

JEP REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

CSCI 200: Object-Oriented Programming
Professor Cheng
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FALL 2011

As a JEP student, your work in the community is similar to that of a social scientist who conducts “participant-observer” research. 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 (RQs) are designed to help you focus your observations and critically reflect on your experiences in relation to what you are learning about in your USC course.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS HINTS:

1. **Read the questions first.** Reading the question before you go to your JEP site is required in order to answer many RQs, and having the questions on your mind will when at your site will help focus your observations and improve your response to all RQs.
2. **Write as soon as possible.** As soon as possible after leaving your site, sketch out your answer to that week’s RQ. Even just taking a few notes about some difficult moments, things that surprised you or highlights will make writing later much easier and will provide the examples and observations you need to write an outstanding journal.
3. **Proof your work.** Like any college-level writing assignment, proof your work to make sure the writing is clear, error-free, and that you answer the question at hand.
4. **Read and respond to your PA's comments.** The questions are related to and build upon one other. So refer back to previous responses and to take seriously your PA’s feedback each week and respond to the feedback by following the PAs suggestions.
5. **Be respectful.** Show your respect by being mindful of the limits of your experience and knowledge. Avoid generalizations and stereotypical 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.
6. **Use examples.** Focus on writing detailed and concrete accounts of people, social settings and conversations (including direct quotes, when possible). Never make claims without evidence or examples!

YOUR ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS

The core parts of each assignment (which you need to focus on) are highlighted in **bold**. Use the additional questions to guide/supplement your answer. Please refer to the PA agreement you received in training for instructions regarding journal due dates and format requirements. *Note that some weeks require longer responses and are worth more points.*

ESSAY ONE - “Pre-reflection”

(1 page, 10 points, due: 9/26)

Please respond to one of the following prompts. Question #2 is for returning students only.

#1: Over the next eight-weeks you will be taking your college education outside of the walls of the University. Based on what you know about JEP and what you know about your site, what do you imagine your JEP experience will be like? Make sure to explain why you think what you think and use examples from your experiences at USC and in the community to explain yourself. Make your imagined vision of your JEP experience specific by addressing these two questions: **Ideally, what would you like to learn from your experiences in JEP? When you think about JEP, what makes you the most nervous or concerned?**

#2: Think back to your last experience in JEP and think about how you can take what you've learned about JEP, USC and the surrounding neighborhood (or the organization or school you worked with) and improve your experience this time around. **Now that you know something about JEP, what do you hope to learn from doing JEP again? What was the biggest obstacle you faced in your last JEP experience and how will you address that issue this time?** Make sure to use clear and detailed examples from your last JEP experience to explain your reasoning.

ESSAY TWO: Goals

(1.5-2 pages, 15 points, due: 10/3)

Describe the student(s) with whom you are working at your JEP site. For instance, what do you know about her/his/their social background and how do you know it? How do they come across to you (e.g., shy or confident) and how has this changed over the first few weeks? **Why do you think that your student was identified as someone who could benefit from math tutorial assistance?** How would you categorize your student's attitude towards math in general? **In the second half of your essay, outline your goals and expectations for the coming week— both for yourself and the student(s) you are mentoring.**

ESSAY THREE: Math in K-12 Education

(1.5-2 pages, 15 points, due: 10/17)

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 math in K-12 settings: how might you have responded to the classroom environment of your mentee(s) or to the mentoring techniques and strategies you are using? How would you categorize your students' responses to your strategies and techniques?

BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION: Mentoring Techniques and Strategies

(20 points, 10/24-28)

By now you've had some experience as a mentor and are likely starting to get a feel for what sort of mentoring techniques and strategies seem to work and not work. In order to help you refine your approach and find new ideas for the coming weeks, it is time to share your successes and failures with the other Math Mentors.

Instructions: Go to Blackboard and click the “Discussion Board” link on the main menu. Click on the “JEP Discussion” link. Your PA has posted the discussion prompt in a thread entitled “*Mentoring Techniques and Strategies.*” You may click on this thread to read and reply to the prompt. Or you may create a new thread (see below).

Discussion Prompt: Think about how you developed the strategies you have used so far. Did any strategies end up working in surprising ways or work out differently than you planned? **Share with**

your fellow mentors one strategy or technique that worked really well with your students and one that could use improvement. Make sure to clearly identify what you think made certain plans or activities successful or unsuccessful. **If there are any problems you've been having with a particular strategy, ask the other mentors for ideas and help.** And of course, when you see someone else's post and you have a suggestion, offer your ideas and help!

