English 1A Spring 2012 **Interview Essay: Writing About Culture**

**Overview:** This project is designed to give you a chance to think about your culture by interviewing someone from a different culture. It will also give you a chance to try a kind of research that might be new to you, the interview. As you might have already noticed from your book club book, the interview is a thriving form of writing that appears in many different forms. If you get good at it, you can do this for a living.

**Details:**

* **Topics**: Members of a culture you don’t belong to but are curious about make the best topics, I think, because you learn more. However, you can also write about a culture you belong to automatically, defined either by nationality, ethnicity, religion, or region, or a subculture you belong to by choice: enthusiasts of a particular hobby, members of a profession or academic major, veterans of a particular experience (not just warfare). Problem topics: I’m sorry, but some topics are either too sensitive or too hackneyed (cliché-magnets), so I must forbid them. In the former category I’d include abortion, in the second fraternities/sororities. I also reserve the right to deny other topics if they seem problematic. That’s what the topic proposal category is for.
* **Audience**: Your choice, but it must be specific and appropriate for the topic.
* **Forum**: Again, your choice, but it must be specific and appropriate to the audience and topic.
* **Method**: Following the models we’ll look at in class, you should include a mix of the following: direct description, testimony from interviews, analysis, narrative, and (optional).*properly cited* information from research of written sources.
* **Format, Length**: MLA format, 1300 words.
* **Requirements**:Although “formal” research is optional, an interview with at least one person in or related to the subculture you are writing about is required, and at least one quote from that person is required. If you include material quoted from written sources (including the Web), you must include a bibliography and follow MLA guidelines for citing sources. Informal citation (as in a newspaper) is fine for quotes from the interview. Although you might not know going in what you will find, by the end you should have a point to make about this group: a thesis.

**Procedure:**

1) Topic Proposal: Briefly identify the group you will discuss, name at least one person you will interview and contact information for him/her (email, ideally, or a phone number). Also identify the audience you will address, and forum. **Due:**

2) Interview questions: I want to see the questions you will use, at least 10, typed. **Due:**

3) Peer Review As with the Personal Essay, you will bring TWO copies of the draft to class, exchange with a classmate, and give each other advice. **Due:**

4) Revise, Turnitin: As before, you will take your draft and your peer’s advice home, consider what advice to use, maybe get my advice, as well; then revise. Print out the final draft AND submit it electronically to Turnitin.com. Staple the final draft pages together, then put that in a big envelope with the peer review sheet, rough draft, and interview notes, and hand it in at the BEGINNING of class on the day its due. Then you can relax and confer with your book clubs, maybe see a short movie. **Due:**

**How to find someone to interview**:

Again, I’d like to urge you to investigate a culture you don’t already know much about. One way to do that is to take advantage of the International Week this week and next to meet some international students. I will even give extra credit if you go to one of these events and write about it (approx. 1 page description/response with a souvenir)

SUNDAY, MARCH 11 **International Pancake Breakfast | 9:30 am—1 pm** 

International House, 360 South 11th Street $5 Students / $10 Non-students / $25 Family of four

Join the campus and neighborhood communities to enjoy international foods, traditional dress worn by residents, and international entertainment.

TUESDAY, MARCH 13 **Coffee Night | 8:30—10:30 pm** [](http://www.sjsu.edu/depts/ipss/calendar/internationalweek.htm#Top) International House, 360 South 11th Street

THURSDAY, MARCH 15 **Foreign Documentary Film:  BUDRUS | 6:30pm - 8:30pm** 
Engineering Building Room 189

Presented by the SJSU Arabic Program and the Silicon Valley Middle East Studies
Consortium.
Community organizer Ayed Morrar began a program of peaceful protest, uniting Fatah and Hamas supporters as well as Israeli civilians, when the Israeli Separation Barrier threatened to wipe out his village of Budrus in the Palestinian West Bank. However, success was limited until his determined 15-year old daughter, Iltezam, mobilized a women's wing, revitalizing the campaign. In this inspiring documentary, filmed over months and months of protests, we witness the efforts of extraordinary individuals who take on the most rigid, violent political social divides to work collectively for peace.

Co-sponsored by SJSU Department of World Languages and Literatures, Jewish Voice for Peace, the SJSU Muslim Student Association, Culture and Conflict Forum, MOSAIC (SJSU), the San José Peace and Justice Center, the Student Association for Middle East Studies (SJSU), the Middle East Studies Consortium, and United Middle East (SCU).