

CDES 102: Principles of Communication Design

## The Learning Project

**Deadline: A printed hard copy is due at the beginning of our February 20 class. Late submissions won't be evaluated.**

Project drafts submitted electronically (as a pdf) before 5:00 PM on Monday, February 13, may receive in-class feedback and up to five points extra credit.

If you have questions about this project, please use the comments link on the course web site so that all may share in the dialogue.

**OBJECTIVES:** Coming up with innovative solutions to problems and designing effective communications are activities that share at least one fundamental property; they both require a clear understanding of what needs to be solved or expressed. Consider the *Deep Dive*. All of the various shopping cart solutions came from detailed research and observations about how people actually behaved and a clear understanding of very real design limits such as fixed time and budgets. Knowing exactly what messages need to be sent in a communication – and how to best send them – is also dependent upon fully and deeply understanding the problem at hand as well as any constraints that exist.

This is an exercise devoted to *learning* and *observation* in order to identify something unexpected or invisible. It is modeled on chapter one of *The Ten Faces (The Anthropologist)* and many of the ideas presented in *The Deep Dive*. This project is about making observations to *identify problems* and to *form lines of inquiry*.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Select from one of following assigned locations (alternate locations may be chosen only with instructor approval). These are all places with a high volume of people passing through and where ongoing *patterns of activity* can be observed and recorded.

**Wildcat Recreation Center (WREC)**  
**Creekside Cafe – between Colusa Hall and Selvester's**  
**Creekside Cafe Plaza – between Colusa Hall and Selvester's**  
**Common Grounds (in the basement of the BMU)**  
**The Marketplace Deli (in the BMU)**  
**Sutter Dining Hall**  
**Butte Station**  
**Holt Station**  
**The Student Bookstore (first or second floor)**

**PART ONE : OBSERVE & LEARN:** Look for patterns and behaviors and use the following questions as examples of the kinds of things to observe and consider. The list is not exhaustive and should be used as a guide to help frame the kinds of observations to make. All of the sites are fairly large. Observe the general location, then identify a more specific area to observe.

**You should allow at least two separate one hour sessions to conduct this phase.**

What is the environment like?  
How does it look, smell, or feel?  
What kinds of sounds do you hear?  
What is the space like - is inviting? Uncomfortable?  
Why are people there?  
How many people are there?  
How long do they stay?  
Do people look directed and intentional or are they wandering around?  
Is this a new experience for the people involved or are they veterans of this place and activity?  
What preferences do you see people expressing - are there favorite spots, spaces, or objects?  
What do people avoid? What do they go toward?  
Where are they coming from? Where are they going?  
How long do they stay in one place?  
How do they move? Are there obstacles? Paths? Desire lines (UPOD term)?  
Are people interacting with one another? How?  
Are there conflicts or problems?  
Does the place or activity remind you of some other place or experience?  
Where do you feel empathy with the people you are observing?  
Do people look frustrated or angry or upset, or do they look relaxed and at ease?

For this section, you should be an *inconspicuous* observer, not a participant of the process or event.

Please **DO NOT** conduct your observations in a way that makes others uncomfortable. You may ask questions and conduct interviews as appropriate, but this project is more about observations than surveys.

Please **DO NOT** double dip; your observations shouldn't take place at the same time as another activity such as working, studying, or eating. When you're working on this project, consider it your full-time job as an anthropologist. It requires your complete and undivided attention.

## **PART TWO : DOCUMENT & RECORD**

**Some of this may be done during your initial observations, but it is more likely you will need to return again to effectively complete this part.**

After spending time simply observing, contemplate what methods you might need to document critical observations or conclusions, then do so.

### **What things can you record that are emblematic of something important?**

- Measure and count activities
- Make diagrams, maps, and sketches
- Record videos or make photographs

## **PART THREE : COMPILE, THINK, WRITE, and CREATE**

**You should allow at least three hours to complete this phase.**

For this part of the project, you will present your findings in a way that are understandable to a general audience and that are supported by your evidence. In your write-up, each section should be very clearly identified with a heading.

### **ABSTRACT**

This is a half page document that:

1. Includes your name and contact information.
2. Describes the frequency and duration of your observations.
3. Exhibits a general base of knowledge about the place you picked.
4. Introduces any important events and activities that you observed.
5. Please print the grading rubric on the back of this page.

### **OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS**

This is a one page document that is a more detailed description of a particular event, area, or thing, that you observed. This is where you should describe any significant findings and address the kinds of issues raised by the following three questions (please use the questions to guide your discussion, but don't respond to them point by point).

**Where did you see patterns or problems that were initially invisible?**

**Where did you find people improvising strategies or solutions to situations or problems?**

### **VISUAL DOCUMENTATION & ANALYSIS**

This is some form of visual documentation that helps explain your observations. It could be a map (that communicates something beyond the basic geography of the space), or a chart that presents and analyzes things you counted or observed, or some other kind of visual communication that supports your observation and analysis. Most visual documentation requires captions or legends to explain or guide a viewer.

### **CONCLUSION**

This is a half page analysis of your process. Use the following questions to guide your conclusion, but please do not respond to them point by point.

1. Briefly re-cap any discoveries about the place or people that was unexpected or initially invisible.
2. If you didn't uncover any invisible patterns or behaviors, what specific recommendations would you make for yourself to yield more fruitful observations.
3. What follow-up observations and investigations would you recommend for future anthropologists investigating this specific site?

**PART FOUR:** Have someone critically review your work then **revise as necessary prior to submission.**

**Grading rubric for Project #1: The Learning Project**

	0-3	4	5	6	7	8	POINTS
<p><b>CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION</b></p>							
<p><b>ABSTRACT</b> The degree to which you exhibit a base of knowledge about the place you picked. This also includes the basic required information and the overall clarity and thoughtful organization of your writing including spelling, punctuation, and grammar.</p>	Missing or incomplete	Inadequate	Minimally adequate	Adequate	Effective	Exceptional	
<p><b>OBSERVATIONS &amp; ANALYSIS</b> The thoroughness and relevance of your observations and analysis. This includes your identification and description of something that was initially invisible, or that was a clear example of people improvising strategies or solutions to problems.</p>	Missing or incomplete	Inadequate	Minimally adequate	Adequate	Effective	Exceptional	
<p><b>VISUAL DOCUMENTATION &amp; ANALYSIS</b> The degree to which your visual documentation helps us understand something significant and fundamental about your observations and analysis. This also includes the use of contextual information such as captions and legends.</p>	Missing or incomplete	Inadequate	Minimally adequate	Adequate	Effective	Exceptional	
<p><b>CONCLUSION</b> The thoroughness and relevance of your process analysis including suggestions for yourself and for future anthropologists. This also includes the overall clarity and thoughtful organization of your writing including spelling, punctuation, and grammar.</p>	Missing or incomplete	Inadequate	Minimally adequate	Adequate	Effective	Exceptional	
	0	2	3	4	5	6	POINTS
							<b>TOTAL</b>