Instructions for Phases of the Youth Cultures Research Project

Instructions for your research proposals:

Consider this a proposal to research your topic. In explaining why you chose the subculture you plan to study, make sure you answer the following questions:

1. Why did you choose your subculture?
2. What interests you about it?
3. Why do you think it's a good subject for research?
4. How much do you know about it already?
5. How do you plan to study it?
6. What specific resources have you identified?
7. What assumptions and/or biases do you have about the culture as you approach it?
8. How are you planning to answer the four course questions in your research?
9. What questions of your own are you seeking to answer?

If you suspect I don't know anything about the culture, provide a web site address that will enable me to learn about it.

Be sure to indicate where you expect to find sources of credible information on your subculture.

Use the articles in the text as models for the type of research you plan to do. As you start your research, you may be unsure about what aspect of the subculture you want to study. Once you get an overview of the subculture, you should work toward one or two main research questions that enables you to take a particular angle on your subculture, a question like how race or gender has influenced the character of the subculture or why a particular ideology has persisted over time, or why participants join, or why adults find the culture threatening, or how it got its reputation. You cannot cover everything about the subculture in your project. Your research question(s) allow you to focus and make decisions about what to include in your final paper.

Use the articles in the text as models to help you know how to answer these questions.

Tips for creating successful research proposals:

1. Remember this class is about YOUTH cultures, not cultures in general. You can pick a culture that has an adult community as well, but you should focus on the youth culture within that culture (LGBT YOUTH).
2. You cannot research a culture we cover in class unless you pick a subset of that culture to study (DJ’s or bboys, not hip hop; straightedge or emo not punk).
3. Don’t choose topics that are so large you will never be able to cover them (like Greek life). Pick something that enables you to focus and draw conclusions (black sororities; athletic fraternities).
4. Don’t pick a subculture you know well and plan to interview your family and friends. You will never achieve objectivity using only people you know as subjects.
5. Don’t pick a subculture in which you are involved for the same reason.
6. Plan to survey a group of people if you are using surveys (at least 10) and plan to interview several people, not just one, and combine interviews with attendance at events, site visits, participation in Internet chat rooms, or other types of fieldwork.
7. Use the questions posted under studying a subculture as a guide for creating your own questions.

**How to annotate your bibliography and defend your sources**

This assignment is designed to help you identify and keep track of useful sources for your research project. As you look around, you will undoubtedly consult many more sources than you will choose to use. For this assignment, you should submit notes on at least five sources you intend to use. These sources might be books, articles, websites or films.

Please indicate the title, author and date of publication for each source and answer the following questions:

1. What is the source about?
2. Who/what is the source and what is the source's relationship to the subject?
3. What makes this source credible?
4. What does the source say or what point of view does it take? (Summarize the argument if an argument is being made.)
5. What have you learned from this source?
6. How has the source advanced your thinking about your subject?
7. What do you plan to use from this source when you write up your research? (Provide a few quotes or examples)

Kelly's bibliography (as a model):

“Everything Went Pop!” (Spring 2005) is an academic essay by Krister Bladh from the University of Lund’s Department of Musicology. It focuses on the birth and rise of indie pop, with special interest to the C-86 mixtape that started the indie pop scene in 80’s UK. This source is credible because as an academic essay, and the author states his intent to retain an objective perspective on the topic. Yet as the author is a fan of the genre, it is not a dry piece clearly written by an alien or outsider to the culture either. The objective of this piece is to trace the history of the culture and discover and evaluate its past and present meanings. This source is informative because it puts the genre in a social and political context of not only the UK, where the genre originated, but also in the US. I will use this piece for my research because it discusses the forms of music that were popular when indie pop began, after the fall of punk rock: hip hop and heavy metal. This was the background of musical America that indie pop was born into.
“Twee as Fuck” (October 24, 2005) by Nitsuh Abebe, an article found on pitchforkmedia.com, focuses on tracing some history, as well as defining the culture of indie pop for those who are not aware or who misunderstand the genre. This source is credible because it comes from PitchFork Media, a highly respected internet publication devoted to music criticism and commentary, music news, and artist interviews, specifically of the indie genre. The point of view seems to be explanatory of a culture not well understood, so at times it may seem defensive, but the writer equally points out the good and the bad of the subculture. This source teaches a lot about the culture beyond its history and roots of the music. It begins to put the genre in the social context of the 90’s in the US, and this is what particularly draws me to this article. Such highlights: “The alternative rock of the 90s, after all, was a return to a lot of the masculine values certain strains of indie were chipping away at... plenty of American kids decided to damn the rest of the world and devote themselves to everything unfashionable about the indie pop aesthetic, everything your average Soundgarden fan would run from: sweetness, girliness, cuteness, brattyness, amateurish performance, and childish innocence.”

