

Fieldwork is the collection of data about human behavior, culture, and society through firsthand observations made in actual settings. In this class you will conduct fieldwork about play and technology for **one blog post** and for **your final project**.

In this class the goal of fieldwork is to *learn more about play and technology*. Simply describing play is not enough—you should use your fieldwork to help you *analyze* and *explain* play and understand the *design* of playful technology.

I. BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Choose your location. Overall, you may observe, record, and talk about the play of *friends, family, or the public* who agree to help you. You may conduct your fieldwork in homes or public places. For your fieldwork blog post you will choose a location in class. **You must do fieldwork using adults.** You must obtain informed consent unless an instructor agreed this was not required for your situation.

Choose the playful technology that you will investigate. You may observe anything that would fit the definition of a “playful technology” used in this class. That might include: video games, computers, radios, televisions, movies, books, board games, playground equipment, sports equipment, and many other playful technologies. When you conduct fieldwork for your final project, you should choose a playful technology that is related to your proposed design—but for your first attempt in your blog post that isn’t so important – just choose any technology that occurs in the play at your location.

Choose your method. You may use observation, recording, and interview. All three are recommended. You *must* always take careful notes during your fieldwork to record your observations. It *may* help you to type your notes directly into a laptop computer if you have access to one. You *may* also use audio recording, photography, and/or videotaping to record your fieldwork. (If you have a digital camera, you can post pictures directly to your blog.) If you wish to use these methods you should secure your equipment in advance and make sure you know how it works, and that the batteries are charged. Depending on your investigation, if you will use interviewing it may help you to write a few questions in advance so that you will not run out of things to say. Here are some examples:

Example Interview Questions:

1. Can you show me how you play (the game)?
2. Do you always play alone (or with other people)? (Who are they?)
3. How good are you at (the game)? What makes you say that?
4. Do you talk about playing (the game) with your friends? What do you say?
5. If you could make one change to (the game) what would it be?
6. While you are playing (or after you finish), how do you feel?
7. What other games do you like? (Video games? Or any other kind?)
8. Imagine you were planning to play (the game) but you unexpectedly couldn’t. What would you do instead?

Print Out Informed Consent Letters. Before you begin talking to anyone or recording them, you *must* obtain informed consent using the procedure covered in class. Print out enough informed consent letters from the class web page so that you will have plenty to spare.

II. CONDUCTING FIELDWORK

Time Spent During Fieldwork. For one session of fieldwork, you should plan to spend at least 1 hour in the field, and expect to spend 1 hour writing up. For some playful technologies it may be possible to spend 1 hour with the same player (the same person) but that is rare. It is most likely you will spend time with several people.

Obtain Informed Consent. Before you begin talking to anyone or recording them, you *must* obtain informed consent using the procedure covered in class unless an instructor has already agreed this was not relevant for your situation.

III. WRITING UP FIELDWORK

Keep Locations Confidential. To avoid identifying people, do not specify locations in your write up unless the location is a well-known public place (e.g., the Michigan Union).

Do Not Use Real Names. Do not use real names in your write up, as discussed in class. You can assign false first names to aid you in discussion.

Demonstrate Your Knowledge of Course Material. When you are describing how people are playing, be sure to make use of terms and concepts from the readings where they apply.

IV. TO RECEIVE CREDIT FOR ANY FIELDWORK

1. **You must complete the relevant assignment.**

For instance, complete the blog post (answer the question) or complete your project.

2. **At the next class meeting, you must...**

...turn in one signed consent form for every person you interact with or record in the field.

3. **In your write-up (or project text) you need to...**

...include or attach the evidence that was collected and that you refer to in your work.

This may be a transcript, extensive quotations, photographs, field notes (which could be scanned or typed), videos, or some other evidence that you collected. It must be clear to the reader that you actually conducted fieldwork. Evidence and supporting materials doesn't count toward any assignment word limit.

Remember to keep your location and participants anonymous in your evidence as far as is possible. **If you identify your fieldwork participants unnecessarily**, you may not receive credit for the assignment.