

“Project Overview”
Portfolio I
Due Monday, February 27, 2012

“Red, black, and grey - the image of a road, framed by sidewalks and reddish-brown brick buildings, appears in front of me. A car pulls out from a side street on the left and drives across the screen, exiting to the right. Another car pulls out from the kerb and drives into the foreground towards me, yet it does not seem to come closer. Cut to another image where a car appears from the forefront of the screen and drives off into the distance without losing its definition as a locus of interest in the static frame. A strange space is opening up, one that appears deep yet seems to flatten all that traverses it into abstract blocks of color and light. Traffic, both human and mechanical, stratifies the surface of these blocks of color and light, creating passages in which “I” move, tracing lines and building up density, intensity in the image. Above the din of traffic, a woman’s voice erupts offscreen: ‘Dear Chantal’, it says, ‘When are you coming home? We miss you very much.’”

- Maria Walsh

“Media, Memory, & Mind”

The following two-part assignment has been designed with your future fieldwork and research in mind. It should help you to begin the task of interweaving the themes of the common text, *The Shallows*, with the research methods found throughout your handbook, *FieldWorking: Reading and Writing Research*. In completing this assignment, you will have a head start in developing the skills required to move beyond a basic awareness of these themes and methods, giving you a far greater appreciation of the sophisticated activities necessary in developing a personal, authorial voice.

Portfolio Objectives

As you move through the experience of taking proper field notes, interpret these field notes relative to your understanding of fieldwork, and observe yourself moving through this process, you will begin to develop an understanding of the following:

- The importance of *constantly developing* your powers of observation and description.
- The importance of *applying these powers* of observation and description to your own engagement throughout the research process.
- The importance of *using proper narrative techniques* in unifying these distinct, yet related types of observation and description.

Evaluation Criteria

Every aspect of this assignment should display hard work and creativity, and the presence and quality of these will be assessed according to the following grading rubric:

- Quality of writing - 60%
- Following of directions - 20%
- Personal initiative - 20%

IMPORTANT: I ask that you include all of the work that you do for this assignment in your portfolio.

*“The map is a medium that not only stores and transmits information,
but also embodies a particular mode of seeing and thinking.”*

- Nicholas Carr

PART I: “Collecting & Selecting Data”

Step 1: Ten to twenty minutes

Please watch the first shot of Chantal Akerman’s film, *News From Home*, carefully observing *all that is presented to the viewer*. Open your senses, and use every one of them. When you have finished viewing this material, please divide a piece of paper into two columns, and on the left side of the page, list five to ten things which stood out to you while watching this opening shot of the film. Next, to the right of this list, please spend about five minutes commenting upon your initial observations, and include some remarks regarding your experience of what you have viewed of the film thus far.

Do not censor yourself.

Step 2. Ten to twenty minutes

Once again, please watch this opening shot of the film, *this time making a mental note of anything that you may have missed during your initial viewing*. When you have finished, list your new observations in the left hand column of a fresh piece of paper. In the right hand column, please devote five more minutes commenting upon what you saw the second time through, and include some remarks regarding your reaction to what you may have missed the first time. Does this experience surprise or intrigue you? Do you find it disturbing or perhaps a bit unsettling? If so, why? *Once again, do not censor yourself.*

Intermission

At this point of the assignment, I would like you to “tell the story” of your experience with this film thus far. In a well written narrative, please discuss each aspect of what you have observed and written about yourself and about the film. *This typed narrative should be one to two pages in length.*

Step 3. Twenty to thirty minutes

With all that you have accomplished in this assignment thus far mind, please watch the first ten minutes of Chantal Akerman’s *News from Home*, once again observing *all that is presented*. As you do so, I ask that you do two things. First, please relax, and surrender to the unusual nature of this work. Second, pay attention to any and all associations that come to mind as you personally “take in” the film. When you have finished, once again divide a fresh piece of paper into two columns, and on the left hand side, list the associations that came to mind, and whether or not these associations were sparked by images, words, or both. Next, to the right of this list, please spend about five minutes commenting upon how the weaving of images and words in the text of the film might have brought the “text” of personal associations that you have listed to mind, and whether or not these personal associations could form any kind of narrative structure at this point. In other words, could you imagine yourself putting together a highly personal representation of these associations as Akerman has done in her film?