To review all of the postings, go back to the “Forum: JEP Discussion” page and click the box in the gray frame above all the list of threads to select all postings. Click “Collect” and a new page will open with each individual post listed by date. To respond to another student’s posting, click the orange “reply” button next to the thread. Enter your message (and upload any attachments, if relevant) and click Submit.

If you wish to take the discussion in another direction (while sticking with the general theme of the prompt), you may return to the “Forum: JEP Discussion” page and create a new thread. Give the thread a subject/title and enter your comments in the Message box. Click submit.

Grading: To receive full credit for your participation in this discussion, you must post a minimum of two comments, questions, suggestions, etc., in addition to your original posting that addresses the prompt. ***Your original posting should be approximately one page in length and your comments should each be at least a substantial paragraph.***

Your PA will provide more details on the timeline for this discussion.

BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION: Topic To Be Announced

(2 posts to Blackboard, 10 points, due: 10/31-11/4)

Instructions and topic will be posted on Blackboard.

Discussion purpose: Your weekly journals consistently reveal a wide range of interesting insights and abilities that result from your coursework and service-learning assignments. Since students participate in JEP from more than 100 different courses each semester, and rarely do all students in a particular class choose to enroll in JEP, we lack the opportunity to bring you together on a regular basis to learn from one another. As a result, the educational benefits of participating in JEP are limited mostly to your individual or small group experiences. This forum is designed to counter the relative isolation of JEP’s service-learning assignments by providing an opportunity for you to share your insights with your peers.

ESSAY FIVE: Mentor/Mentee Progress

(2 pages, 20 points, due: 11/7)

You are coming towards the end of your assignment at your site and so now is a good time to reflect on your student’s progress. Look back to the goals you set in Essay Two—*make sure to open the document in Blackboard so that you can also review your PA's comments*—and evaluate both your progress as a mentor and your mentee's progress with math. **Do you feel that the student you are working with has made good progress in terms of advancing her/his math skills?** How does the JEP approach to math instruction—or your particular approach—differ from that in the classroom? **Make sure to use clear and detailed examples of progress (or struggles) in your response.**

ESSAY SIX: Programming Mentor

(1.5-2 pages, 15 points, due: 11/14)

If you were a programming mentor instead of a math mentor and were teaching your mentee(s) basic

coding, how would your approach change? There is an established set of arguments for why learning math is important, but what about computer programming? Computer code mediates our lives all the time—in obvious ways through the devices we use directly, such as cell phones and notebook computers, but in less obvious ways as well, such as through traffic signals, closed circuit TV (surveillance), and various databases that store and access data about our identity, history, movement and consumer habits. Because of this, many scholars argue that literacy in computer languages will be crucial in the coming decades. **Do you think it would be a good idea to teach elementary students how to code?** Provide evidence for why or why not you think it would be a good idea to teach students like your mentee(s) to code using both what you know about coding and your experience as a math mentor. **How would you connect the importance of learning to code to your student's everyday lives?** What sort of lessons would you want to teach the students you are mentoring? *For inspiration, take a look at MIT's "Scratch" project (<http://scratch.mit.edu/>), designed for use by 6-16 year olds.* (Hint: It may be useful to think about how computer code affects your student(s) while they are in school or at other times and places in their lives, as well as what would be possible if you knew how to code from a young age.)

ESSAY SEVEN: Final Reflections on Service-Learning

(2.5-3 pages, 25 points, due: 11/21)

In addition to potentially providing beneficial services for the communities in which it is implemented, service-learning is also credited with numerous benefits for the participating students. In particular:

- Young people gain access to the range of supports and opportunities (or developmental assets) they need to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. One study of youth civic activism found that these settings had particular strength in cultivating youth and community involvement (Lewis-Charp et al., 2003).
- Increased sense of self-efficacy as young people learn that they can impact real social challenges, problems, and needs.
- Higher academic achievement and interest in furthering their education.
- Enhanced problem-solving skills, ability to work in teams, and planning abilities.
- Enhanced civic engagement attitudes, skills and behaviors. Many leaders in public service today speak about how they were nurtured, inspired, and shaped in early experiences in community service or volunteering.

(Sources: Chung, 1997; Coe-Regan et al, in press; Lewis-Charp et al., 2003; Tannenbaum, S. C., 2007; and YMCA of the USA, 2004)

Consider these benefits and reflect on the various ways in which your JEP experience has impacted you this semester. **Based on your personal experience, do you believe that the above-mentioned benefits can come from participating in a service-learning program? Which outcomes seem most likely for service-learning students? Which seem least likely? Are there other benefits that you have experienced that are not listed above?** In answering these questions, make sure to explain your reasoning and use specific examples from your service-learning assignment and your course.