

## Fieldwork Assignments

### **Fieldwork Observation & Analysis**

Beginning the first week of the course, each of you will spend about an hour interacting with and/or observing how information and communication technologies (ICTs)-- **both digital and nondigital**-- are employed in a particular organization. Some examples of ICTs used by an organization might include tools used in product design, collaboration, and project management, software and databases that support the organization's systems for record-keeping, marketing, accounting, sales, distribution, client relationship management, or vendor management-- or any other type of ICT that helps the organization accomplish its mission. These interactions comprise a type of research called "fieldwork" (note that such fieldwork was the basis of our course textbook, *Technological Choices*, by Bailey and Leonardi).

Listed below are the overarching questions that should guide your fieldwork (observations and interviews) each week. Since your research interests and the organizations in which you are conducting your fieldwork vary significantly, it is your responsibility to develop a set of sub-questions to use in the interviews and/or observations you conduct each week. The sub-questions you develop should be relevant to--and contribute toward answering-- the overarching question of the week. For that purpose, 10-15 minutes at the end of each class session will be dedicated to giving you a chance to begin forming your sub-questions.

The notes you take during your fieldwork are called "fieldnotes." Expect to spend two hours each week elaborating the fieldnotes you take during your hour of fieldwork in the organization. There are two components that should be included in every fieldnote:

1. Fieldwork observations (which may include written commentary, interview notes, and any relevant supplemental material including diagrams, charts, photos etc. for which you have permission from your organization liaison to include in your fieldnotes). (400-500 words each)
2. A written reflection on what you observed that incorporates key concepts, ideas, and themes that are covered in weekly readings and class. The goal of the reflection is to connect and illustrate how ideas discussed in class resonate in the real-life experience of the organization you are observing. (300-400 words each)

### **Scheduling Fieldwork Assignments**

Fieldwork sessions should be scheduled for Thursday, Friday, or Monday each week to give you ample time to complete the assignments. Fieldnotes should be posted to Canvas by 10pm on Mondays. You will review a peer's fieldnotes (see assignment below) every week, which is due at 5pm on Wednesdays.

Overarching Questions (1 per week, except Thanksgiving week)

1. By Mon 10/3: How have the ICTs employed by this organization changed over time? (A 20-year lookback is ideal, but if the org is less than 20 years old, note that. Learn all you can about the non-digital as well as digital ICTs employed in each aspect of the organization's work.)
2. By Mon 10/10: What are the organization's greatest ICT challenges currently, and how is the organization attempting to address them?
3. By Mon 10/17: What has been the most significant ICT change that the org (or some part of it) has made, why and how was this change implemented, and in which ways did it affect particular units/teams/employees?

4. By Mon 10/24: Where is this organization in a cycle of ICT-related innovation, or, how has it moved through a cycle of ICT-related innovation?
5. By Mon 10/31: How has this organization experienced resistance to or failure in some form of ICT change?
6. By Mon 11/7: What are some ways in which staffmembers' preferences and practices have shaped this organization's selection, adaptation, and/or configuration of ICTs, and what are some ways that ICTs have shaped the way some staff do their work?
7. By Mon 11/14: How does collaboration (or some form of transaction beyond financial) happen between this organization and other entities (e.g. vendors/suppliers, competitors, partner organizations, etc)?
8. By Mon 11/21: How does collaboration happen within this organization? (e.g. between individual employees, within teams, between teams of employees)
9. (No fieldwork assignment due on 11/28)
10. By Mon 12/5: What is some "thing" (digital or nondigital) that one or more employees in this organization has made (or is in the process of making), either to distribute externally or to help improve an organizational process and what is the "origin/making story" of that thing? AND What do you need to learn more about from the org, in order to better understand its digital ICT practices and trajectory? [This field note is worth 20 points; no peer review]

Field work should be scheduled for Thursday, Friday or Monday. Field notes should be uploaded by Monday night at 10pm. Peer reviews will be due by Weds at 5pm.

### **Peer Review of Fieldwork Assignment**

Each week you will be asked to provide a peer review of another student's Fieldwork Assignment. Peer review will be graded on a 5-point scale and should address the following questions using the template form provided on Canvas:

- 1) What did you find most interesting in your classmate's fieldnote?
- 2) What was similar to and different from your field experience this week?
- 3) Why might your field experiences have differed this week?
- 4) What questions can you propose to your classmate that might be interesting for him/her explore further?
- 5) What is at least one additional connection between this fieldnote and course readings that was not mentioned by your classmate?