These JEP Reflective Questions are designed to help you reflect upon your experiences as a member of a mini-team so that you can make the most of your community teaching experiences. 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 GEOL 130.

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 a few notes about your experience that day—difficult moments, things that surprised you, highlights from teaching, etc. This sort of quick “field note” writing will make it much easier for you to respond to the Reflective Questions that follow and will help you improve your team’s work in the classroom. 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).

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 from your first day at your site? What are some of the notable social and physical characteristics of your JEP site (for example, the number, age, sex, race, and ethnicity of the people and the size, space, decor, noise level, etc., of the classroom, buildings, and grounds)? What are your goals and expectations for the next eight weeks? How do you think your teaching experiences will help you to better master your course material for GEOL 130?

WEEK TWO: Assessing your Plan

Consider the eight-week plan that you completed with your mini-team. What are the major themes in your geology course that you plan to emphasize throughout the following weeks? Why are these themes important to understanding the concepts you are studying related to scientific methods and histories and why have you chosen these themes and not others? How will you go about developing lesson plans that get these points across? What are some of the activities you have been preparing for the students in order to emphasize these themes?

WEEK THREE – The Team

Describe your impressions of your mini-course team. How well are you gelling as a team? What strengths do you think each member brings to the table? What weaknesses are you concerned about, if any? How do you think about your own roll in the team? That is, what strength and weaknesses do you bring and what skills would you like to develop?

WEEK FOUR- Your K-12 experience

Compare and contrast your experiences at your JEP site with your own K-12 education. How is the JEP school, its facilities, its approach to education and teaching, etc., similar to or different from what it was like at your school? Think back...
to any experiences you may have had learning about science or the origins of science in K-12 settings: how might have you have responded to lesson plans such as the ones you have been creating for your students? Based on your experiences in the first four weeks, how would you categorize the students’ attitudes towards and understandings of how scientists work and what scientists do? What are the apparent source(s) of their knowledge of these matters—for instance, television, the teacher, their own experiences, or parents? What do they understand reasonably well and what is way off target, based on what you’ve learned in your GEOL course?

WEEK FIVE – Learning Activities
Identify one learning activity that worked really well and one activity that you think could use some improvement. Explain why each idea was successful or unsuccessful. How are you translating the course concepts you are covering in your college geology course for the younger students at your site? Do you think you can teach the same concepts you are learning to younger students? Why or why not? How have the students—and the teacher—responded to your efforts?

WEEK SIX – From Teacher to Student
Has teaching geology changed your experience as a student in a geology class? Think about how you approach your own learning style, how you engage with others when you return to the role of student, if any course concepts became more clear when you thought about how to teach the concepts to others, how you understand the reasons you are at USC, why you are learning about geology, etc. Provide a detailed description of a specific example from your team’s work in the classroom to explain your response.

WEEK SEVEN – Neighborhood Geology
This week’s journal entry requires that you read the question and do some work on-line before going to your site for the week so you can make some observations while traveling to and from your site. Go on-line and try to find out about the geological characteristics of this community. For example, are there any fault lines in the area? Is the community located in a flood plane? What types of rocks are buried underneath all of the concrete? (You need not answer all of these questions; just make an effort to find out something about the geologic history of this area. Print some of your findings to include with your journal.) Here are a few good places to start your search are (take a look at all the links, and thoroughly explore at least three sites in detail):

- the USGS National Seismic Hazard Mapping Program: http://earthquake.usgs.gov/hazmaps/
- the California Geological Survey: http://www.consrv.ca.gov/cgs/information/geologic_mapping/
- the Environmental Protection Agency’s “My Environment” page: http://www.epa.gov/myenvironment/
- the USC Southern California Earthquake Center: http://www.scec.org

Use evidence based in observations from your trip to and from your JEP site (ideally walking) to answer the following question. How can you see these geological characteristics making an impact on the landscape around your JEP site? Think broadly about the landscape: pay attention to the built environment (including parks, roads, etc.), be observant of what it is like to experience air, water, noise and other types of pollution that might exist, look around you to see how people and environment interact on the ground, at a neighborhood level, etc. Finally, based on what you’ve learned about scientific inquiry, what kind of science have are you performing for this week’s journal assignment? How is this sort of “science” related to scientific revolutions?

WEEK EIGHT – Final Reflections
Review your journals for the entire JEP experience, and then compose a summary of what you learned over the last eight weeks. How have your experiences at your JEP site and in the community in general changed your understanding of the neighborhood in which USC is located? What have you learned about yourself? What kinds of stereotypes were challenged in the process for you, if any? How have your perceptions of Los Angeles, race and ethnic relations, gender, public education, and social inequality changed, if at all? (If you do not think your community experiences have shifted your thinking about any of these issues, please explain why.) Have you noticed a change in the students’ general attitude towards science (see Week Four)? Based on these insights, what would you do similarly and/or differently in a future service-learning assignment? How might your experiences inform or relate to other situations you might encounter in the future?