

Sociology 100
Sociology in Action Project
Guidelines

Overview: What is This Assignment?

Apply what you have been learning in class to the social world around us. Go to an online interactive forum that is new to you (i.e., a forum you haven't used at all before). Read the comments, look at the visuals, etc. Examine how people present themselves and how they behave. Think about how the culture and/or subculture(s) of that setting compares to an online interactive forum you regularly participate in (you can also think of an actual in-person social setting or group). Take detailed notes on what you see, and write a 1,200 word minimum (excluding cover page, references, and appendices) description and analysis. The title page and references in accordance with APA 7th are required but are *not* included in the page minimum.

Important Details: Choosing a Setting

Choose a setting or type of channel or feed that is different from what you are familiar with. You cannot have used that setting/channel/feed before (not even once). Are you mostly active on TikTok? Choose a different social medium. Do you regularly read and maybe even post on a few Reddit communities? You can stay on Reddit, but choose topics/sub-Reddits with a very different type of focus than yours — social vs. professional, academic vs. fun, etc. You might need to make an account to see site posts. Feel free to use a throwaway email for it!

Here's a non-exhaustive list of potential social media sites: Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Tiktok, Twitter, or Tumblr; a group or company's Facebook page; a Twitch channel or a subreddit on Reddit. It should be a space that you are not familiar with, and that you can compare with somewhere you are familiar with.

How much to observe? This depends on the medium you choose. If the site is organized by people or groups (e.g., TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) choose one or two people's or groups' pages or feeds. If it's organized by topic (e.g., Reddit, Discord, Twitch), choose one or two topics. Start with two weeks' worth of posts and interactions. In some cases this could be a huge amount; in others, not enough. You don't need to read all 1,300 responses to the twenty posts put up over two weeks! **As a ballpark, you should go through about twenty computer monitor screens' worth of text.** (This means, for instance, that if a lot of the content is pictures, you should be looking at more than twenty screens!) You might do this in one session, or in a few batches.

As you read, record your initial impressions. You will turn your notes. keep records of what you see (turn these in, too): either copy & paste text you think you will talk about into a document, along with the poster's name and the date, or take screen shots. (On Macs, save a picture to your desktop by using Cmd-Shift-3 to take a picture of your entire screen; use Cmd-Shift-4, and then go to a corner and drag to choose a rectangle that you want to take a picture of. On Windows, there are multiple ways. Here's a good link with directions:

<https://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-screenshot-on-windows>. If you use Linux, I assume you can figure it out yourself!)

Keep track of what you look at. Give me web addresses for the accounts/pages, and the date range for original posts that comments were made on. Get the specific links for posts or questions that you look at a lot, and that you think you will end up writing about.

Important Details: Making Observations and Taking Notes

Ideas of things to look for: What are people doing and how are they behaving? What norms do you see in action? How and when do people interact with each other, and what does this suggest? Any cues about people's social class? How is material or nonmaterial culture used? What symbols do you see? Are there any recurring or influential stereotypes? Pay attention to the social structure of your setting: do you see things that suggest specific power relations? How about latent and manifest functions? Are there in-references or jokes? Do not expect to be able to think about all of this(!), and don't be limited to this list: everything we have learned is open to you. Also, pay attention to what is similar to and different from settings you are familiar with.

While you're doing your initial read of your setting: don't take such detailed notes about one post or comment that you don't get to the big picture. Mark something that stands out, write yourself a brief note about why it stands out or what you noticed, and keep going. Once you're done with that session of reading, or with the responses to one post, or you're at some other nice breaking spot, go back through your notes and fill them in with more details about your thoughts. Don't assume that you'll remember what you were thinking if you don't write it down! Don't write your entire paper here, but make sure you've written enough that you'll remember what and why something was significant, what course content it connects to, and how.

What to Write

For your write-up: Tell me about this place as if I don't know anything about the setting or what goes on in it (I might not!). In your essay, in order:

1. In 5-8 sentences, identify and briefly describe your setting. What is it? What is its manifest social function? What is its basic structure (i.e., organized by people or topic), and how does it work?
2. Spend 3-4 pages telling me about what you observed, and your analysis of it. When describing things remember to use relevant sociological terms, such as the "cultural capital" of someone you saw, or the "signified" associated with something you read. For each aspect of the setting you describe: tell me how what you observed illustrates or reflects a sociological phenomenon from class, what concept it is an example of, how something you have learned can help me understand what you saw, etc. Make sure to define sociological concepts, phenomena and the like. Include citations to definitions or other relevant course content.

3. Think of a comparable setting you are used to. You don't have to do formal observations of this second setting, though you are welcome to revisit it if it would help. Spend about 1 page discussing how what you observed is similar to or different from it. What is a comparable setting that you are used to? Are there surprising similarities or differences? Do you have ideas about why some things might be the same or different?
4. In 5-8 sentences, summarize the paper by telling me what the most important things were that you learned about the setting you observed.

These sentence and page ranges are guidelines. You won't have room to write about everything, so focus on the aspects that you find most interesting, important, surprising, etc. If you go to the maximum for each section, you'll be over the 1,200 word minimum requirement.

Formatting Guidelines

Use Times New Roman 12pt font, double-spaced, 1" (2.54 cm) margins. Do not put extra space between paragraphs. Start each paragraph with an indent/tab. Number your pages! You should start with a title page, which should include: your essay title, your name, the due date, the course name, and my name. Cite in-text in accordance with APA 7th and include a references page at the end in APA 7th, which also does not count as one of your pages.

You are required to turn in your essay and notes through the drop box on eLearn.

Source Requirements

The course text (Cummings) must be meaningfully integrated into your analysis and cited in-text and included on a references list accordance with APA 7th.

Upload your essay as a Word or PDF file. If you wrote your notes on paper, scan or take pictures of them to upload. It's okay if your handwriting is bad, we want to see the originals! It's fine if each page of notes is a separate file. If you typed your notes, upload them as Word or PDF. You can upload multiple assignment files to eLearn.