

PAPER ASSIGNMENT #1
Due in class, October 12, 2005

USING THE CONCEPT OF POWER IN EVERYDAY LIFE

This assignment requires that you be an anthropological observer of everyday life, drawing on data from situations in which you were present. You may write about a situation in which you were a passive observer (e.g., reporting on a meeting you attended but in which you did not directly participate or a conversation you observed), or you may analyze a situation in which you assumed an active role (e.g., discussing with your friends what to do on a Friday night). If you write about a situation in which you yourself were strongly affected, you should include all of the “other” participants’ resources that made them powerful, and all of the variables that made you receptive to power at that time (or vice versa). There is no requirement for personal disclosures. You choose the setting and interaction.

This assignment requires not only that you be an anthropological observer but that you also develop the skills of the ethnographic writer. You are asked to provide detailed description and analysis. Use the concepts developed in class and in your reading assignments to interpret the situation you are describing. Define power and its variations. Explain how different forms of power operated in this situation. Name the constituent elements and how they operated and were combined to produce a specific result. You are encouraged to work on your prose style and to offer the reader a rich, nuanced text that demonstrates your observational skill and writing effort.

Your paper should address the following topics:

1. Background: Set the stage. Describe the situation in enough detail so that the reader has the proper and sufficient context for your analysis (e.g., place, time, setting, relational history of actors).
2. The Interaction: Describe the sequence of events. Who did what to whom, with what effect? What was the intention, as far as you are able to know? What was the final outcome?
3. Analysis: What forms of power were operating in this situation? Was this something that would be expected from the research on power about the conditions under which people are most vulnerable and that are described in your readings or class discussion? What forms of power were not operating and why? How might this situation be explained by the authors you have read thus far?

Format and Grading:

Your paper should be no longer than 8 double-spaced, typed pages. All pages must be numbered. Any paper submitted without page numbers will be penalized one grade. Citations should conform to the format described in L. Cuba, A Short Guide to Writing about Social Science. Grammar and syntax should emulate the illustrations in Strunk & White, The Elements of Style.

All papers must be submitted with a copy of the first and second drafts of the paper. No one produces only one draft of a paper. Your paper will not be graded if it is unaccompanied by a copy of earlier drafts. First and second drafts vary by more than small spelling and grammatical corrections. The second draft should be an improvement in organization, depth and detail of analysis, and tightness of organization and writing.

Your paper will be graded on the following criteria:

- 1) The extent to which it articulates and substantiates a clearly defined thesis. (Is there a point? Do you make it? Do you make it persuasively? Have you provided the evidence for your conclusions?)
- 2) An appropriate balance between description, analysis, and interpretation (depth and detail).
- 3) The inclusion and appropriate reference to the course materials: lectures, readings, and films.
- 4) Organization and writing. Proper English grammar, appropriate citation (see Cuba, *Writing About Social Science*), and succinct, clear writing style (see Strunk and White, *Elements of Style* for excellent advice and examples).

Your paper is due October 12 in class. Late papers will be penalized one grade per day late.