

Appendix 12 – YouTube Ethnography Project

Living and learning alongside people in other cultures in an attempt to understand a culture is at the very core of cultural anthropology. Where ethnographers seek to understand and describe culture, so can students. Ethnographic fieldwork usually involves to varying degrees observation, interviewing informants, note-taking, making maps, collecting life histories, charting kinship, keeping a field journal, etc. Ethnography can also involve videotaping. This assignment has been designed for you to use YouTube in order to learn more about cultural representation and interpretation. This kind of learning can help you become a more insightful, patient and introspective cultural explorer.

Assignment:

Part One: Prior to Departure.

- a. *U.S. American Culture.* Locate a short video clip on YouTube that in your opinion accurately portrays an aspect of U.S. American culture. Write a brief description (one page) of the video and your defense in support of its representation. To help get you started, have a look at one of these video clips below and ask yourself if it is an accurate cultural representation:
 - "Americans are Not Stupid" [www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJuNgBkloFE]
 - "Why People Hate the USA" [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LysxbVZ1DNM&NR=1]
 - "What is American Culture" [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pg87sSaTZSc]
- b. *Host Country Culture.* Locate a short video clip on YouTube that in your opinion accurately portrays an aspect of the host culture where you will be traveling. Write a brief description (one page) of the video and your defense in support of its representation. Be sure to check out the YouTube website for the host country. To help get you started, have a look at one of these video clips below and ask yourself if it is an accurate cultural representation:
 - "Sushi" (Japan) [www.youtube.com/watch?gl=JP&hl=ja&v=0b75cl4-qRE]
 - "Brazilian Dance-forró" [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KLXmTCdfuuA>]
 - "Sunset in Rome" [www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHSuD_irk0s&feature=related]
- c. *Class Presentation.* You will be given 10-15 minutes to present one of the two video clips you've chosen. Allot no more than five minutes for showing the video clip. Most of your time should be given to discussing the video and the accuracy of its cultural representation. Remember your role is to defend the video, so expect a lively debate. Video links and write-ups are due at the time of your presentation.

Part Two: Upon Return.

- a. *YouTube Ethnography Project.* Now, it's your turn. While abroad, you and a partner are to create a YouTube video ethnography of one aspect of the host culture. Your video should be no longer than five minutes and should be uploaded to YouTube. While your video may be humorous, keep in mind that this will be a public representation and interpretation of one aspect of the host culture.

In order to upload your video, you will need a YouTube account. You can get your free account at www.youtube.com. You can find answers to all of your YouTube questions by following the *Help* link on the homepage. Also, consider reading over one of the many sites that offer tips for making high quality YouTube videos, such as www.videomaker.com/youtube/.

- b. *Class Presentation.* Upon return, you and your partner will be given 10-15 minutes to present your video clip. After showing the video clip, allow time for a brief discussion of your approach to representing and interpreting the host culture. The link to your video clip and a 1-2 page reflection paper will be due within one week of your class presentation. The reflection paper should discuss the process behind your approach to making the video and based on the class presentation and discussion, what you've learned about representing culture through video.

Evaluation:

The assignment is worth 30% of your overall course grade: 10% for Part One and 20% for Part Two (10% for the video clip). You will not be graded on your video production skills. Rather, your grade will be based on your ability to represent and interpret an aspect of the local culture through video and your class presentation and discussion of it.

Video Ethics:

How do you know what is appropriate when making a video for public consumption. It is never easy, but there are some general rules that you can apply while abroad. For example, ask permission before videotaping someone or something. If you do video someone, let them know that the video will be uploaded to a public website. There is also video etiquette to consider when posting to YouTube. Here's a helpful (and humorous) video clip on YouTube etiquette, www.youtube.com/watch?v=SilHEwmpYSI

An Anthropological Introduction to YouTube:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPAO-IZ4_hU&feature=channel]

If you think YouTube is only for funny home movies, you need to watch Michael Wesch's video, "An Anthropological Introduction to YouTube." Wesch is perhaps the first cultural anthropologist to study and teach digital ethnography. After watching this video, you'll never look at YouTube the same way again. You can learn more about Wesch's YouTube project at, http://mediatedcultures.net/ksudigg/?page_id=85

Helpful Reading:

- Crane, J. & Angrosino, M. *Field Projects in Anthropology: A Student Handbook*, 1992.
- Roberts, C. "Ethnographic Approaches to Cultural Learning," 1996.

Source:

A. Ogden, 2009