The mission of the Peace Games program is to work towards the day when every child will have the skills, knowledge, and relationships to take action for peace and justice. To realize this vision, Peace Games connects young adults and school communities through a learning process emphasizing community service, cooperative activities, and celebration.

The program currently operates in Los Angeles, Boston and New York and is supported by funding and in-kind donations from a variety of government agencies, private corporations, foundations, and individuals. The Joint Educational Project, the Southwest Division of the Los Angeles Police Department, and several community-based agencies all worked together to bring the program to Norwood Street School in 2001. (For more information about Peace Games, please visit their website: [www.peacegames.org](http://www.peacegames.org).)

These Reflective Questions are designed to help you think about the connection between what you are learning about at USC and what you are experiencing in the community through your participation in the Peace Games program; they are intended to help you think about how violence, racial conflict, poverty, environmental problems, and politics at the local level relate to corresponding issues at a macro, or societal, level.

Note that as you respond to the questions, you should concentrate on answering the main question(s) (i.e., the highlighted one). The additional prompts are ‘focusing questions’ to help you identify critical factors related to the main question.

Use these questions as prompts to guide you but go beyond the prompts, writing about whatever seems important to you about your experience especially that which is related to the subjects you are studying in class. Please read through all of the Reflective Questions prior to beginning your assignment. Doing so will help to focus your observations and improve your responses. Please turn in your Reflective Question responses each week to your Program Assistant for the course.

*Please refer to the PA agreement you received in training for instructions regarding journal due dates and format requirements.

**ALTERNATE QUESTION**
If your experience at your JEP site does not allow you to adequately answer a Reflective Question, you may substitute the question with one of the questions listed at the end of this document.
YOUR WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

Week One
Describe your initial experience in Peace Games, including a detailed description of the activities (lesson plan) you developed for the children. Use the following questions to guide your answer: (1) What are your most vivid impressions from your first day at your site? For instance, what are some of the notable social and physical characteristics of your JEP site (think of the number, age, sex, race, or ethnicity of the staff, faculty, and/or students; and the size, space, decor, noise level, etc., of the classroom, buildings, and grounds), and how do these characteristics make you feel? (2) How do you envision your activity to contribute to the experiences of the children in your classroom? (3) How do your experiences during this first week compare to your initial expectations?

Week Two - Initial Responses:
This week, we will share your journal with the Peace Games Coordinator and your classroom teacher in order to facilitate communication and to provide you with greater support. Please write this week’s journal in the form of a letter to your classroom teacher. In this letter, address each of the following questions: (1) What are your personal goals for participating in Peace Games and what do you hope to learn from your experience? (2) What have you found to be most challenging about your new role as a Peace Games instructor thus far? (3) What are the children’s initial responses to the Peace Games program; (4) do the children seem open to the underlying principles of peace, respect, teamwork, etc., promoted by the program; are any of the children resistant to participating; and (5) what do you think is responsible for the different attitudes of children? Please note that the classroom teacher will be reading your journal, so be respectful in your comments and/or suggestions.

Week Three - Peace and Understanding in Los Angeles
In the last few years, media reports suggest that tensions and violent conflicts between Latino and African American high school students and gangs in Los Angeles are on the increase (see for instance: http://www.latimes.com/news/printedinition/opinion/laophernandez7jan07,1,414328.story?coll=la-news-comment or http://articles.latimes.com/2005/oct/05/local/me-store5). How can the Peace Games Program help to combat ethnic and racial conflict in Los Angeles? Use examples from your experiences in Peace Games (e.g., student responses, lesson plans, etc.) to illustrate how education and social awareness raising may (or may not) help to ease racial/ethnic tensions between Latinos and African Americans or any other ethnic groups.

Week Four – Peace Games, Race and Gender
Do gender and race seem to affect children’s reaction to the activities you play with them? If you notice differences, what are they? Who takes leadership roles – and what counts as “leadership”? Are there any differences along race and gender lines in the physical actions or the language used by children? To what do you attribute these differences?

Week Five – Emotions in times of crises
Your participation in JEP happens at a time when two major international crises are unfolding. Effects of both the international financial crisis and the swine flu epidemic are noticeable at the macro level and often generate highly emotional responses. Consider the way in which both crises have affected the school community (students, parents, teachers). In particular, look at how both crises are affecting the school and how, as an institution, it is addressing the challenges arising from these crises. What type of responses have you witnessed both at the institutional and individual level? (For example, has the school recently implemented guidelines for its students and staff in order to minimize the spread of the disease? Or, in the case of the financial crises, has the school expanded its free lunch program?) What role do emotions – and irrational thinking – play in the institutional policy-making process?
**Week Six – Affective Intelligence**
Affective Intelligence theory addresses the role of emotions in a decision making process, especially when it comes to voting for a political candidate. According to this theory, a person’s initial feeling toward a political candidate influences the evaluation of new information. Emotional reactions to that new information in turn influence learning. History has shown that emotions play an important role in conflict. **How would you explain to your students the benefits and drawbacks of using emotions in decision-making processes? Particularly, how do emotions exacerbate or alleviate conflict? Have you witnessed any instances when emotions contribute to tensions and conflict in the classroom?**

**Week Seven – Looking Back**
Choose your own topic for this week’s journal, writing about whatever POSC 449 course topic(s) have been most significant to you over the last 7 weeks as part of your Peace Games experience. Be sure to provide plenty of examples.

**Week Eight**
According to USC’s mission statement, “The central mission of the University of Southern California is the development of human beings and society as a whole through the cultivation and enrichment of the human mind and spirit. The principal means by which our mission is accomplished are teaching, research, artistic creation, professional practice and selected forms of public service.”
http://www.usc.edu/about/core_documents/

Consider this statement in light of your experiences in JEP. Do you think public service and specifically your service learning experiences in the community via JEP have helped to “cultivate” or “enrich” your mind and “spirit” and/or those of the community members with whom you worked? If so, how? If not, why not? Please describe in detail what you have gained from your experiences through JEP from an intellectual, spiritual and/or ethical perspective. How have your experiences in JEP compared to what you expected to get out of the program?

**ALTERNATE REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS**

**Culture of Violence**
Popular culture and particularly mass media (e.g., video games, television, movies, or toys) play important roles in the lives of children. **Drawing from your own experiences and observations at your JEP site, what role does violence play in popular culture and/or mass media products?** What are some of the social characteristics of this violence, e.g., in terms of gender (are boys more likely to be portrayed as more violent than girls; are movies or toys targeted at girls likely to show/promote less violence than those targeted at boys), race/ethnicity, or social class (are certain groups more likely to be associated with aggression/violence than others)? What impact, if any, do you believe that the cultural institutionalization of violence in our society has on the students’ ability to effective fight violence, war, and aggression and promote peace and tolerance at your JEP site and through the Peace Game Program?

**Realism**
Some realists argue that violent conflict is inevitable, in part because states will always act in their own self-interests. Similar arguments have been made about the fundamentally antagonistic nature of human beings. **Consider these assumptions in relation to your work in Peace Games.** Do any of the children with whom you are working appear to act aggressively and out of self-interest? Do you see any evidence of the ability of children to change their orientations and ways of interacting? Based on your experiences, do you believe the goal of ending violent conflict is utopian, as some realists contend? Why or why not?