As a JEP student, your work in the community is similar to that of a social scientist who conducts “participant-observer” research. Throughout the course of the semester, you will observe and participate in the daily activities of those you meet at your JEP site, and you will write about your experiences on a weekly basis. These JEP Reflective Questions are designed to help you focus your observations and critically reflect on your experiences in relation to what you are learning about in your Sociology course.

Please read through all of the Reflective Questions prior to beginning your JEP assignment. Then, as soon as possible after leaving your JEP site each week, write down as much as you can about your experiences, especially that which is related to social stratification and education. This “field note” writing will help you write responses to the Reflective Questions that follow and your ethnography term paper. You are only required to turn in responses to the questions below. However, you are strongly encouraged to take comprehensive notes throughout the semester. While they may seem time-consuming now, these notes will serve as crucial sources of information for the required term paper. Therefore, the more you write now, the better your paper later! You may turn in a copy of your more extensive notes if you wish, as long as they address the issues posed by the Reflective Questions. The questions are related to and build upon one other. We encourage you to refer back to previous responses and to take seriously your PA’s feedback each week. Doing so will help you to learn more from your experiences. Please be respectful of the community and mindful of the limits of your experience and knowledge. Avoid generalizations and psychological explanations of behavior; in other words, do not make arguments that assume you know how someone else thinks or feels or use these assumptions to explain the way people act or their circumstances. Instead, focus on writing detailed and concrete accounts of people, social settings and conversations (including direct quotes, when possible).

Alternate Question
If your experience at your JEP site does not allow you to adequately answer a Reflective Question, you may substitute the question with the ones listed at the end of this document. Note, however, that you are required to answer Weeks One, Two and Eight.

YOUR WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS
The core parts of each Reflection Question (which you need to focus on) are highlighted in bold. Use the additional parts of the question to guide/supplement your answer. Please refer to the PA agreement you received in training for instructions regarding journal due dates and format requirements.

WEEK ONE - First Impressions at Your JEP Site
Describe your initial experience at your JEP assignment. Include a detailed description of the responsibilities and activities involved in your particular assignment. What are your most vivid impressions of the site? What were some of your expectations prior to beginning your assignment? How do your experiences during Week One compare to your expectations?
WEEK TWO: 1:1 Chats: Discuss Questions, Issues, and Concerns

This week you will be meeting one-on-one with your Program Assistant to talk about your experiences in JEP. In place of a full-length journal assignment this week, we ask that you take a few minutes to write down any questions, comments or concerns that you have about your JEP assignment so far. For example, what are your tasks at the site and how are you adjusting to your new role? How are you relating to the people at your site? Are you having any problems with any of the logistical aspects of your assignment (e.g., schedule, transportation, Blackboard access, etc.)? Please submit your comments (approximately a paragraph) the same way you would submit any other journal through Blackboard. Rather than providing written comments, your PA will discuss the issues with you during your “chat.”

WEEK THREE – Children’s Lives

When doing participant observation research involving children, it is important to reflect on some of the methodological issues you, as an adult researcher, may face at your site. For instance, you can not assume that the children at your site share your perception of events and interactions, as our worldviews are often shaped by our age and life-experiences. Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that interactions between you and the child may be influenced by your status as JEP student and the age discrepancy; as this provides you with a certain power and authority in the relationship. Briefly reflect on some of the other methodological issues you may come across when studying the children at your site (e.g., think of your perceived social class status, and gender or racial identification). Particularly, ask yourself the question whether adults and children perceive events differently and how this may influence the inferences you can draw from your observations. Pick a noteworthy event or incident involving children you witnessed at your site. How might each of the children involved in the incident interpret or understand it and how would their interpretation differ from yours? On what evidence do you base your conclusions (be sure to provide specific examples/evidence for your observations)?

WEEK FOUR – Narrowing the Scope

By now, you will need to decide upon a clearly defined topic for your paper. (Check your course syllabus for the paper outline due date) This week’s question aims to help you identify a specific research topic. Reflecting on your experiences thus far, what significant issues related to the social inequality and class stand out for you? Ask yourself the following questions: why is this issue about class or inequality; what specifically do you want to learn about this group or issue at hand; how do your observations and activities at your JEP site allow you to better understand the issue at hand and how it affects people; and are there any issues that might be difficult to understand given the relatively limited time at your JEP site or the limitations of participant observation?

WEEK FIVE – Writing Analytic “Memos”

Writing “memos” is an early step in the process of analyzing ethnographic data. It allows the researcher to step back from the field experience and to think about the emerging themes in an analytical and theoretical manner. The weekly Reflective Questions serve this same analytical purpose, but “memos” are less structured and allow you to pursue their your own interests, hunches, and ideas. In preparation for your term paper, write a “memo” that addresses your experiences at your JEP site.

