

Assignment 4: Exploring Dorchester Through Neighborhood Institutions **Due Tuesday, April 7 at 12:00 noon**

Summary

In this assignment, you'll explore Dorchester by closely observing one place where people gather. You'll then submit a six-page write up that both describes and explains key aspects of what you observed and experienced. Drawing on this work, you'll also submit a brief (2-3 paragraph) description of the place you selected, a photograph, and (if you'd like) a short video and/or snippet of audio. We'll use these to create a collective online ethnographic map that will serve as the basis of section discussion about Dorchester.

Overview

Sometimes the best way to approach a neighborhood is via close observation of its institutions and organizations – to grab a seat and take in its cafes, parks, restaurants, libraries, churches and civic organizations and other places that provide the community's structure, identity, and sites of commerce and comity. With nearly 50 students in this class, we can use this approach together, with each of you contributing individual observations that together will create a collective ethnographic portrait of the larger neighborhood

So for this assignment, you will choose one organization, business, institution, or social space that you'd like to visit and experience. To prevent any one place from being overwhelmed, look at the attached list of potential and quickly send an email to your TF indicating three places you'd like to visit. (You may also suggest a site not on this list.) Most of the sites on the list are within walking distance of various Red Line stations; if time is particularly important to you, use Google maps to make sure you can easily get to whatever you select.

Once your TF has assigned a site to you, check to make sure you (a) will be able to visit the site and (b) you are planning to go at a time when it is likely to be livelier (e.g. you should go to a church when there are services or other activities). Note that you can do this visit alone or in pairs—in the morning, afternoon, or evening; on a weekday or on the weekend. Whenever you choose to go, above all, consider your safety when deciding when and how to enter and interact in the field. Please also dress appropriately, particularly if you are visiting a place where this might matter (such as a church or a court). You might want to consider traveling to the neighborhood with a friend, separating in the case you are responsible for different sites, and then re-connecting after an hour or two to return to Cambridge together.

Before you go, use the preliminary tools you learned from Assignment 2 (e.g., maps and online sources like the *Dorchester Reporter* and local websites) to do a modest amount of pre-field research about the specific part of Dorchester that you'll be visiting. You should also look back at some of the course readings by Jane Jacobs and William Julius Wilson that touch on the role of institutions and gathering places in neighborhoods. Also, if you are visiting an institution such as a church, community health center, or school, you should call ahead to make sure you will be welcomed and allowed to participate and observe.

While travelling to your site, you should take only minimal notes, since your observational energy should be saved for your site (unless, of course, you stumble on something too interesting and engaging to ignore). Once you get to your site, we suggest you participate in whatever is going on. For instance, if you select a barbershop, consider getting a hair cut while you are there. If you decide to go to a grocery store, consider also shopping for groceries as you observe. And, if you are going to a church or other religious institution participate in the service or other activities. Regardless of what you do and where you go, try to remember that, as we've discussed in class, the basis of good field research is a moment when you notice something that surprises you or makes you ask: "What is going on here?" More broadly, as you observe (and participate), you might reflect on some or all of the following questions:

- What is going on?
 - Who is in charge and who works there?
 - What kinds of people come there and how do they interact?
 - What surprises you?
 - What are the social norms of the social space?
 - Who seem to be the insiders? Who seems to be marginal?
 - Is the site accessible and welcoming to outsiders?
- What role does the place seem to play in the community and neighborhood?
 - What kind of community is the space enabling? How do you know?
 - What does this community suggest about the larger neighborhood?
 - What does this community or sense of community suggest about the neighborhood's relationship to the city as a whole.

Doing the Field Work

You should spend at least an hour at your site. (If, despite your best efforts there is no one there, see if you can find an alternative site and let your TF know you are writing another place.) Wherever you wind up, be aware of all six of your senses: taste, smell, touch, aural, sight, and gut. You can interview someone in the field or you can ask questions while doing other things (a very relaxed and organic form of interviewing). Or you can observe like a fly on the wall. We strongly encourage you to bring an audio recording device. Ensure the anonymity of your informants with an appropriate (gender and race-sensitive) pseudonym if you learn a name. Tell people you are doing writing a paper for a college course if they ask. You can mention Harvard if you would like. Please take at least one illustrative photo while in the field. Audio samples of background noise in the establishment, or video snippets of the space, the environment outside as viewed from within the establishment, etc., are also meaningful ways of illustrating community and place, and will be included in the online map.

As in previous assignments, when in the field take faithful and COPIOUS jottings. Be sure to narrate key moments as soon as you can. Think about what “puzzles” emerge for you in the field, and how your observations support different explanations of those puzzles. As with all writing, your work is in part to figure out what is important and what is not. You do not need to write every experience. Rather, you need to provide an overview and then pick two or three interactions, observations, or conversations that capture and illustrate key themes, tentative social claims, and puzzles from your visit. You should also use research tools like Boston Map or Social Explorer to further explore aspects of the specific site and larger neighborhood.

Deadline and A Few More Details

The assignment is due on Tuesday, April 7. The final submission should be a no more than six-page, double-spaced essay that includes an introduction, observations and explanations, conclusion, and an embedded photograph. In addition, please separately submit the photograph, one or two paragraphs from your essay, and possibly any multi-media you collected (sound, video) Please include the name and address of your site so that the teaching staff can map these and help us create a class-wide ethnography of Dorchester.

