**Tips for Intercultural Observation Assignments:**

1. “**Visiting” someone else’s culture is an honor and a privilege, not a right, even if you have been assigned to do so.** Demonstrating gratitude and humility will help you have a successful intercultural interaction.
2. **Think about the power dynamic.** Awkward or unpleasant situations arise when people who are historically underrepresented/marginalized are asked to share deeply held cultural beliefs, stories, and traditions for the entertainment or benefit of dominant culture members. Be aware of this when you ask permission to interview someone or visit a group. They may not want you to come, and you need to make sure they know it’s okay if they say no.
3. **Seek out opportunities that are planned explicitly for public audiences: museums, workshops, classes, campus events.** Club meetings or other groups that are designed specifically for the support of group members are typically not good places to observe. Avoid showing up at small meetings that are not planned with the intention of educating outsiders.
   1. Small group meetings are typically designed for the safety of their members, and an outside observer can disrupt that safety.
   2. Clubs and other groups are sometimes working on activities that can require quite a bit of context or background for outsiders to understand and report accurately, such as a Drag Show or luau. If you report on these events without deep understanding or context, you risk tokenizing or stereotyping the activity and the group.
4. **The way you ask permission is important (See #1).**
   1. Remember to ask, not to assume it’s okay.
   2. Develop a relationship with the person/group before you attend the function (unless it’s specifically open to a large audience).
   3. Call or email in advance.
   4. Contact the designated representative of the group: the president, the advisor, the head of the organization, so they can decide whether or not your request is appropriate for the group’s response.
5. **Research the group in advance so you can address people appropriately and use accurate terminology.**
6. **The goal of your assignment is usually for you to deepen your understanding of another culture and to building meaningful connections with people who are not like you.** Be open and listen to what people are willing to tell you; be aware of times when you feel you want to impose your own beliefs or pre-conceived opinions on the group. If you don’t understand or are uncomfortable with what the group is doing, ask for information with respect—don’t argue or make light of their practices.
7. **Accept the information that is given to you.** You may have come in with an idea of what the group or person is going to be like. If they challenge your assumptions, assume that their information is accurate—for them. You do not know someone else’s culture or experience better than they do.
8. **The best inter-cultural relationships are equal ones. (See #2)** What do you offer in return for the gift of the group’s time and sharing of their traditions? Don’t think money! Can you volunteer for the group on a project they really need help with (Latino Youth Summit, Conversation Partner Program, Food4Kids)? Can you help them raise awareness about issues important to them? Ask for their suggestions on ways in which you can be of service to them—don’t impose your expectations (such as, “If you do this for me, I’ll take you to lunch.” Instead, try, “What would be an appropriate way for me to support your group in appreciation for the time you’ve shared with me?”) And be ready to follow through!