Indie-mp3.co.uk is an indie pop website that reviews albums, gigs and singles as well as champions new indie pop bands and labels. This source is credible because it is the sister site of an indie pop label, Lost Music Records, and has contributing writers from England, Scotland, Sweden, Iceland and Germany. Their point of view is to campaign for and keep indie pop alive. Their tagline is, “Don’t stop indie pop!” and consider themselves “the campaign for real indie pop.” This site will help me learn about the current happenings in the indie pop scene, specifically in Europe. I plan to use this source for it’s message boards, which feature posts from members of the subculture. Specifically, I was interested in a post I read about fans’ disgust in using the word “twee” to define their music, and their views on the stereotypes that the term “twee pop” has created. One post, by SPT, read, “Some might try to reclaim it, but "twee" is pejorative - characterising bespectacled, cardigan and floral print wearing, sport-loathing, herbal tea drinking wimps who wouldn’t know decent rock music if it bit them on their arse. To an extent key labels and their fans played up to the stereotype, and it was useful to set yourself...”

“Smells Like Indie Spirit” (July 8, 2007) is an article by Jude Rogers that ran in The Observer. It talks about the anticipated resurgence of the original indie spirit - the DIY ethic that the genre was born from. This article is from a British newspaper, where indie pop is still very popular, and it is written by a self professed indie kid from her younger years in the 90s. After describing what the scene was like when she was younger, the article seems credible. The article discusses today’s meaning of indie, which has been commodified and made fashionable and thus changed the original values of the subculture. She asserts that there seems to be a return to the roots of the indie scene, including a true DIY ethic. This source tells a lot about the way the mainstream has changed the meaning of indie, and marketed an image with little content behind it. An interesting point made in the article is the following: “And gradually, the term 'indie' changed. It came to mean any shambolic guitar band that wore vintage clothes and harked back nostalgically to the past. Indie kids now are more likely to be the boy with
artfully messy hair or the cool girl in skinny jeans than the 'mis-shapes' and 'misfits' that Jarvis Cocker used to treasure.”

“If it’s cool, creative and different it’s indie” (October 13, 2006) is an article by Catherine Andrews found on cnn.com. This article talks about the term “indie”: what it means, and how it has evolved through the decades. CNN is a very well respected news source, so I trust that this article is credible and contains legitimate information. The source traces the changing meaning of what is indie and what is not. It acknowledges that it is not the same subculture that was founded several years ago. I was interested in the way the article talked about the commodification of the “indie” scene, and how the mainstream has changed the term. An interesting point made in the article that I may consider using: “The indie spirit has been commodified and re-envisioned as a marketable lifestyle just like punk, alternative and grunge before it, Pitchfork's Schreiber said. ‘But those are all permutations of the same very resilient subculture,’ ...”

**Template for Studying a Subculture:**

In order to develop an understanding of a subculture, answer the following questions:

1. What historical moment in time, what political and socio-economic conditions gave rise to this subculture?
2. Who were the founders of the subculture and what were the demographics of the participants, particularly their race, class and gender characteristics.
3. What motivated the formation of the subculture? What ideology drove it?
4. What made it unique and original? What do participants gain from their affiliation?
5. Who joins the subculture and why?
6. How did/does it relate to mainstream society?
7. How has the media represented the subculture and how has it influenced the subculture’s development?
8. How did capitalism/consumerism influence the development of the subculture?
9. What accounts for the subculture’s longevity or ability to continue to attract participants?

