English 1A Spring 2017 **Profile Essay/Site Visit: Writing About Culture**

**Overview:** This project will give you a chance to think about your culture by interviewing someone from a different culture. It will also give you a chance to try a kind of research and writing that might be new to you. A profile based on an interview is a thriving form of writing that appears in many different settings. If you get good at it, you can do this for a living.

**Good Topics**: Pick a culture that ***you don’t belong to*** but are curious about. We are defining “culture” either as a group people belong to automatically—such as a nationality or ethnicity--or by choice, such as members of a religion. You needn’t try to cover that person’s culture as a whole, though. You could focus on some interesting experience or accomplishment of the person—their multi-country education, their refugee/emigration story, their experience as a Muslim person in the US on 9/11, etc.—anything that offers insights into culture and identity.

**Problem topics**: While it is certainly possible to find really interesting people from well-known neighboring countries like Canada and Mexico, talking about the culture of either place in an interesting way might be a challenge because they are already familiar to most Californians.

* **Audience**: Your choice, but it must be **specific** and appropriate for the topic, and it can’t be just this class and its professor.
* **Forum**: Decide where this would be published, but it must be specific and appropriate to the audience and topic. Don’t just say “a blog,” say *which* blog.
* **Format, Length**: ESSAY (not a transcript of the interview), MLA format, 1400 words.
* **Methods**: Following the models we’ll look at in class, you should include a mix of the following: direct description of a person and place, testimony from interviews, analysis, narrative, and (optional) ***properly cited*** information from research of written sources.
* **Requirements**:Although “formal” research on the Web or in books is optional, an interview with at least one person who belongs to the culture you are writing about is required, and at least two quotes from that person is required.
* **Citing sources:** If you include material quoted from any source other than your interviewee, (including the Web), you must give credit and include an MLA style works cited page. Within the essay itself, informal citation (as in a newspaper) is fine for quotes from the interview.

**Procedure:**

1) **Topic Proposal**: In a memo briefly identify the culture you will discuss, name at least one person you will interview and contact information for him/her (email, ideally, or a phone number). Also identify the audience you will address & forum. **Due: Th 2/23**

2) **Interview questions**: I want to see the questions you will use, at *least 10*, typed. **Due: Th 3/2**

3) **Rough Draft:** Peer Review Submit a copy of the draft to Canvas and bring a hard copy of both the draft AND the interview transcript to class to get and give advice. **Due:** **Th 3/9**

4) **Revise**: Next, take your draft and your peer’s advice home, consider what advice to use, get my advice, as well, if you want; then you’ll revise. This doesn’t mean just fix any spelling/grammar errors you notice (that’s editing). It means take a new look at it and try to improve anything that needs it. *Most first drafts fall in the “C”-range, at best!* If you want to get good grades in college, revise! You will turn in both the rough draft and the revised version.

**5) Submit final packet, TWO ways**: Print out the final draft AND submit it electronically to Canvas (PDF or Word doc). Staple the final draft pages, then put that in a big envelope with the peer review sheet, rough draft, and interview notes, and hand it in at the BEGINNING of class on the day its due. (If you’re late, so is your paper.) **Due: T 3/21** (this is an extension from the syllabus date of Th 3/16. I think I’ll need more time to comment on the rough drafts.)

**One place to find someone to interview**: **SJSU International House**

It can be challenging to investigate a culture you don’t already know much about. One way to do that is to take advantage of the SJSU “I-House” to meet some international students, maybe find one you can interview for your paper. Web site: <http://www.sjsu.edu/ihouse/index.htm>

* **COFFEE NIGHT** **Tuesdays** 8:30 – 10:30 pm I-House Dining Room. All are welcome!
* They also hold a **Pancake Breakfast** at some point in each semester. The upcoming one is **March 5, 2017** 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. <http://www.sjsu.edu/ihouse/life/events/pancake-breakfast/>

**Classmates:** You might also be able to find an interview subject right in this classroom, or in one of your other classrooms, or in the dorms.

**Clubs:** SJSU student organizations offer a vast array of opportunities to meet people from other countries and different religions, from the [Afghan Student Association](https://vpsaweb2.sjsu.edu/greenlight/pages/public/ViewMemberList.php?recid=1575&ClubID=ORG0000662&ClubName=Afghan%20Student%20Association) to the [Zen Buddhism Club of San Jose State University](https://vpsaweb2.sjsu.edu/greenlight/pages/public/ViewMemberList.php?recid=1149&ClubID=ORG0000236&ClubName=Zen%20Buddhism%20Club%20of%20San%20Jose%20State%20University). Here’s the site for the full list: <http://wpe.sjsu.edu/greenlight/pages/public/directory.php> Aim for those classified as “cultural and religious”