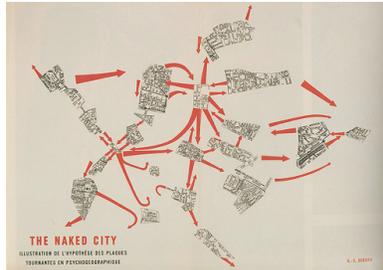
Step 4: Ten minutes

Take some time to look over all that you have written thus far, and make sure that your writing is clear enough for you to understand at a later time. This is essential, as you should be able to make sense of all that you have written later in the semester, and there should be enough substance to this work to summarize every aspect of your experience in a narrative of some kind.

“Seeing--establishing a gaze in fieldwork--requires your ability to notice the details of what’s happening around you and a willingness to listen to your own inner thoughts.”

- *FieldWorking*, page 93

PART II: “Reflecting & Projecting Data”



Step 1: The Ethnographic Essay

For this section of the portfolio, I'd like you to draw upon your observations of the world around you. Choose an environment on campus you are unfamiliar with, outside of your usual surroundings. This could be an academic department, an art gallery, a club meeting place, a cafe, or even a bus stop (this seems to be a favorite). I only require that your place of choice be populated by people. Observe the scene and take copious field notes. Then write a two page report describing the place, the people, and their actions *so as to convey the spirit of the place and offer some insight into the impact of the place on the people*. This assignment asks you to use observation as your primary resource for writing. It is meant to be grounded in immediate, close observation, so don't rely upon a long-ago memory. Go somewhere new and open your senses - use all of them. **This typed report should be two pages in length.**

Step 2: The Autoethnographic Essay

For this section of the assignment, I'd like you to draw upon your self-observations in response to Part I of this portfolio assignment. Once you have completed your ethnographic essay, find a quiet place to think about the impression that the spirit of this place and its people has made on you as an observer. Once again take copious notes, being careful not to censor yourself as you write. Then write a two page report describing the affect that this observational exercise has had on you *so as to convey the spirit of the place and offer some insight into its impact on you*. This assignment asks you to use self-observation as your primary resource for writing. It is meant to ground the immediate, close observation of Step I in and through the mediating activity of self-observation and writing, and so while once again your work will not be reliant upon distant memory, it will by its very nature be an act of constituting memory of some sort. **This typed report should be one to two pages in length.**

Step 3. Psychogeographic Mapping

For this section of the assignment, I would like you to draw upon the results that you have garnered in and through Parts I & II of this portfolio. With these results in mind, please think about creative ways to represent and/or to narrate something of the spirit of the place that you have observed, as well as the personal results of your observations. With Chantal Akerman's *News from Home* as your guide, please propose an imaginative way of mapping your chosen location psychogeographically. As these proposals are hypothetical at this point, feel free to make use of methods that are not currently available to you, such as film making. That said, you may also make use of any tools currently available to you in expressing your ideas, such as working images into your work.

This part of your portfolio should be one page in length.

Portfolio Directions:

All of your work for this portfolio should be included within a thin, two-pocket folder of some kind.

Portfolio Checklist:

- Your double-entry notes from Part I
- A one to two page narrative of your experience with the film, as described in Part I - Intermission
- Your copious notes from Part II
- A two page place observation report of your chosen location, as described in Part II - Step 1
- A one to two page personal observation report, as described in Part II - Step 2
- A one page hypothetical representation idea, as described in Part II - Step 3

At this point of the semester, you have already read the first two chapters in *FieldWorking*. However, while working on this assignment, you might want to review the following sections of the text.

- "Posing Questions: Ethnographic vs. Journalistic" - page 14
- "Fieldwriting: Establishing a Voice" - pages 40-41
- "The Research Portfolio: Definitions and Purpose" - Pages 52-53
- "Constructing Field Experience" - page 56

Use your imaginations, and have fun,

Tom