

## Short Ethnographic Practicum Assignment Topics

Note: This is a generic list, adaptable and modifiable to specific course themes, levels, and class size.

1. **In-class Observation assignment:** In 15-20 min, divide the class into separate groups. Each group will move to a specific site on campus (food court, library, sports complex, busy building corridor, departments) and write their own individual observations. After reconvening, each group will collectively present their observations while reflecting on commonalities and differences. As a class, reflect on the process, how we observe similar sites differently, and what “lenses” we use to observe our surroundings.

**Sample grading rubric:** This assignment can count towards the participation grade (5% of total participation grade) and can be repeated several times throughout the semester

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Student wrote down notes & actively shared them in class				
Student communicated observations on space, individuals, interactions				
Student was capable of reflecting on their observations, what affected them, and what they might mean				

2. **Interviews:** Based on the course theme or one of the weeks’ texts, each student conducts a semi-structured interview (20-25 min long) with a close friend, family member, or acquaintance. Each student submits their transcribed interview along with a short (250-500 words) reflection on the process. How are interviews helpful to understand the topic? How are interviews limited as a method? What could they have done differently/better?

**Sample grading rubric:** This assignment can count towards the participation grade (5-10%) or can be part of a larger assignment or final essay in which the interview is complemented with library research on a given topic.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Duration and relevance of interview to the course themes				
Interview is balanced between interviewer and interviewee speaking				
Interviewer gives space for interviewee to speak, reflect, and open up				
Interviewer is prepared for the interview with topics, questions, and themes				
Interviewer introduces themselves and the context of the interview				
Interviewer shares reflections on limitations, advantages, and benefits of interviewing as a method				

- 3. Writing a fieldnote:** Each student spends a few hours in a social space such as a mall, coffee shop, family gathering, religious space, party) with the aim of producing a fieldnote (1000-1500 words) that provides a thick description of the space. This fieldnote should include descriptions of the space, individuals, social interactions as well as the student's reflections. The guiding motivation of the fieldnote should be to transport the reader to the social setting with all its details.

**Sample grading rubric:** This assignment can count towards the participation grade (5-10%) or can be part of a larger assignment or final essay in which fieldnotes are complemented with library research on a given topic.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Fieldnote provides details on the spatial configuration of the setting				
Fieldnote provides details on the individuals and social interactions in the setting				
Fieldnote includes the voice of the student reflecting on the process				
Fieldnote provides details on other sensorial aspects of the setting (sound, smell, ambience)				
Fieldnote provides context of the setting (where is this taking place, which part of the city, socioeconomic background of participants)				

- 4. Media Reflection:** Based on the course theme or subthemes, each student chooses a media artifact (episode of a TV show, TV ad, song, TikTok video) and provides an analysis of that artifact as it relates to the course themes. This analysis should be around 1000-1500 words long and should reflect on the process and limitations of this method of ethnographic social research.

**Sample grading rubric:** This assignment can be 10-15% of the total grade and can inform a larger essay or final submission on a related topic. In that larger essay or submissions, students might wish to complement their media analysis with interviews that explore audience reactions on that artifact.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Relevance of the artifact to the course theme				
Student provides context and rationale for choosing the artifact				
The analysis uses screenshots, quotations, or excerpts from the media artifact				
The analysis actively draws on the course themes and texts to put the artifact in perspective				
The analysis reflects on the limitations and advantages of this methodology				

**5. Autoethnographic/personal reflection:** Based on one of the course themes or texts, each student provides an autoethnographic reflection (500-750 words) that engages with their life history and experiences as they relate to a given topic. In this exercise, each student is their own interlocutor and ethnographer, observing and critically reflecting on their own personal choices, histories, and experiences.

**Sample grading rubric:** This assignment can count towards the participation grade (5% of total participation grade) and can be repeated several times throughout the semester when/if relevant.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Relevance of the reflection to the course themes				
The reflection engages with concrete examples from their lives that relate to the course themes/topics				
The reflection does not merely describe incidents but engage with them and reflects on their meaning				
The reflection offers an original take on (some of) the course themes				
The reflection critically engages with the examples and experiences mentioned				