If you have any trouble while in the field, please contact Aaron Benavidez, Head TF, who lives in the heart of Dorchester. His phone number: (617) 407-3662. You can call him at any time. If you can't reach him, call Matt Kaliner at (617) 750-4781 or David Luberoff at (339) 223-0804 who will try to help even though neither lives in Dorchester.

Potential Sites for Assignment 4

After reviewing this list, please email your TF as soon as possible with three sites that you'd like to visit. (You can also suggest a site not on this list) We will try to assign you to your top picks.

Civic Institutions

- Bird Street Community Center at Columbia and Bird
- Dorchester Division Boston Municipal Court at Washington and Melville
(Note you are not allowed to bring cell phones into court.)
- Vietnamese Community Center at Charles and Ditson
- YMCA at Washington and Ashmont

Library Branches

- Boston Public Branch Library at Adams and Delmont
- Codman Square Library at Washington and Walton
- Fields Corner Library at Dorchester and Park
- Uphams Corner Library at Columbia and Bird

Health Care Institutions

(Call ahead to see if there are activities, such as classes, that you can observe)

- Codman Square Health Center at Washington and Epping
- Uphams Corner Health Center at Columbia and Cedar

Religious Institutions

(Call ahead to make sure you are welcome and check times of services and activities)

- All Saint's Episcopal Church at Ashmont and Bushnell
- Calvary Baptist Church at Ashmont and Rundel Park
- Chua Luc Hoa Boston Buddhist Culture Center at Greenwood and Park
- First Baptist Church in Dorchester at Ashmont and Adams
- First Parish Church in Dorchester at Parish and Adams
- Ganeshe Hindu Temple at Edson and Norfolk
- Iglesia De Dios Pentecostal Columbia and Intervale
- Jehovah's Witness at Dorchester and Parkman
- New Testament Pentecostal Church at Tonawanda and Geneva
- St. Margaret's Catholic Church at Columbia and Dorchester
- St. Marks Catholic Church at Dorchester and Roseland

Locally Owned Restaurants, Bars, Coffee Shops, and Ice Cream Stores

- Ashmont Grill at Dorchester and Ashmont
- Ba Le Restaurant at Dorchester and Pearl
- Blarney Stone at Dorchester and Park
- Blasi's Café at Adams and Minot
- D-Bar at Dorchester and Hancock
- Dot2Dot Café at Dorchester and Roseland
- Flat Black Coffee at Dorchester and Ashmont
- Greenhill's Irish Bakery at Adams and Minot
- McKenna's Cafe at Savin and Sydney
- Peggy O'Neil's bar at Dorchester and Linden

- Pho Hoa at Dorchester and Orchardfield
- Restaurante Cesaria at Bowdoin and Draper
- Savin Scoop at Savin and Tuttle
- Shanti Taste of India at Dorchester and Roach
- Taste of Eden at Norfolk and Withington

Locally Owned Businesses

- American Food Basket at Dorchester and Park
- Brothers Supermarket at Dudley and Columbia
- Dorchester Laundromat at Dorchester and Rosland
- Fantasy Nails at Columbia and Stoughton
- Geneva Maytag at Geneva and Westville
- Gerard's Barber Shop at Norfolk and Withington
- Phu Cuong Market at Dorchester and Greenmount
- Rodriquez Barbershop at Bowdoin and Quincy
- Tammy's Nails at Washington and Lyndhurst

Local Sites of National or Regional Chains

- Burger King near Columbia and Geneva Ave
- Burger King at Dorchester and Dewar
- Dunkin Donuts at Boston and Columbia
- Dunkin Donuts at Dorchester and Ashmont
- Family Dollar at Park and Geneva
- MacDonald's at Dorchester and Park
- MacDonald's at Washington and Talbot

Local Events

(Unless otherwise noted, more information is available at <http://www.dotnews.com/notables>)

- Winter Farmers' Market, Great Hall, Norfolk and Talbot: Friday, March 27, 3 to 7 PM
(See <https://www.facebook.com/DorchesterWinterFarmersMarket>)
- 2015 Mother's Walk for Peace Info Session: Saturday, March 28, 10 AM- 1 PM. SEIU 1199, 3rd floor, 150 Mt. Vernon Street
- DCR and Phillips Candy House 23rd Annual Kids Spring Egg Scramble: Saturday, March 28 at 11 AM: DCR Pope John Paul II Park on 763 Gallivan Boulevard.
- Breakfast on Community Policing: Saturday, April 4 at 9 AM. Blue Hill Boys and Girls Club 15 Talbot Ave. With special guest speakers Mayor Martin Walsh, BPD Commissioner William Evans, and Capt. Haseeb Hosein of District B-3. Suggested donation \$20. For more info call 617-343-4717.
- Codman Square Neighborhood Council Meeting, Wednesday, April 1, 7 pm, Great Hall, 6 Norfolk Street, Dorchester
- Fair Foods, Two-Dollar-A-Bag Food Distribution. Various times and days, see <http://fairfoods.org/dollarbag.html>). *Call ahead to make sure you would be welcome.*