

World View and Mindset

Ames: Make sure it's on, ok I think it's on, I think it's on. Alright, so thinking about ethnography, thinking about the idea that ethno-, eth-no-graph-y means writing culture, right? You guys all should have already read that chapter, know what it means. And if you haven't you might want to do that. Either before or after you finish watching this. In order to really think about that, in order to become a conscious writer of culture, there's a couple terms that I want to introduce to you today in order to get you to the way of thinking about how it is you're observing and how it is you're thinking about writing about the culture you're going to talk about. Ok. So those two words are Worldview and Mindset. Ok. So, Worldview, we'll start with that one. I'll put mindset up there in a minute, back up there. Ok. Worldview. Alright, so first thing—basic definition, Worldview. A shared perspective of (or on, whatever you want to say) reality. OK. So again, it's your view of the world, but the distinction we're really going to hammer here today is that it's what you all share. You share a view of the world, right? Ok, so how do we think about this, or how do you want to talk about this. Often, you can start to think about Worldview based literally and specifically upon your geographical location, if you will. Where you are. And what that's going to—and your perspective on reality really boils down to coming to understand what it is that people believe—what are commonly understood beliefs—because those beliefs, they're what make up our reality. Make sense? Following, sort of? Ok, so worldview. So what do we think about this? Well, I think about the fact that—here we go, that's really bad—oh, what's that? A really terrible drawing of the United States. Ok, really terrible, because that's really more like that, ok you get the idea. Ok, so we think what are our beliefs, what do we believe, how do we believe it, how do we function in society—your geographical location, does that change how and what you believe in? Have you ever thought about this before? Yeah? So, if you say I'm, we're going to work, let's see, which direction do I want to work in? If I work from the notion of this classroom right here. Here you are in this classroom. We happen to be at Columbia College Chicago and I can start to ask you what are the commonly held beliefs you guys have about something like education. Right? So, what do you guys believe about education?

PAUSE

Ok so now these descriptive words get at their affective understanding and belief about themselves and belief about reality, which is all very much—has an impact based on where literally they're standing. Think about this. Like, where you literally are positioned. So when you're positioned in New York City and there's a famous cover of the New Yorker that— what's his name? Solvers? Whatever. It's where you have, you know, 9th avenue, 10th avenue, or whatever and then their view of the world, the New Yorkers' view of the world. Do you understand what I'm saying? Right, so it's very limited, they're very insular, they think they are the center of the world and there's nothing else beyond it. Right? Ok. So cities, city people are believing like this. Midwest—we're going to say this makes you “non-city” now. So

we're a Midwestern city. And we say, "oh we're polite." Anybody have another word—are we "friendly"? We're just polite.

Student: It seems like there's some sort of tolerance or acceptance.

Ames: For?

Student: Well I laughed when [other student] said "weather." People here tolerate things.

Ames: In that way. I see what you're saying.

Student: And they also—it doesn't have to be negative. I think sometimes tolerance is like, "well I do this because I have to, or it feels more necessary." I think there's also a more willing quality to it that makes it seem like acceptance.

Ames: Ok, and are you from the Midwest?

Student: No.

Ames: No? So you can make that observation. So here's one of the main points. When you're not from the place that you're in, when you're not a member or an insider, it makes it easier to observe the thing that other people are doing, yes? And then you've got to reflect back at that moment and go, "wow, what do I do and believe in, and how is that different?" Because when you're too embroiled in the culture, it's invisible to you. It's just the soup you're swimming in. Ok. So I love this idea of tolerance. They're tolerant, and I hate the word tolerance when you talk to me if I talk about queer things, I hate it. I hate it. And that's about right. They're tolerant. I tolerate it. I put my jacket on and I blaze across. So when I'm usually talking to folks about this we talk about the Midwestern. So here's the "oh, everything's lovely and popping and we believe in—really, city people believe in this notion of diversity. Midwesterners believe in simplicity, they believe in rural simplicity, they believe in family, they believe in food. Literally, they believe in it. Lots of it. And we have an huge abundance of it. We can see that in things like county fairs and state fairs. But we believe in these things, we sort of believe in these things, and part of it is because of the weather. Anybody here from the Midwest? Ok. So—ok, Midwesterners keep your hands up. I have friends—I still am friends with people from highschool, keep your hand up. I still am friends with people from junior high. I'm still friends with people from grade school. I'm still friends with people from kindergarten. There you go. That's a Midwesterner. Right there. And all they did was they hung out with the same people all the time, you're talking about familiarity. And the coat thing, I really think part of this is it's freezing outside, and I put my head down and I run to the next building. Really, I go to somebody's basement and I sit inside the same basement playing videogames and eating cheetos all the way through my childhood. It's part of my life. And so then you're polite and you're friendly, well you're polite but you're not necessarily friendly. What I mean is you're not going to make new friends.

