**Exploring Portland: Neighborhood Group Project**

**UNST 220: Understanding Communities**

**Spring, 2013, Steven Reed Johnson**

Student groups will select a neighborhood or area of town in the Portland region and conduct a community assessment and develop a community profile. The groups will write a short paper and create a poster session to be presented in the last class of the term.

Groups will be selected and neighborhood chosen by April 3. Individuals should all be in the same mentor sessions*.* The selected area has to be approved by the instructor and only one group per selected neighborhood or area. Areas should be residential and preferably include some mixed use elements as well.

There are several parts to the assignment. A grade is given for both group effort (300) and individual effort (100). Part I, Part 2, Part 3 describe the individual product. The information gathered by the individual students is compiled and used by the group to create the poster session and the narrative (Parts 4 and 5). The Poster session assignment also includes a short written summary of the product. Note: please also document the process. The group will be expected to turn everything in at the end of the term in a 3 ring binder.

**Part 1: Demographics (the numbers story)** Data, graphs, & maps - For this part of the assignment you retrieve demographic data for your selected community. Retrieved data will be to construct tables and graphs. The census "Factfinder" web site will give you access to data and to a Census Bureau GIS (Geographical Information System) mapping program - where you can build, save, and print census maps on various dimensions to include with your narrative. Although you may find demographic and map data from any source that fits your community, *the data must be relevant and meaningful.*. No matter the source, *every project must include tables, graphs and maps illustrating* some demographic element of your team’s research. Not all the data you find will be used in the poster session and final reports. A Separate handout describes the basic demographic profile required.

**Part 2: Sidewalk Survey (the visual story)**. For this part of the assignment each team member will visit the community you are investigating. You will walk through the neighborhood with sketchpad, notebook, and camera in hand (a small disposable camera works well). You will identify the salient features of the neighborhood physical and social structures in drawings, pictures, and detailed notes. The product of this exercise is a field notebook that will help build your narrative and add depth with photos and drawings. Note: there will be 2 class periods provided as field days. Groups may use these days to do both their individual work and work together. Everyone is required to participate in the field work day and that the group will meet in the neighborhood.

**Part 3: Interview (the people’s story)** For this part of the assignment each team member will interview at least three people representing three distinct dimensions of your study. For example, you might interview a resident, a businessperson, and a school principal. You will ask questions similar to the following: (1) what, in your opinion, is the most interesting characteristic of [*this community*]\*? I.e. what sets it apart from other communities in Portland? (2) How has this neighborhood changed in the past 10 years? (3) What do you believe are the most important issues currently facing the community? And (4) any other question that you believe is important to your research. You may restate these questions in any manner you wish, but the first three questions must address the unique character, change, and salient issues of the community of study. You ***must*** ask a fourth question of your own design that is the same for each of the interviews and be able to explain why you believe it is an important question. You may ask more than four questions.

**Part 4: The narrative (the written story).** As a team, using the information you gathered in the first three parts construct a narrative of the community you have investigated. You may include other information as well - e.g. historical elements or architectural commentary. The narrative must integrate the elements above and synthesize concepts from the texts, videos, lectures, and class / mentor discussions. Do your best to include any theoretical understanding from other college courses e.g. sociology, economics, or political science. Make an attempt to interpret the story as well as to tell the story. What does this mean? What does the story imply? What are the consequences or impacts of human behavior in this place? What does this say about community? Etc. You may use any number of media to publish your team narrative – e.g. a web page, a bound report, or a video “documentary”. But the narrative must be accessible to the professor on the final day of class.

**Part 5: Poster Session.** On the last day of class (June 5), students will unveil their 3 panel poster describing their project. Each group will also provide a short (3-5 minute) summary to the class.

**Last but not least:** Groups will select a theme song that fits their group and/or neighborhood and a TV show or movie.