

JEP REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

PHIL 340: *Ethics*
Professor Dreher
PA: Katherine
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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 - “Preflection”

(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 how JEP works, 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: Social Context of your Community Site

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

Describe the clientele/student body/participants at your JEP site. Try to be as specific as possible about the number of people, age, sex, race, ethnicity, social class background, primary language spoken, and any other significant characteristics (e.g. immigrant status, religion) about the group served by the site. Describe the volunteers/ staff/teachers at the site. How many of them are there? How are they similar to and different from the group served at the site (in terms of race, class, gender, etc.)?

ONE-ON-ONE CHATS:

(Scheduled with your PA, 10/10-10/14)

This week you will be meeting one-on-one with your Program Assistant to talk about your experiences in JEP. In place of a full-length essay this week, we ask that you take a few minutes to **jot down any questions, comments or concerns that you have about your JEP assignment so far.** For example, what are your tasks at the site and how are you adjusting to your new role? How are you relating to the people at your site? Are you having any problems with any of the logistical aspects of your assignment (e.g., schedule, transportation, Blackboard access, etc.)? *You do not need to submit these notes on Blackboard; rather, take them with you to your one-on-one chat with your PA so you are prepared and remember to talk about any issues that need to be addressed.*

ESSAY THREE: Definitions

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

A good understanding of basic terms is necessary for courses such as PHIL 340. Pick a key term or concept that relates to the material you have been covering in your course (for example,

“ethics,” “right,” “wrong,” “morality” or a term defined by your professor in a lecture). Look up the term in your textbook and/or class notes. **Have your experiences in the community changed the meaning of this word for you? If so, how?**

ESSAY FOUR: Deontological Ethics

(2 pages, 20 points, due: 10/24)

In your PHIL 340 class you have read Kant’s *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, which is Kant’s first contribution to moral philosophy. Kant’s theory of ethics has often been defined as “deontological.” **After providing your own definition of “deontology” in light of your class readings, consider the ethics of service-learning. As deontologists look at rules and duties, can you identify the rules governing service-learning and the duties of JEP participants? Develop a 10-point deontological code for service-learning and community service that takes into account these rules, the duties of participants, and the potential limitations of these activities.** Make sure to complement your code with what you have learned in class and to illustrate it with examples from your JEP experience.

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: The Good Life

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

In Nichomachean Ethics, Aristotle develops a theory of the good life. It is a common belief that helping others is a critical part of leading a “good life.” **Reflect on the meaning of “the good life” in the context of your JEP assignment. How has your JEP experience of helping others enhanced your own life? Do you think one can lead a good life without some kind of service to others? Why or why not?** Make sure use what you learned in your course and to illustrate your argument with examples from your JEP experience.

ESSAY SIX: Free Will and Moral Responsibility

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

Free will is essential to establish moral responsibility. Schools, alongside families, traditionally play a key role in educating children as rational agents and in instilling a sense of moral responsibility. **Yet, can moral responsibility actually be taught? Based on both your class discussions about moral responsibility and your observations at your JEP site, reflect on school’s contribution to raising moral individuals.** Are children in schools considered “free agents”? How is their moral responsibility determined? Also, have you witnessed cases of children being reprimanded in the school context? In your opinion, do blame and punishment

play a role in teaching moral responsibility?

ESSAY SEVEN: Final Reflections

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

Take a look back at the essays you have written (make sure to use Blackboard, so you can see your PA's comments), and think about what you have learned over the past few weeks. It is often noted that one of the benefits of service-learning for participating students is “higher academic achievement.” For this final essay, we want you to focus on this particular outcome vis a vis your JEP assignment. **First, consider the premise itself: how does participating in a service-learning program lead to higher academic achievement?** When does it fail to do so? Do students’ outcomes vary by the subject matter of the course? Or do they vary by their experiences in the community? **Describe what you think are the most important factors in a service-learning assignment that ensure “higher academic achievement” for university students.**

Next, think about your JEP experiences in the context of your USC course: What is the most significant “academic” outcome of your JEP assignment? How has JEP affected your understanding of the course content? Why do you think your professor is giving academic credit for JEP? What are his or her goals for you? In answering these questions, make sure to use specific examples from your course. Think broadly about the relationship between JEP and your course. Even if you believe there is no direct connection, consider how you could apply a course concept to help better understand or explain something you encounter in your JEP experience. You might focus on detailing a specific learning outcome (e.g., describing a particular theory and how it came to life through your experiences, or how teaching helped you to understand a particular course concept). Alternatively, you might reflect on how your experiences in JEP shed light on material you have learned in other courses at USC.

The goal of this assignment is for you to think critically about the academic outcomes of service-learning and describe what you learned from your experience. If you are struggling to make the connection, as an alternative, explain, in detail, how you think the course or JEP could be redesigned to foster a more meaningful connection between your course and a service-learning experience in the community.