**GEOG 360: HUMAN GEOGRAPHY**

Dr. Christy Jocoy [Christine.Jocoy@csulb.edu](mailto:Christine.Jocoy@csulb.edu)

**Data Collection Exercise 3 (DE3):** In- and Out-of-place in Public Spaces

**See BB for due dates for DE 3 field notes and interview transcripts. Please submit typed paper copies to BB dropbox.**

Three of the major objectives of this course are to learn to:

1. **identify** different methodological approaches used in investigating social-spatial organization;
2. **describe** and **explain** the necessary components of the research process; and
3. **develop** oral and written communication skills.

Accordingly, for this assignment you are asked to demonstrate your evolving knowledge and skills by collecting data using methodological approaches and techniques commonly used in human geographic studies. Using two qualitative methods – **participant observation** and **interviews** - you will collect data to study **the geography and use of public space on campus**. You will become familiar with two components of the research process: a) the data collection techniques and procedures and b) the methods used to analyze the data. Refer to the readings on BB about participant observation, interview methods, and qualitative coding.

**Research questions**:

1. How and why do people use public spaces on campus?
2. To what extent are Mitchell’s (1995) ideas about the uses of public space visible (i.e., citizenship, commerce, and spectacle)?
3. To what extent are Whyte’s (1988 film) ideas about designing a public space to promote social interaction visible?

**Data Collection**

**Group selection of public space locations on campus – completed during class.** Identify locations on campus that fit the definitions of public space offered by Mitchell (1995) and Whyte (film, 1988).

**Part 1: Participant observation of public space on campus**

Each student will be assigned a location on campus. Go to your assigned campus location and observe how people are using the public space for 15 minutes. Take field notes that address the following (Use the field notes template on BeachBoard):

1. Record the date and time.
2. Describe your viewpoint and location within the space. (i.e., Where are you sitting, standing, etc.? From what viewpoints are you observing? How are you observing the space?)
3. Describe the natural and built environments and their spatial arrangement.
4. Describe what people are doing in the public space. Use Mitchell’s and Whyte’s definitions and descriptions of public space to categorize their activities.
   1. How are people using public space to practice politics, economics, and/or culture? (citizenship, commerce, and spectacle in Mitchell’s terms)
   2. What design features of the space bring people together and promote sociability?
   3. Which of the activities that you have observed seem to be appropriate uses of public space? Which seem to be out-of-place?

Ethical consideration: If you wish to take photos to record the arrangement of the space, please make sure that you are respectful and ask permission when individuals might be identifiable.

Each student will type up the individual field notes and turn in through BB. Do not put your name on the document for confidentiality but make sure you upload through BB for credit.

**Part 2: Interview of one person using the public space**

Download the Interview Guide from BeachBoard.

Interviews may be conducted individually or in pairs. Prepare the guide before you conduct the interview.

From your observation, select a person who is doing some activity in the public space (e.g., sitting, reading, eating lunch, handing out flyers, selling something, having a conversation). You may interview two people if they are having a conversation or doing something together.

Plan the procedures for conducting the interview before you approach the person(s). Use the Interview guide that contains example questions to ask, but rather than Q and A, try to make the interview conversational as Burgess (2003) discusses in the reading on interviewing methods (see BB.)

Ethical consideration: Approach the person(s) politely and ask if they are willing to answer a few questions for you for your class project on the way people use different areas of campus. Tell them that you will ask some information about them, but their answers will remain confidential and they may decline to answer any individual question. Try to make the interview as conversational as possible.

Group member roles: (follow below if working in pairs; otherwise individuals working alone will complete both roles)

Group member 1 (Interviewer) – asks open ended questions

Group member 2 (Note taker) – take field notes on the questions asked by the Interviewer and the answers of the Interviewee as close to word–for–word as possible.

As long as you get the information that answers the questions on the guide, you may ask all of them or only one of them, as long as the interviewee expresses the answers. You may have to ask your interviewee more than just one question or he/she may offer all the information you need with their answer to just one question.

After conducting the interview, group members should compare their recollections of the interviewer’s questions and the interviewee’s answers and create one file that documents the questions and answers. **Type up your interview questions and answers and submit through BB (one interview file per group)**. Put the names of your group members in the space on BeachBoard when you upload it. Do not put names on the interview to maintain confidentiality.

**Learning objectives: (aka study guide for the take-home exam).**

Be sure that you can:

**Describe** the purpose of the research

**Describe** the methodological approach

**Contextualize** briefly the researchas human geography using human geographic concepts & theories including reference to sub‐disciplinary perspectives

**Describe** data collection techniques & procedures (participant observation and interviewing)

**Describe** methods of analysis (qualitative coding)

**Explain** why methods are appropriate for answering the research question.