English 1A Fall 2016 **Profile Essay/Site Visit: Writing About Culture**

**Overview:** This project is designed to 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.

**Details:**

* **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 could also consider people who form a culture because of a disability, such as the blind/visually impaired. You needn’t focus on 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 experience as a professional soccer player, their refugee/emigration story, their experience as a Muslim person in the US on 9/11, etc.
* **Problem topics**: I’m sorry, but some topics are just too hackneyed (cliché-magnets) to work, so I must forbid them, fraternities & sororities, for instance. Also, since the idea is to learn something new from someone you don’t already know, family members, friends, neighbors are not acceptable topics. You’re on your honor here, obviously, but I hope you will honor the concept that you learn the most when you explore the unknown. Also, while it is certainly possible to find really interesting people from a well-known neighboring country like Canada and Mexico, talking about the culture of either place in an interesting way might be a challenge, again, because they are already familiar.
* **Audience**: Your choice, but it must be specific and appropriate for the topic.
* **Forum**: Decide where this would be published, but it must be specific and appropriate to the audience and topic.
* **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 written sources (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**: 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:** MW class, M 10/3; TTh classes, Th 9/29

2) Interview questions: I want to see the questions you will use, at least 10, typed. **Due:** MW class, 10/10; TTh classes, Th 10/6

3) Peer Review You will submit a copy of the draft to Canvas and bring a hard copy of both the draft PLUS the interview transcript to class to get and give advice. **Due:** MW class, W10/19; TTh classes, T 10/18

4) Revise, submit final packet: You will take your draft and your peer’s advice home, consider what advice to use, get my advice, as well; then you’ll revise. 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.) Then you can relax and confer with your film clubs, maybe see a short movie. **Due:** MW class, W 10/26; TTh classes, Th 10/20

**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 SJSI International House to meet some international students, maybe find one you can interview for your paper. I will even give **extra credit** if you go to one of these events and write about it (approx. 1 page description/response with a souvenir) Check out their Web site: <http://www.sjsu.edu/ihouse/index.htm>

* **COFFEE NIGHT** **Tuesdays** 8:30 – 10:30 pm I-House Dining Room All are welcome to attend!
* They also hold a **PANCAKE BREAKFAST** at some point in each semester. The upcoming one will be announced on their site.

**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). Below is a partial list of other relevant clubs.

* [Taiwanese Student Association](https://vpsaweb2.sjsu.edu/greenlight/pages/public/ViewMemberList.php?recid=1140&ClubID=ORG0000227&ClubName=Taiwanese%20Student%20Association)
* [Students for Justice in Palestine](https://vpsaweb2.sjsu.edu/greenlight/pages/public/ViewMemberList.php?recid=1562&ClubID=ORG0000649&ClubName=Students%20for%20Justice%20in%20Palestine)
* [Spartans for Israel at San Jose State University](https://vpsaweb2.sjsu.edu/greenlight/pages/public/ViewMemberList.php?recid=1250&ClubID=ORG0000337&ClubName=Spartans%20for%20Israel%20at%20San%20Jose%20State%20University)
* [South Asian Advocacy Group](https://vpsaweb2.sjsu.edu/greenlight/pages/public/ViewMemberList.php?recid=1535&ClubID=ORG0000622&ClubName=South%20Asian%20Advocacy%20Group)
* [Sikh Students Association](https://vpsaweb2.sjsu.edu/greenlight/pages/public/ViewMemberList.php?recid=1134&ClubID=ORG0000221&ClubName=Sikh%20Students%20Association)
* [Muslim Students Association](https://vpsaweb2.sjsu.edu/greenlight/pages/public/ViewMemberList.php?recid=1122&ClubID=ORG0000209&ClubName=Muslim%20Students%20Association)
* [Malaysian Student Association](https://vpsaweb2.sjsu.edu/greenlight/pages/public/ViewMemberList.php?recid=1637&ClubID=ORG0000724&ClubName=Malaysian%20Student%20Association)
* [Korean Entertainment Student Association](https://vpsaweb2.sjsu.edu/greenlight/pages/public/ViewMemberList.php?recid=1515&ClubID=ORG0000602&ClubName=Korean%20Entertainment%20Student%20Association)
* [Indian Students Organization](https://vpsaweb2.sjsu.edu/greenlight/pages/public/ViewMemberList.php?recid=1115&ClubID=ORG0000202&ClubName=Indian%20Students%20Organization)
* [Hindu Yuva](https://vpsaweb2.sjsu.edu/greenlight/pages/public/ViewMemberList.php?recid=1114&ClubID=ORG0000201&ClubName=Hindu%20Yuva)
* [Atheists and Skeptics for Knowledge](https://vpsaweb2.sjsu.edu/greenlight/pages/public/ViewMemberList.php?recid=1353&ClubID=ORG0000440&ClubName=Atheists%20and%20Skeptics%20for%20Knowledge)