



Third Places Lab Assignment

(Example from KU's J301 Research and Writing class.)

For lab instructors:

Begin by reviewing the characteristics of third places. Remember, third places:

- are rooted in daily life;
- are comfortable public gathering places where people choose to spend their free time;
- usually don't have a formal leader, but they do have catalysts;
- may change depending on the time of day.

Review what happens in third places. Remember:

- Discussions in third places are not expressly political, but talk about common challenges is frequent.
- People in third places talk informally to understand concerns and test ideas.
- Third places can lead to quasi-official spaces.

Review who's involved in third places:

- Community catalysts
- Citizens with something in common (neighborhood, ethnicity, parenthood, work)

Provide some examples of third places:

- Churches
- Playgrounds
- Donut shops
- Bars
- Bookstores
- Cafes

Lab Activity:

Divide the class into teams with three or four people assigned to each team. As a team, the students should brainstorm third places at the University of Kansas and the city of Lawrence. Students should try to think of as many third places as they can. Emphasize that this exercise sets the groundwork for their homework assignment, so they need to be specific. They can't just write down: churches. They need to have a specific church in mind.

After 20 to 25 minutes, bring the students back together as a class. Which group had the most third places? The least? Have the students share some of their third places, ones they thought were unusual or ones they thought everyone might have. As a group, discuss the third places the students provided. Talk about what makes them third places and how they decided whether that was a third place. Were there places they talk about that didn't make the list?