

# JEP REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

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*SOCI 150: Social Problems*  
*Professor Kaplan*  
*PA: Travis Glynn*  
*SPRING 2011*

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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.

Because you are participating in JEP through a USC “diversity course,” this set of questions focuses on helping you learn more about diversity through your experiences in the community.

## 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. **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 2-3 minutes to do this each week will save you time later 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 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 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 : “P reflection” on Diversity and JEP**, 10 points, due: 2/14)

The diversity requirement is designed to provide undergraduate students with the background knowledge and analytical skills necessary to understand and respect differences between groups of people. Students should understand the potential resources and conflicts arising from human differences on the contemporary American and international scene. Students will increasingly need to grapple with issues arising from different dimensions of human diversity such as age, disability, ethnicity, gender, language, race, religion, sexual orientation, and social class.

These dimensions and their social and cultural consequences will have important ramifications for students' personal, professional and intellectual lives, both for the time they are students and in later life. Students will gain exposure to analytical frameworks within which these issues are to be understood and addressed, including social, political, cultural, ethical and public policy analyses. It is the university's goal to prepare students through the study of human differences for responsible citizenship in an increasingly pluralistic and diverse society.

Source: <http://college.usc.edu/diversity-requirement/>

You are earning credit for JEP in a course that meets the Diversity Requirement at USC (see description above). Use this week's essay to reflect on what you think your JEP experience will be like vis à vis diversity. **That is, how do you think diversity will factor into your JEP assignment this semester? What do you expect to learn about diversity through your experiences in class and in the community, particularly in terms of what the USC Diversity Requirement intends to accomplish?**

**ESSAY TWO: Developing a Research Question**  
(1.5-2 pages, 15 points, due: 2/21)

Imagine that you have been assigned to write a research paper for your professor based on your JEP experiences. Based on what you have learned in class and from your observations in the community thus far, **develop a hypothetical research question that examines some aspect of diversity**. Your question should be tailored to the specific research method you will be engaging in this semester—i.e., participant-observer field research. In other words, your research question should take into account what you think you are likely to learn through your experiences at your JEP site. In addition, it should be a question you can imagine your professor assigning (tied to course content) *and* something that you find interesting, curious, upsetting, or otherwise engaging. **Write out your research question and provide some context or rationale for the question**. What about your experiences in the community suggest that this is an important question to answer? How might your coursework shed light on the issue? What additional information would you need in order to answer the question (e.g., data or statistics)? Use at least one example of an experience you have had in JEP that provides context for the research question and/or could provide useful data for your hypothetical research.

*Keep this research question in mind; we will return to later in the semester.*

\*\*\*\*\***One-on-One Chats: February 28-March 4**\*\*\*\*\*

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: Emotional Responses to Diversity**

*(1.5-2 pages, 15 points, due: 3/7)*

Experiencing novel and diverse environments sometimes cause us to feel stress, discomfort, or even fear. In this sense, situations that challenge our existing beliefs or understanding of the world can often be an emotional experience. These emotions may lead to a variety of reactions: reflection (e.g., why am I feeling anxious?), confrontation (e.g., challenging someone on his/her conflicting experience or view), complacency (e.g., hoping for the best, waiting for the negative emotional reaction to change), or avoidance (e.g., not returning to a site or avoiding individuals who tend to cause these feelings of uneasiness). Try to recall a similar experience where diverse individuals, environments, or discussions surrounding diversity elicited some sort of emotional response in your experiences with JEP. **Describe this experience: the context, the emotions experienced, the ways you experienced these emotions (e.g., physical reactions such as a tightening of your stomach or sweating). Then reflect on your reaction to these emotions and how this reaction may have encouraged or hindered learning.**

