

IA 160: Survey of Design: Diversity in the U.S.

REFLECTION PAPER GUIDELINES

In the past few weeks, you have acquired a good introduction to cultural diversity in the U.S. through the lens of architectural diversity. You learned that the American built environment is not just a random occurrence, but a result of logical and clever architectural contributions by a large number of different ethnic groups and cultures over a very long period of time. You also learned how to define the elusive concept of culture, how culture is a large component of everyday life – an everyday life we tend to take for granted- and how we can appreciate the American cultural diversity through such everyday activities and use of built space. You have realized that ethnic and cultural diversity is not just “out there” – it is very much present around us, right under our very nose.

While the cultural diversity is a result of what has taken place in the historic past, our current society is also changing its cultural composition rapidly, like a kaleidoscope. With such changes, the cultural landscape, social norms, and ideologies are also changing inevitably. At the same time, ethnic and cultural groups continue to hold on to their unique traditions, beliefs, values, and customs and continue to celebrate them as a significant part of their own identity. All this makes our society in the U.S. multi-faceted, complex, and quite interesting.

After this brief glimpse into the American multi-cultural society through the IA 160 course, I'd like you to take a few moments to reflect on what you have learnt from it as a broad lesson - something that you are likely to take away with you after the course is over. Perhaps the following questions may help to organize your thoughts. Please note that you are not expected to answer these questions in your paper; they are just helpful directions for formulating your thoughts.

How does learning about cultural diversity affect your perspective of the American society, past and present? How does getting to know more about cultural differences in the society and diversity in the built environment and material culture influence you, personally or professionally? Having studied that architecture is just one medium to understand different cultures, how do you look at architecture around you from now on? Similarly, what else can you think of as representative of the cultural diversity in the U.S., other than food habits and religion (which we are already very familiar with)? What are the “different” cultural philosophies that describe the ways with which some cultures operate and what have you learnt from these differences? (Example of such different perspectives: Native Americans perceive land very differently than most of us do; some Native Americans don't follow the clock because they measure time very differently; African Americans pronounce some words differently) Most importantly, in your view, what do these differences mean to us – to the larger American society?

For the Reflection Paper, share your thoughts. Reflect on what you can take away from this course, not just how it is relevant (or not relevant) to your particular major. Think of broader life experiences you are going soon encounter after you graduate and how you may perceive the world around you based on what you know from this course. Describe your thoughts, ideas, views, and points about cultural diversity. It is very important that the paper contains your own reflections and thoughts presented in a logical manner; this is not an exercise where I expect you to memorize and repeat information from the lectures etc.!

Please use as many examples and personal experiences as you like, but they must be relevant to the topic of “culture.” For instance, it wouldn't be a good example if I wrote in the paper: “I love to eat

tacos at Taco Bell and therefore the Mexican culture has influenced me.” I think you know why it’s not a good example! ☺ A much better example would be: “I now notice the differences in how Mexican Americans try to continue their cultural traditions in the midst of rapid changes in their society, through their traditional foods, clothing, holiday celebrations, dance, music, and continual use of Spanish.”

Since this paper is based on your own personal reflections, you may write the paper in First-Person language (using “I,” “me,” “my” etc), but please avoid using Second-Person language (using “you,” “your” etc).

The paper should be a single page, 1.5 line spacing with either Arial 10 or Times New Roman 12.

Due on D2L on Friday June 17th by 11.59 p.m.

Total points = 100.