JEP REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

PPD 372 Public Service in an Urban Setting
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As a service provider, your work in the community is much like that of the participant-observer researcher or ethnographer. Throughout the course of the semester, you will observe and participate in the daily activities of those you meet at your service site. These journal questions are designed to help you in the process of writing up “field notes” that document your experiences and prepare you for writing your service-learning project.

As soon as possible after leaving the “field” (i.e., your service site), write down as much as you can recall about your experiences. Use these journal questions as prompts to guide your field notes, but go beyond the prompts, writing about whatever seems important to you about your service experience – especially that which is related to the issues of poverty and diversity. While they may seem time-consuming now, these notes will serve as crucial sources of “data” for the required service-learning project (due on the last day of class). Therefore, the more you write now, the better your paper later!

REFLECTIVE QUESTION 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 when at your site will help focus your observations and improve your response to all RQS.

2. **Take notes.** As soon as possible after leaving your site, take a few minutes to quickly write down a few notes about your experience that day—difficult moments, things that surprised you, highlights from teaching, etc. Taking a few minutes to do this each week will save you time later and will provide the examples and observations you need to write an outstanding essay.

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 another. 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 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.

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 WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS
The core parts of each Reflective 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 due dates and format requirements. *Note that some essays require longer responses and are worth more points.*
ESSAY ONE - “Pre-reflection”  
(I page, 10 points, due: 2/14)  

Please respond to one of the following prompts. The second set of questions is for returning volunteers 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: The Social and Physical Context  
(1.5-2 pages, 15 points, due: 2/21)  

Describe the social and physical context of your community service site. Try to be as specific as possible about the number of people that are there, as well as the age, sex, race, ethnicity, and any other significant characteristics of all those involved in your assignment. Pay attention to the built environment; specifically, provide details about the size, space, decor, noise level, etc. of the classroom (or meeting room), the building(s) making up the site, and its grounds. How do the aesthetics and overall feel of the site compare with the USC campus and/or other places you have worked or attended school? What are some of the main difference and similarities? How do you think that the built environment might make it easier and/or more difficult for your service organization to achieve its goals?

ESSAY THREE - Data about your School or Organization  
(1 page, 10 points, due: 3/7)  

Please note: this week you have two options.

Option One: What is the primary community served by your school or organization? Are there physical or geographic boundaries that clearly demarcate the community? Can you identify any non-physical boundaries (e.g., social, legal, psychological, etc.) that are significant in establishing the “catchment” area of the organization? How are these boundaries used in defining the mission of the school or agency and/or the scope of its potential impact?

Go to the “American Factfinder” section of the U.S. Census Bureau’s website and look up demographic information about the community served by the organization: http://factfinder.census.gov/. Enter the zip code (or the city or county, if that is more relevant) for the catchment community and click “go.” If you are placed at a school or another organization that serves a small neighborhood, click on the “search by address” link in the box with the zip code you
entered and enter the address of your site (or an address relevant to your particular project). A Census tract link will appear near the top of the page, under the “Fact Sheet” header. Review the demographic information and explore the map features available in the chart that appears. **What are some of the more interesting or surprising statistics about the community?** How does the community fare compared to Los Angeles County? How do these findings about the community relate to or inform your work at your JEP site?

**Option Two:** Who is the primary community served by your school or organization? Are there physical or geographic boundaries that clearly demarcate the community? Can you identify any non-physical boundaries (e.g., social, legal, psychological, etc.) that are significant in establishing the “catchment” area of the organization? **How are these boundaries used in defining the mission of the school or agency and/or the scope of its potential impact?**

Go to Google Maps to learn more about the physical content and conditions of the community served by the school or organization: [http://maps.google.com/maps](http://maps.google.com/maps). Enter the address of your site (or an address relevant to your particular project) and click “search maps.” Play around with the “satellite” or “hybrid” views and zoom in for a closer look at the community. Click on the “street view” and move around the human figure that appears to see various locations from the ground level. What types of buildings are present in the neighborhood and how would you describe their apparent condition and purpose (e.g., single- or multi-family residential housing, commercial -- and what types of businesses, etc.)? How much land appears to be used for community purposes and of this land, how much is private (shopping centers, restaurants, some hospitals, some churches, professional and some social service agencies, etc.) and how much is public (schools, community centers, libraries, police and fire departments, government offices, city parks, etc.)? How much green and/or open space is available, if any? How pedestrian-friendly is the community (e.g., for children walking to school)? **How do these findings about the community relate to or inform your work at your JEP site?**

**ESSAY FOUR – Assessing Service**
(2 pages, 20 points, due: 3/21)

**Please note:** this week you have an alternative question if you are placed with a school.

**Based on your experiences in class and in the community over the course of the semester, critically assess the mission and programmatic structure of the site.** Is the site’s mission oriented more toward providing charity or promoting social change? How closely do site staff work with those served by the site to identify needs and develop programmatic goals? Regardless of how they are established, how well do you think the organization meets its goals? What are the strengths and limitations of the site’s approach? What alternatives could be proposed at the site level? What broader changes in public policy/society might further address this issue?