Further questions to try to answer as you learn more:

- Is your subculture dominated by one gender? Why/why not?
- Does your subculture appear often in the media? Why/why not?
- How does the media treat your subculture? Why?
- At what stage of evolution is your subculture?
- Is your subculture segregated by race? Why/why not?
- What stereotypes exist around your subculture?
- How does your subculture relate to consumer culture?
- Does your subculture consume any products? What does it consume?
- What is the socio-economic status of your subculture’s participants? Why?
- Does your subculture make or produce anything?
- What motivates participants to join your subculture?
- What does it take to become a member of your subculture?
How did your subculture start? At what moment in time?
Does your subculture resist mainstream culture? How?
What ideology does your subculture subscribe to?
What style characterizes subcultural participants?

**Guidelines for Fieldwork:**

Here are some questions that you can use to guide your research if your fieldwork involves attending an event. You can use all or just some of these questions; regardless, the quality of your work will depend on rich detail and description and covering everything you observe related to the course questions and your own research questions.

1. Where does the cultural activity take place?
2. How do people get there?
3. Is the mode of transportation important? Why?
4. What does the place look like?
5. Is it indoors or out? Does that affect how people participate?
6. What kind of activity are people engaged in before the central cultural event?
7. Is this activity ritualized (made into repeated, meaningful patterns)? How?
8. What happens after the central cultural activity? Is that activity ritualized?
9. What do people look like (hair, clothes, jewelry, tattoos, piercings)?
10. How would you describe their style?
11. Do you notice any symbols either in the place or on the people? What do they mean?
12. Are members self-segregating or are they mixing (race, gender, age)?
13. Is there an obvious hierarchy among the participants--leaders, journeymen, apprentices, followers? How is that hierarchy determined? How do you know?
14. Are the participants involved in creating something? What is it? What does it look like? Is there a particular reason they create this particular thing?
15. If there is music involved, how culturally central is the music?
16. What does the music sound like?
17. Is there a specific dance or dances that are associated with the music?
18. What other kinds of physical activities do the participants engage in?
19. Are drugs involved? If so, what kind? How is the drug use ritualized? How do the drugs affect the activities?
20. How do the participants communicate? Do they have their own slang?
21. Do participants express some kind of philosophy or value system? How?

**Guidelines for presentation of fieldwork:**

This assignment is designed to enable you to get some first-hand experience at being a social science researcher. You are conducting a study and, in order to make your results
and conclusions as informative and credible as possible, you need to document how you went about your research. You also need to strive to be as objective as possible and allow yourself to learn from what you observe and hear.

1. State your research question(s): What did you set out to find out?

2. Describe what you did for your fieldwork. If you conducted interviews, tell us how many people you interviewed and who they were (race, class, gender, location). Why did you choose these people to interview?

3. If you created a survey, provide a copy and explain why you chose to ask the questions on the survey. How did you choose people to survey? How many responses did you get? Describe the demographics of the people who responded to your survey.

3. If you attended an event, describe the event and explain why you chose to attend it. Who was there (again, don't forget to include the demographics)? Why is it significant to the culture and what does it represent?

4. Present what you saw, heard, and/or learned in as much detail as possible:

- If you observed an event, describe the event in detail so that your readers can experience it and come to better understand how the culture operates.
- If you have conducted interviews, it's probably best to summarize your interviews rather than record them word for word, highlighting significant similarities and differences in the answers given by your interviewees, and including relevant quotations so that we can hear participants describing the culture in their own voices. You may transcribe entire interviews, but generally it is not necessary. If you wish, you can include transcribed interviews as an attachment.
- When you develop questions for surveys or interviewees, be sure to try to get answers that will help you answer the course focus questions:

1. Are youth cultures forms of resistance to mainstream culture or do they reinterpret mainstream culture?
2. Are they manifestations of new styles of expression, or are they products of consumer culture?
3. Do youth cultures form around existing race, class, and gender identities or do they form across those barriers?
4. Do youth cultures change mainstream culture or do they get absorbed into mainstream culture and disappear over time?

