English 1A Fall 2017 **Profile Essay**

**Overview:** A profile based on an interview is a thriving form of writing that appears in many different settings. For this project, you can choose one of two varieties. One will give you a chance to think about your culture by **interviewing someone from a different culture**. The other will let you **investigate a particular person’s career path**.

**Good Topics**:

**For option ONE: Culture**, pick a culture that ***you don’t belong to*** but are curious about. We are defining “culture” either as a group people belong to automatically—such as a nationality or ethnicity--or by choice, such as members of a religion. You needn’t try to cover that person’s culture as a whole, though. Make it individual. You could focus on some interesting experience or accomplishment of the person—their multi-country education, their refugee/emigration story, their experience as a Muslim person in the US on 9/11, etc.—anything that offers insights into culture and identity.

**For option TWO: Career Path**: You could just pick someone who has a job you would like to have and ask them about their experience with it. You could also interview someone who just has a really interesting job, say, a surfboard craftsman. (Seriously, there’s an [SF Chronicle profile](http://www.sfchronicle.com/thetake/article/The-Regulars-Surfboards-take-shape-in-this-11439017.php) on James Mitchell, who does this for a living.)

**Problem topics**: While it is certainly possible to find really interesting people from well-known neighboring countries like Canada and Mexico, talking about the culture of either place in an interesting way might be a challenge because they are already familiar to most Californians. Similarly, while some people’s jobs are inherently interesting to a general audience (lion-tamer, video game designer), others are harder to make into a readable feature story. Keep your audience in mind!

* **Audience**: Your choice, but it must be **specific** and appropriate for the topic, and it can’t be just this class and its professor.
* **Forum**: Decide where this would be published, but it must be specific and appropriate to the audience and topic. Don’t just say “a blog,” say *which* blog.
* **Format, Length**: ESSAY (not a transcript of the interview), MLA format, 1400 words.
* **Methods**: Following the models we’ll look at in class, you should include a mix of the following: direct description of a person and place, testimony from interviews, analysis, narrative, and (optional) ***properly cited*** information from research of written sources.
* **Requirements**:Although “formal” research on the Web or in books is optional, an interview with at least one person who belongs to the culture you are writing about is required, and at least two quotes from that person is required.
* **Citing sources:** If you include material quoted from any source other than your interviewee, (including the Web), you must give credit and include an MLA style works cited page. Within the essay itself, informal citation (as in a newspaper) is fine for quotes from the interview.

**Procedure:**

1) **Topic Proposal**: In a memo briefly identify 5 things: 1) the culture OR the job you will discuss, (2) name at least one person you will interview and (3) contact information for him/her (email, ideally, or a phone number). Also identify the (4) audience you will address & (5) the forum (where it would be published). **Due: Th 9/21** (for TTh sections) **or F 9/22** for F section

2) **Interview questions**: I want to see the questions you will use, at *least 10*, typed. **Due: Th 9/28** for TTh sections **or F 9/29** for Fri section

3) **Rough Draft:** On the day of thePeer Review and bring 2 printed copies of both the draft AND the interview transcript to class to get and give advice. **Due:** **T 10/10** for TTh sections or **F 10/6** for Fri sections

4) **Revise**: Next, take your draft and your peer’s advice home, consider what advice to use, get my advice, as well, if you want; then you’ll revise. This doesn’t mean just fix any spelling/grammar errors you notice (that’s editing). It means take a new look at it and try to improve anything that needs it. *Most first drafts fall in the “C”-range, at best!* If you want to get good grades in college, revise! You will turn in both the rough draft and the revised version.

**5) Submit final packet, TWO ways**: Print out the final draft AND submit it electronically to Canvas (PDF or Word doc). Staple the final draft pages, then put it in an envelope with the peer review sheet, rough draft, and interview notes, and hand it in at the BEGINNING of class on the day it’s due. (If you’re late, so is your paper.) **Due: T 10/17** or **F 10/13** (depending on section)

**One place to find someone to interview**: **SJSU International House**

It can be challenging to investigate a culture you don’t already know much about. One way to do that is to take advantage of the SJSU “I-House” to meet some international students, maybe find one you can interview for your paper. Web site: <http://www.sjsu.edu/ihouse/index.htm>

* **COFFEE NIGHT** **Tuesdays** 8:30 – 10:30 pm I-House Dining Room. All are welcome!
* They also hold a **Pancake Breakfast** at some point in each semester. The upcoming one is not yet announced. Watch this space: <http://www.sjsu.edu/ihouse/life/events/>

**Classmates:** You might also be able to find an interview subject right in this classroom, or in one of your other classrooms, or in the dorms. If they don’t sound like a Californian, or if they mention having come from another place, they probably have an interesting story of how they came here.

**Clubs:** SJSU student organizations offer a vast array of opportunities to meet people from other countries and different religions, from the [Afghan Student Association](https://vpsaweb2.sjsu.edu/greenlight/pages/public/ViewMemberList.php?recid=1575&ClubID=ORG0000662&ClubName=Afghan%20Student%20Association) to the [Zen Buddhism Club of San Jose State University](https://vpsaweb2.sjsu.edu/greenlight/pages/public/ViewMemberList.php?recid=1149&ClubID=ORG0000236&ClubName=Zen%20Buddhism%20Club%20of%20San%20Jose%20State%20University). Here’s the site for the full list: <http://wpe.sjsu.edu/greenlight/pages/public/directory.php> Aim for those classified as “cultural and religious”