Focusing on a very narrow and specific issue (even more narrow than your paper topic) and moving beyond a merely descriptive account, begin to consider various explanations for what is going on and why. What are your sociological hunches about this particular issue? Why does it seem significant? In your memo write out a question that you like to answer (this can be part of your term paper research question or just something you are curious about). This is great time to figure out the “prior questions” for your topic. Prior questions are the questions you need to ask before you can answer the question you just wrote down. Think
about what you need to know about the education system, the law, student's backgrounds, what you can learn
from students at your JEP site, etc. **What are the “prior questions” for your question?**

**WEEK SIX - Developing Your Thesis Statement**

**Please note:** this week’s assignment has two components.

1. In Week Four, you narrowed the scope of your paper and decided on, tentatively, a paper topic. **This week, you will develop a preliminary thesis statement; a research statement or question which you intend to answer using your weekly JEP observations.** The thesis statement is usually a single sentence somewhere in the first paragraph of your paper’s introduction that presents your argument to the reader. The rest of the paper, the body of the essay, gathers and organizes evidence that will persuade the reader of the logic of your interpretation of the research data. **Write a thesis statement and a brief explanation on why and how you are going to argue the thesis in your paper using you JEP observations.**

2. Part of testing the strength of a thesis statement rests in getting feedback from other readers. **Therefore, once you have formulated the thesis statement (not to exceed one page) you will post the statement on the Blackboard Discussion Board.** Your PA will pair you up with another student, whose thesis statement you will critique (via the Discussion Board) and who, in return will critique/comment on your statement. You can then use these comments to reflect on the strength of your thesis statement and rewrite it if you feel that is necessary.

**WEEK Seven - Theorizing about Social Inequality**

Sociological theory should be an important element of your research paper. **Select one of the theories of social inequality discussed in class and in the readings. How does this theory help to explain “the circumstances” (e.g., learning-problems, popularity, gender role behavior, or bi-lingual education) of the students at your JEP site?** What aspects of the students’ experiences are not addressed or adequately explained by the theory and if so, why? **How does this theory help you understand the topic that you have selected for your research paper? Make sure you clearly identity which theory you are using, where it comes from, and why it is a good fit for the circumstances at hand.**

**WEEK EIGHT – Review**

According to USC’s mission statement, “The central mission of the University of Southern California is the development of human beings and society as a whole through the cultivation and enrichment of the human mind and spirit. The principal means by which our mission is accomplished are teaching, research, artistic creation, professional practice and selected forms of public service”.


Consider this statement in light of your experiences in JEP. **Do you think public service-and specifically your service-learning experiences in the community via JEP-have helped to “cultivate” or “enrich” your “mind” and “spirit” and/or those of the community members with whom you worked?** If so, how? If not, why not? Please describe in detail what you have gained from your experiences through JEP from an intellectual, spiritual and/or ethical perspective. **How have your experiences in JEP compared to what you expected to get out of the program?**

**ALTERNATIVE QUESTION 1– Inequalities and Public Space**

As you have learned, social inequalities take a variety of forms and are sometimes played out in terms of access to space. For instance, last year, Undergraduate Student Government debated passing legislation that
would alter the terms of public space at USC by potentially banning “recycling gatherings” on campus (read: http://tinyurl.com/m9zdmb). What parts of USC and the surrounding neighborhood would you describe as public space? Why do you think these areas are or should be public space?

USC has recently hired 22 privately contracted “security ambassadors” to patrol the area north of campus. (read: http://dailytrojan.com/2009/08/25/usc-contracts-security-force-to-patrol-area/). What effects do you think this could have on access to public space? How does who is part of “the public” change at different times of the day? That is, does how different people in the community are looked at or surveilled change from 9am to 1am? If you have had any interactions with these “security ambassadors,” have seen them interacting with students and/or other members of the community, or have heard stories about how they work, feel free to include this “evidence” in your response. If you were going to follow up on the effects that this form of enforcement has on access to public space, what would you want to know? Who would you need to talk to?

ALTERNATIVE QUESTION 2– Air Pollution and Children's Health
The Southern California Environmental Health Sciences Center is a partnership between USC and UCLA. Visit http://hydra.usc.edu/scehsc/coep/coep_atlaschap.asp to read their report, Air Pollution and Children’s Health.

How might heat, air pollution, etc., impact the fitness levels of children at school? What influence could the potential environmental hazards have on children’s fitness levels? Drawing from your experiences at your JEP site, what do you consider to be the most significant health problem or risk for children at the school? Based on what you learned in your class, how do you think health and access to a healthy environment are related to social inequality?