

Urban Observation Journal Writing Assignments

1. Use a disposable camera OR digital camera to take a minimum of 10 photographs. They should all be of ONE neighborhood you intend to focus on for the duration of the semester. Burn them onto a CD and bring them to class. **Write about ONE of the photographs**, what it represents to you, why it is important to you, where it is, & what your connection to this location is. You will read it out loud in class and share photos.
2. Write about a public space. Sit in a public space (park, plaza, transit, etc) that is in the neighborhood you are exploring. Write about how and why it is a public space. Who is using this space? What are they doing – talking on cell phones, eating lunch, jogging, playing with their kids in the park? Then write about what you like or what you hate about it. Are there recommendations you have thought of on how to make it a better public space?
3. Find your neighborhood on **Google Earth**. Find your neighborhood on **Google Map**. Write about how these digital maps of your neighborhood are similar and different. What were you able to see on these maps (restaurants, roads, parks, etc)? Did either map make you think about your place in a new way? If so how? Is there something about your neighborhood that you love that isn't represented? If so what? Could you see your house, your favorite park, shoe store, etc? What kinds of informational layers exist for your area and what if anything did you learn from them?
4. Find an article about your neighborhood in a local newspaper that relates to an important issue in your community, EITHER gentrification, immigration, food security, unemployment, transportation, flooding, or some new urban development project. It should be a topic that you could explore for your final research paper. Explain how you believe this issue is impacting the neighborhood.
5. Interview someone who has been living in or working in this neighborhood for many years (an immigrant, African American and/or women). Come up with your questions in advance! Ask them questions like: when and why they ended up in the neighborhood? What they like about it? How has the neighborhood changed? Did they like it better before or now and why? Write a written summary of your interview with them, but also attach the raw interview.
6. Find census data from last 10 years and analyze it, write a journalism type piece about the neighborhood changes. What was the population of your neighborhood in 1980 and compare that to 2000. What was the ethnic and racial make-up of this community in 1980 and how has it changed? Find other dramatic changes in the data and discuss them. (**use website myciti.org**)
7. Find an interesting venue within your neighborhood either public art piece, unique store, museum, library, farmers market, etc that is important to the neighborhood. Review it like a travel guide.