### **ESSAY FOUR: Responsible Citizenship**

*(2 pages, 20 points, due: 3/21)*

One of the goals of the USC Diversity Requirement is “to prepare students through the study of human differences for responsible citizenship in an increasingly pluralistic and diverse society.” Consider this goal in relation to your diversity course and your JEP assignment. **How do you think the “study of human differences” prepares students for “responsible citizenship,” and how is the latter defined?** What behaviors and skills are associated with responsible citizenship? What specific knowledge should a diversity course impart to college students? **How can a service-learning experience such as JEP contribute to these desired outcomes (if at all)?**

Keeping these goals in mind, think back over the past few weeks of your JEP assignment. **Can you recall any encounters you observed or experienced directly that relate to diversity in some way? What happened and how did the individuals respond?** How did you respond (as either a participant or an observer of the encounter)? Now that you're removed from the situation and have had time to think about this encounter, is there anything you have learned from your diversity class can help you better understand this encounter? (Think about the broad context of the encounter, histories, social and economic context, etc.) **Reflecting on this moment and thinking more about diversity, is there anything you would do differently or that you think the people involved should have done differently?** *If you can't recall an encounter that actually happened at your JEP site, imagine a scenario that in some way involves diversity that you think might occur frequently at your site and address the questions above.*

### **ESSAY FIVE: Research Findings**

*(2 pages, 20 points, due: 4/4)*

Return to the research question you developed for assignment #2. Based on what you have learned over the last few weeks, how would you revise the question to make it more relevant to your JEP experience? **Restate your research question, revising it to reflect any additional “evidence” you have collected through your experiences in the community.** Next, consider the readings you’ve been assigned in your diversity class. How do they supplement your research in the “field”? Alternatively, find another source—for example, a scholarly journal article, a set of data or statistics from a credible source, etc.—that addresses the same topic. (Ask your PA if you have any questions about what counts as a “credible” source.) **Select one particularly helpful source and briefly summarize the parts that are relevant to your research question.** That is, how does the article, set of statistics, etc. shed light on the problem underlying the research question? Be sure to properly cite any and all sources you draw from in your essay. **Finally, what are your hunches about the possible “answers” to your research question?** Are you able to draw any conclusions, based on your experiences in the community and the classroom? What additional information or research would you need in order to better understand the issue?

### **ESSAY SIX: Social Problems**

*(1.5-2 pages, 15 points, due: 4/11)*

In the first week of your course, the readings (Social Problems Chapters 1 and 2) discussed how you determine what a social problem is. **Based on your experience in SOCI 150 and in JEP, do you think there is a relationship between social problems and diversity?** Have you identified any social problems at your site? Why do you believe that the event or problem you witnessed is a social problem and not a problem specific to the site or neighborhood itself? **Describe the nature of this social problem and use clear examples from your site to explain what you mean. How do you think the problem is related to diversity (or not)?**

### **ESSAY SEVEN: Final Reflections on Diversity and JEP**

*(3 pages, 25 points, due: 4/20)*

*This final assignment has three interrelated parts. You need not separate your response into these same “parts”; the question is divided here to help clarify the tasks associated with each section. Instead, your response should address the core aspects of the entire assignment in a cohesive, three-page (750-word) essay.*

**Part One:** Return to your original essay (Essay One: “Preflection”) and re-read your list of expectations for JEP. **How do these early expectations correspond to what you actually learned through JEP this semester?** What surprised you about your experiences? If you have participated in JEP in the past, what was different about your experience this semester? **What, specifically, did you learn about diversity?**

**Part Two:** Re-read the entire USC Diversity Requirement, paying close attention to the desired outcomes of the requirement. (See <http://college.usc.edu/diversity-requirement/> or Essay #1, above). **If JEP were to “count” toward the diversity requirement (independently of the course you took), where would it be most successful? How would JEP fall short of reaching the stated goals? How did JEP complement the “diversity” content of your USC course (or did it)?**

**Part Three:** **Finally, how would you revise the Diversity Requirement, based on your experiences in JEP and in class, to better reflect the main learning outcomes of your service-learning assignment for your diversity course?** Be sure to thoroughly explain the reasoning behind your suggested revisions.