BREAK

In 1860-something this guy Alexis de Tocqueville was hired—well, the French government wanted him to come over and figure out—the first project was to come over and figure out why the American prison system was so good. Yes, true. In the

1860s it was pretty awesome, in the 1850s. So he did that project, and then while he was here, he—anybody know this name, Alexis de Tocqueville? Anybody heard it? No? Ok. Your history... So anyway, he was invited to come over for that. While he was here, he kept looking around and thinking, God, these Americans are so weird. So strange, so different from we Europeans. And what he did was he coined the phrase “individualism.” Alexis de Tocqueville coined this phrase and what it means—it does not mean, “oh look, I wear these cool pants or this cool shirt.” Which—it’s not individuality, that’s not what it means. Individualism is the notion that a drive, almost, to set yourself literally, physically apart from other people. To embody a kind of continually lived manifest destiny. And that’s kind of how we behave as collective Americans. And from that, we get a bunch of our notions of what it means to be number one, what this word means, why we go into certain wars, and even when you guys don’t agree with what the decisions are being made in Washington, even when that’s not—you’re not like “yeah, I’m all for that,” you are completely aware of the logic, the rhetoric, and the discourse in which that argument has been formed. Make sense? So at some points in history you’re like, “yeah, well that was a really good idea to go bomb them. But this one, no.” Unless you’re a complete pacifist, and then that does—again, that makes you a sort of an outlier. Alright. So, Worldview. So when we think about this for your projects, you want to kind of consider, do the people in the room share a worldview? And if so, what is that worldview? And if they really don’t, there’s a wide range of diverse worldview in the room, how does that change the space? So this is worldview. So this is what we all share. Now the thing is, even in that, we’re all individuals. And then, now, that’s when and how and where I use this term: Mindset. This is an individual perspective of reality. Ok so there’s this shared view, worldview so here’s the little, the little visual that we use to describe this. Now a lot of this—a lot of these ideas I’ve ripped off from the very first class I ever taught, which was intro to popular culture. And down in bowling green, Ohio they made a lot about these ideas and then worked it into talking about popular beliefs, like the myth of perfectibility, the myth of endless childhood, the myth of American dream, all those myths that basically create reality narrative reality in our culture. Right, that’s where we’d get to. Sometimes I talk about that in class and sometimes I don’t. For us just to think about ideas, if you start with this big worldview idea, we’ve got this is what we share but now me and my individual mindset, we have—there’s a reality filter of sorts, right? You’re going to distill this, and you distill it through your own personal experience, what actually happens to you, and the environment in which you specifically exist. And here is where you want to become aware of your own thoughts, beliefs, assumptions, feelings about any given moment, situation, and then go back and think about what about your environment or experience lead you to believe in something or lead you to sort of like—brought up that feeling in you. Is this making sense, right? So that you’re going, well, it’s not just natural, it’s not just a natural thing to believe something is good or bad. Somehow that whole thing got created for you. Experience, so when you think about these things, one of the things we think about is I say it in terms of S.E.S. demographic—your own demographics. So everyone in here has a demographic, is a demographic, correct? A list of demographical characteristics or whatever. So in our culture they are age

(excellent), gender, race, socio-economic status, education level, and then some of the unwritten ones are things like to me like height, size, let's see—various ranges of how are bodies are interpreted and seen in space or time, yes. And then your environment could be did you grow up in a single family home, did you grow up in a multiple family home, did you grow up with one, two, three, four, some faction of parents, some faction of siblings—with grandparents, not with grandparents, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And then there is the layer of what happened to you on top of all that. Right? Ok. And all that stuff is what sets us up to start to look at culture as an ethnographer. Someone who's going to write—write it into existence. Once you write it, it becomes, it becomes in a way that it wasn't before you wrote about it. That's also the magic of writing. It sort of becomes through that. I think that's enough of this.