Format: this section should be a first person narrative. Use the articles in the textbook as models. It can include visuals, audio and/or video, but all such material should be explained also in the text.

Rubric for evaluation (5 pts for draft section):
1 point for the quality of the material you collected
1 point for connections made between what you observed and the course questions
1 point for ability to organize and present material effectively from a social scientist perspective
2 points for clarity, focus, presentation

Points will be subtracted for late papers. If you need an extension, ask for one.

Instructions for presentations (not always required in every section):

Each student has approximately 15 minutes to present (including discussion), which is not a lot of time, so you need to organize carefully. If you’re working in a group, each group has 30 minutes.

You are not required to use powerpoint, but many students choose to use it as a way of organizing their presentations.

If you use powerpoint, make sure you limit the amount of text on each slide and DO NOT READ FROM YOUR SLIDES. Use the slides to summarize information or give statistics or show visuals that complement what you say.

Make sure you are well organized and have chosen only essential and/or very interesting material to present to the class.

Short video clips, illustrations, examples that help us visualize your content are always appreciated.

Introduce your subculture, tell us why it interested you, provide some background information, describe its origins and its development, tell us who is involved and why (be sure to give us breakdowns by race, class, gender and region). If you have completed your original research process, tell us what research questions you had, what you did to investigate your questions (interviews, surveys, other), and what you found out.

Each listener will provide brief written feedback to each presenter.

For both your presentations (and final papers) keep in mind what we have been discussing all semester about youth cultures (the relationship between the mainstream and subcultures; the composition and character of different subcultures; the reasons subcultures form, how they develop over time, and their ability to stay authentic; the moment in time that gives birth to a subculture; the nature of youth subcultural resistance to expectations imposed by the mainstream; the relationship between youth cultures and our capitalist system; the demographics of participants; the ideologies that define subcultures; the role of youth in promoting social change). Try to address the questions
these topics raise when you present and when you analyze your data for your final paper. And remember to come back to and prepare to answer the course questions:

1. Are all youth cultures forms of resistance to mainstream culture (as the textbook claims) or do they reinterpret mainstream culture?

2. Are youth cultures manifestations of new styles of expression, or are they products of consumer culture?

3. Do youth cultures form around existing race, class, and gender identities or do they form across those barriers?

4. Do youth cultures change mainstream culture or do they get absorbed into mainstream culture and disappear over time?

**Instructions for final papers:**

Begin your final paper by identifying your position as a researcher. What is your relationship to this culture? What did you know about this culture when you started? What biases and what pre-formed expectations did you bring to the project? How did your position influence the outcomes of your research and what you conclude? If you had any particular challenges or difficulties doing this research, introduce them and discuss them here or at the end of your paper. Be sure to tell your readers what interested you about this culture and what research question or questions you set out to answer and why. Summarize the process you used to investigate the culture. Review your sources of information. If you have any questions about the reliability of the information you gathered, reveal and discuss it here or as you present the information.

Based on your research, what claims are you prepared to make about your culture? Make sure that you reference the issues raised by the course focus questions--race, class, gender, location and relationship to the mainstream. Provide evidence from your research to support your claims. How do your claims agree or disagree with the scholarly research on the subculture and with what other sources say? If you research revealed something different from what you learned from your sources, how do you account for that difference?

What conclusions have you drawn about your culture? What led you to form those conclusions? What was significant or important about the research you conducted and your results? As you conclude your paper, be sure to "answer" the course questions to the extent that you can. In what ways do your answers for the culture you studied lead you to draw conclusions about youth cultures in general? Are there claims you feel safe to make, based on the evidence you gathered and consulted, about youth cultures and mainstream society in general?

Your paper should be 7 to 10 pages (give or take, or approximately 1500-2500 words, using a
font like times or times roman, 12 pt), well presented, and documented using either MLA or APA format. It should include a list of Works Cited. This paper should represent your best work.

Criteria for evaluation (20 points)

- 4 points for quality of the claims made
- 4 points for quality of evidence presented
- 4 points for quality of conclusions drawn
- 4 points for demonstrated understanding of the culture and its relationship to mainstream
- 4 points for clarity, organization, presentation