**Writing Project #2 – *Ethnography!***

**Background/Apologia**

The internet defines **ethnography**as “the scientific description of the customs of individual peoples and cultures” (Google). An “ethnographic essay” might best be understood as a short piece of **descriptive** writing which **attempts to outline some general practices and concerns of a specific group of people**. These Groups might be categorized, identified, or “labeled” prior to the ethnographer’s work (so one might continue to explore aspects of a group other ethnographers have left out of their consideration), ***or*** they might be identified [*or* described/outlined] by the ethnographer herself.

Ethnography is an interesting exercise because it can offer fresh insights into ***seemingly*** familiar groups, and also improve one’s understanding of unfamiliar customs, world-views, and dispositions.

**Overall Task**

Write an ethnography of a group or community of your choosing. You will first submit a topic proposal consisting of a community or group on campus or in Lawrence *and* an issue or characteristic of that group that you are interested in. (See the sample topic proposal on the back.) Once your topic is approved, you will perform original research, through **observation and interviews**, on the group you’ve chosen. Finally, you will find and use **both popular and peer-reviewed academic research** on either your group or the issue/characteristics on which your paper will be focused.

A key component of this essay will involve the sustained use of a particular source – the introduction to Dick Hebdige’s *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979), “From Culture to Hegemony.” I will ask that you work a concept, claim, idea, or definition from Hebdige’s essay into your own paper as a means to focus your research… We’ll be discussing this text’s implications in great detail in class, so I urge you to familiarize yourself with this piece of writing post-haste.

The paper itself will use your original research, peer-reviewed and/or popular research you have found online, and Hebdige’s claims and terminology to explore the role or importance of an issue or characteristic in the specific community you have studied. You should include an introduction that both briefly **introduces your community or group and presents a thesis about the issue/characteristic of the group that you have studied**. The body of the essay should include a thorough explanation of your primary research (observations, interviews, etc.) as well as an analysis of that research. This analysis should be your own, but should also make reference to peer-reviewed sources that inform your analysis of the issue/characteristic.

**Purposes**

* To practice conducting original research. We’ll be discussing and practicing two ways of doing in-person research: field observation and interviews.
* To continue working on finding and incorporating peer-reviewed and popular research productively and thoroughly.
* To practice analyzing and using (perhaps) unfamiliar academic genres: culture studies & ethnography. We will look at several samples of these types of texts in class but you will be responsible for determining how to best employ Hebdige’s discussion of culture, and what stylistic conventions/characteristics of ethnography to undertake.
* To practice writing in a researcher’s voice—one that reports the facts, but also uses them to interpret and even to argue.

**Requirements**

* 5-7 pages, double-spaced, 12 pt. font, 1-inch margins
* 2 hours of field research (minimum)
* Must cite the Introduction to Hebdige’s *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*
* Use of at least 2 other scholarly peer-reviewed or popular sources
* MLA citation

**Schedule**

* 23 February Sample field notes & Research proposal due
* 11 March Peer Review Workshop
* 13 March Writing Project #2 due

*We will discuss grading criteria for this assignment in class.*

**Sample Topic Proposal**

In the past few weeks I’ve noticed lots of people performing music on Massachusetts Street – some of these musicians play almost every day. I know that I’ve heard people refer to these people as “buskers,” but I don’t know anything much about the term. I think it would be interesting to hear about these musicians’ perspectives, and I already have a few questions about busking downtown (Ex: “Are they in it for the money?” “Do they all know each other?” “Do they like the term ‘busker’?” “Do they write their own songs?” “Why not play in a bar or club?”). I want to observe and interview a few of these buskers and find out a little more about their lifestyle. I think my questions (and their answers!) might relate to Hebdige’s ideas about the social “reproduction” of style, and I want to know what role these musicians see themselves as having in the community (or, as Hebdige might ask: *What is the nature of their relations and responses to the dominant cultural ideology?*). Besides interviews, I think my research will mainly use blogposts and newspaper articles about buskers and busking, but I might be able to find some more academic articles about it via KU’s databases…