**Alternative Question: Inequalities and Public Space**

As you have learned, social inequalities take a variety of forms and are sometimes played out in terms of access to space. For instance, last year, Undergraduate Student Government debated passing legislation that would alter the terms of public space at USC by potentially banning “recycling gatherings” on campus (read: [http://tinyurl.com/m9zdmmb](http://tinyurl.com/m9zdmmb)). **What parts of USC and the surrounding neighborhood would you describe as public space? Why do you think these areas are or should be public space?**

effects do you think this could have on access to public space? How does who is part of “the public” change at different times of the day? That is, does how different people in the community are looked at or surveilled change from 9am to 1am? If you have had any interactions with these “security ambassadors,” have seen them interacting with students and/or other members of the community, or have heard stories about how they work, feel free to include this “evidence” in your response. If you were going to follow up on the effects that this form of enforcement has on access to public space, what would you want to know? Who would you need to talk to?

ESSAY FIVE – Service and Mutual Aid
(2 pages, 20 points, due: 4/4)

In part III of the course, you examined how American society, historically, has responded to the plight of disadvantaged groups in society. You also examined the culturally based differences in the practices of service and caring among various ethnic and culture groups. What are the traditions of service and mutual support for the particular cultural group with whom you are working (e.g., transnational familial support, assistance to new immigrants, links to the church)? (Note: if you are working for an agency with a diverse population, focus on one of the cultural groups present. Also, If you have trouble finding out about traditions of service and mutual support for the people served by your site, you may want speak with some of the site staff.) Based on your experiences at your site, what evidence do you see of these traditional forms of communal support (i.e., are they integral to the agency’s primary service goals and/or structure, or are they mostly limited to the efforts of individuals at the site)? What are the apparent motivations of community members to get involved at the site – as staff, volunteers, and/or recipients? How does the site cultivate, maintain and/or draw upon community and cultural resources?

ESSAY SIX – Town and Gown: Students and Community
(1.5-2 pages, 15 points, due: 4/11)

Please choose one of the two options below:

Option 1 – Your role in the community

USC’s master plan (http://www.usc.edu/community/upcmasterplan/) lays out USC’s vision for developing the area around the University Park Campus. Students are not mentioned in the majority of the plan save for the section on “community outreach.”

Throughout its 125-year history, USC has put high value on being a good neighbor—and on programs and projects that have a positive and visible impact on its neighborhoods. In his 1991 inaugural address, USC President Steven B. Sample spelled out his vision of the urban university, where traditional boundaries between university and community become blurred and permeable, and students have the opportunity to be active participants in the interchange.

As a result, USC has come together with local residents in one of the most ambitious social-outreach programs of any university in the nation. This culturally diverse, living laboratory of community collaboration reveals itself in more than 300 academic and professional programs that address educational, cultural, economic and safety issues in the local communities—and which earned USC the distinction of College of the Year 2000 from Time magazine and The Princeton Review.

Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE) presents a different opinion on the role of students in the community (full article: http://bit.ly/fUd7tJ):
"Students today aren't going to be here when any of the master plan is implemented, but these people in the community - they live here, and they're raising their kids here, and they want to retire here."

The UPC Master Plan is a general outline for redevelopment that would provide thousands of new beds in housing complexes, construct new academic buildings and lure high-end retailers and restaurants over the next two decades.

[SAJE staff] and others want to see a commitment to building affordable housing and funding real community improvement alongside plans for expansion and a promise that new retailers will serve both the school and the community.

Consider the contrasting perspectives above as you answer the following questions. Do you think your participation in a program like JEP serves USC’s greater goals? If so, be specific about how these goals are served. If not, be specific about why not. Next, do you think USC’s goals serve the community? Again, make sure to explain why you think what you think. Finally, based on your experiences in JEP, what roles and responsibilities do you think USC students should have as residents of the neighborhood and/or as students of the University? 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. Use any experiences you have had at your JEP site and in the community (with JEP or in any other capacity) that have changed your understanding of your role as a college student and as a resident of this neighborhood and city in your answer. (If you live outside of the university community, reflect generally on the roles and responsibilities you think that college students do have and should have to their city and neighborhoods in which a university resides.) (If you have not had any experiences that have shifted your thinking about the role and responsibilities of University students in regards to any of these issues, explain why you think you have never had any such experience.)

If you’ve participated in JEP before: you may also include your thoughts on how your current JEP assignment differs, complements or reinforces what you learned from your previous JEP experience(s).

**Option 2 - Benefits of Service-Learning for Students**

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.

(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.

ESSAY SEVEN – Final Reflections
(3 pages, 25 points, due: 4/20)

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. As noted in the assignment for Essay #6 (Option 2), 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.