In this exercise you will get the chance to put yourself in the shoes of an ethnographer studying a foreign culture and prepare an ethnographic report. You will be reporting on an activity that involves at least two people. It's best if you can actually observe and participate in an activity that is at least somewhat foreign to you, but if you can't, try to at least behave as though you are unfamiliar with the activity. The goal is to report on not just what people do, but what the activity means for those engaged in it.

You will first observe the activity and take detailed field notes. After a specific period of time you will participate in the activity while also continuing to record notes. After your research you will write up your report and reflect on the differences between observing, participating, and the whole process of participant-observation.

Part One, Observe:

(1) First, **pick a site** where two or more people (housemates, friends, spouses, etc.) are engaged in an activity that is unfamiliar to you. Gain your informant's permission and let them know that, initially, you will be observing them closely for **30 to 60 minutes** and will not be able to help. Remember the importance of establishing rapport with your informants and perhaps offer to help them do something later in exchange for their cooperation with this project.

(2) Begin by **taking notes on the overall setting**. Who are your informants? Describe the setting in enough detail that you will later be able to recreate an accurate picture of it for your reader. Be sure to be very specific with relevant details. For instance, note "Waterford crystal goblets" rather than "glasses". You should also **draw a diagram** of the place where the activity is occurring. Use it to show how your informants utilize the space.

(3) **Describe the activities**. Pay very close attention to what is going on. What are your informants doing and how are they doing it? How long are they engaged in each particular action? Are there events that interrupt the flow of activity (phone calls, visits, etc.)? What objects are used? How do the informants use them? Make a timeline noting how long the various activities take. Throughout the observation, be sure to take detailed notes. Record what people say verbatim when possible.

(4) **Reflect on what is happening**. While you’re observing, try to come up with some ideas about the deeper meanings and cultural behaviors going on. What do your observations tell you about the culture that you’re observing?
Part Two, Participate:

The second part of this exercise, to be completed after Part One, involves participating in the same activity for approximately 30 to 60 minutes. If the activity you observed in part one does not last for a full hour or two, you can participate in the same type of activity on a separate occasion. Try to participate fully in the activity and take notes and reflect (as described in 3 & 4 above) at the same time.

Part Three, Report:

Write up a two page ethnographic report of the activity you observed and participated in. Your report is not the same as your field notes. Think about the hundreds of pages of field notes Brenneman must have collected studying the Kurds; he then condensed them into a 130 page book. You will be doing something similar; your report should include information on what the activity is and how it’s conducted, but also on what it means for those people involved. Think about what an anthropologist studying this culture would learn from observing this activity.

Part Four, Reflect:

Share this report with the people who were engaged in the activity and get their reaction to it. Does the etic (outsider, i.e. your) view differ from the emic (insider, i.e. their) view of the activity? Why or why not?

Finally, discuss the differences you experienced between observing and participating. Ethnographers cannot "see" everything at once. Our observations are always situated and focused on something. Try to discern how and why your attention was focused in particular ways. What were you observing? How did that change when you started participating? What were you putting in your notes and at what level of detail? What effect did your observing or participating have on the people engaged in the activity? What are the pros and cons of each type of research?

Write up your reflection, which should be around 2 pages.

Turn in: Parts Three and Four (no need to turn in your field notes), preferably typed, standard margins, 12 point font, 1.5 spaced. Both parts of your assignment should be written in essay format (proper sentence and paragraph structure, intro and conclusion). Your grade will be based on both the content of your assignment (e.g. are you using and applying anthropological concepts correctly) and the presentation of it (e.g. structure, spelling, grammar).

Due: Thursday, January 31 at the beginning of class. Late assignments will not be accepted.