behaviors to your own life. (e.g., why you chose the setting, what you expected, how your behavior was influenced by others, how your preconceptions of the setting may have influenced your interpretation, etc.); and
- (e) Discuss the limits of your observations. (i.e., what alternative arguments might explain what you observed? More importantly, if you had unlimited time and resources, what method would you use to analyze the issue at hand (i.e, experiment, survey, in-depth interviews, existing data, etc.) and what factors would you control for in your research (and why)?

Good examples of ethnographic fieldwork:

- Philippe Bourgois' *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in the Barrio*.
- William Finnegan's *A Cold New World*.
- Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo's *Domestica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*.
- Robert M. Emerson, et al *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*.
- Also, see articles posted on website that describe how to do ethnographic work.