Details about the English 349 Organizational Ethnography

The goal of your Organizational Ethnography is to characterize your organization and your prospective readers for yourself, for your teacher, and for your peer reviewers.

Doing the ethnography involves the following steps:

• **Collect** materials
• **Describe** the organization and your readers
• **Analyze** the significance of what you have learned to your project.

There are no set requirements in terms of how much material to collect and how much to write, though if I am not happy with what you have done, I may make you redo it.

Materials that you may collect for your ethnography include

1. Field notes from interviews, online chats, emails, surveys, etc.
2. Documents from the organization or the readers.
3. Images or screenshots (of readers, workplaces, whatever).  
4. URLs

As a general rule, the more diverse your data sources, the better your ethnography. When a researcher brings evidence from a number of different sources, I tend to trust them more.

In the next column, lists of possible questions are presented in menu style. You are not expected to address every item. Use only the ideas that apply to your project, your organization, and your readers.

Questions about Organizations

• Learn as much as you can about the organization. Who are they, what do they do, where are they located etc.
• What is their mission?
• What are their values? In what ways do their public actions demonstrate these values.
• Why would they publish or use your document?
• How will they publish or use your document? What process would they likely go through?
• Who would likely to be involved in the decision making process?

Questions about Readers and Users

• Who are the different types of users/readers of your document?
• Why will they use it? What is the situation likely to be in? Where will they likely use the document?
• What are their values? How are these values likely to influence their reading/use?
• What can you learn about these people: Their background? Typical education? Experience with your topic? Technical knowledge? etc.
• Are there any landmines (things that will blow up in your face)?
• If you are writing documentation, try to learn what they hope to do with this document, what sort of tasks. If an earlier version exists, find out what they liked and did not like about that version.
• Describe your typical reader/user encountering your document.