

JEP REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

SOCI 150: Social Problems
Professor Sternheimer
PA: Elena
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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:

- **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.
- **Take field notes.** Not only will this make writing your essays for JEP easier, it is a requirement for your term paper for SOCI 150. 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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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: Emotional Responses

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

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 at your site. **Describe this experience: the context, the emotions experienced, the ways you experienced these emotions (e.g., physical reactions, how you acted, how felt). Then reflect on your reaction to these emotions and how this reaction may have encouraged or hindered learning.**

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: Developing a Research Question / Art Proposal

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

For SOCI 150 you will be writing a term paper based on your CODA experience and for CODA you will be developing an art project. While working on your proposal for your art piece, it is also important to start thinking about your research question for SOCI 150. When putting together your proposal in the coming weeks, try to think about how the artistic process might inform your research project and vice versa—both your art work and your research project can address the same issue from different perspectives.

For this essay, take what you have learned in class and from your observations in the community thus far, **start to develop a research question for SOCI 150. Write out your draft research question and provide some context or rationale for the question.** (If you have already picked a topic, try to focus the question with this essay; if you have yet to pick a topic, feel free to work through a few different possibilities.) 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, statistics, further reading)? **How do you think the research process and the process of designing and creating your art piece can inform each other? What can the art piece address about the issue you are interested in that research piece cannot, and vice versa?**

Your CODA Proposal is due on Blackboard Tuesday, October 25th

Read the guidelines below and keep them in mind as you plan your work:

Your final assignment is to create either a musical or visual art piece inspired by your experience as a CODA volunteer. Think about your most meaningful experiences as a volunteer and what you have learned or gained as a result. Your piece can be a performance, a drawing, a slide show, a painting, a song, a series of photographs or whatever medium you decide best demonstrates your experience. Just be creative. All final projects will be performed or displayed at the end-of-semester showcase.

A project proposal is due to the JEP house on Tuesday, October 25th, approximately one month before the due date of the actual project and five weeks before the showcase. The proposal should make it clear what you are trying to communicate or share about your experience and how the media accomplishes that. If anything changes during your creative process (when you are painting, writing, etc.) you will include these changes in the final project analysis (see below).

ESSAY FOUR: CODA Proposal

(2 pages, 20 points, due: 10/25)

Your final assignment for CODA is to create either a musical or visual art piece inspired by your experience as a CODA volunteer. Think about your most meaningful experiences as a volunteer and what you have learned or gained as a result. Your piece can be a performance, a drawing, a slide show, a painting, a song, a series of photographs or whatever medium you decide best demonstrates your experience. Just be creative. All final projects will be performed or displayed at the end-of-semester showcase.

A project proposal is due to the JEP house on **Tuesday, October 25th**, approximately one month before the due date of the actual project and five weeks before the showcase. **The proposal should make it clear what you are trying to communicate or share about your experience and how the media accomplishes that. Also, explain your research question for SOCI 150 and how it address social inequality. What about your experience suggested that this was an important research question to answer? How do you think the artistic process and the research process can inform each other?**

If anything changes during your creative process (when you are painting, writing, etc.) you will include these changes in the final project analysis (see below).

BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION

10/31-11/4

As a CODA volunteer, you have the opportunity to share your talents with an “audience” of one sort or another. Yet because you work independently, you rarely have the opportunity to benefit from the experiences of other CODA volunteers. This forum is designed to counter the relative isolation of your volunteer experiences by providing an opportunity for you to share your insights and experiences with your peers.

Instructions: Log onto 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 “*Assignment #3.*” You may click on this thread to read and reply to the prompt. Or you may create a new thread (see below).

Discussion Prompt:

CODA was established to give non-performing arts majors a venue for artistic expression. **Share with your fellow students a little about your experiences as an artist and CODA volunteer.** What experiences did you have in the arts prior to coming to college? How have your experiences at USC contributed to (or detracted from) your identity as an artist? Why did you decide to become a CODA volunteer and what has your experience been like so far? **With your peers, discuss your perceptions of the USC climate vis á vis the arts and what the University could do to improve this climate.** If relevant, also discuss the role of the arts at your CODA site. How is artistic expression encouraged or discouraged by those at the site?

To review all of the postings, go back to the “Forum: JEP Discussion” page and click the box in the grey 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.

The Blackboard discussion will be available beginning Monday October 31, 2011. The last day to participate in the discussion is Friday November 4th at 11:59pm. To receive full credit for your participation in this discussion, you must post a minimum of one comment, question, suggestion, etc., in addition to your original posting that addresses the prompt.

ESSAY FIVE: Narrowing the Scope

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

Writing “memos” is an early step in the process of analyzing ethnographic data. It allows the researcher to step back from the field experience and to think about the emerging themes in an analytical and theoretical manner. The weekly Reflective Questions serve this same analytical purpose, but “memos” are less structured and allow you to pursue your own interests, hunches, and ideas. In preparation for your term paper, write a “memo” that addresses your experiences at your site.

Focusing on a very narrow and specific issue (even more narrow than your paper topic) and moving beyond a merely descriptive account, begin to consider various explanations for what is going on and why. **What are your sociological hunches about this particular issue?** Why does it seem significant? In your memo **write out a question that you would like to answer** (this can be part of your term paper research question or just something you are curious about). This is great time to figure out the “prior questions” for your topic. Prior questions are the questions you need to ask *before* you can answer the question you just wrote down. Think about what you need to know about the education system, the law, student's backgrounds, what you can learn the people you are working with, etc. **What are the “prior questions” for your question?**

ESSAY SIX: Thesis Statement

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

In Essay Three, you outlined a research question and then in Essay Five, you narrowed the scope of your paper and have by now hopefully honed in on a solid paper topic. This week, you will develop a preliminary thesis statement; a research statement or **question which you intend to answer using your weekly JEP observations and field notes, as well as any other relevant research required for SOCI 150.** The thesis statement is usually a single sentence somewhere in the first paragraph of your paper’s introduction that presents your argument to the reader. The rest of the paper, the body of the essay, gathers and organizes evidence that will persuade the

reader of the logic of your interpretation of the research data. **Write a thesis statement and a brief explanation on why and how you are going to argue the thesis in your paper using your JEP observations.**

Thesis statements are often a challenge to write—especially at this stage of research and writing. But doing the work now will help focus your research and writing, even if you end up revising the thesis statement later. Remember, a thesis statement should let your reader know 1) the topic you are going address; 2) what you are going to argue about that topic; and 3) how you are going to go about making your argument (a hint at what methods or evidence you will use).

ESSAY SEVEN: CODA Final Project

(2-3 paragraphs, 25 points, due: 11/22)

As noted above, your final project assignment is to create either a musical or visual art piece inspired by your experience as a CODA volunteer. Projects are to be turned in at the JEP about one week before the end-of-semester event (date TBA). **Give your piece a title and turn in (via Blackboard) a brief analysis (2-3 paragraphs) describing the idea behind your project and how it developed over the course of the semester. Use this brief analysis to focus your research question for SOCI 150—based on your experience creating the artistic piece for your CODA final project, what were you left wanted to know more about or explore in more detail?**

For all artwork please describe the medium you used and explain why you chose it. For performances, please include an outline of the performance including an estimate of how long it will last.

Final project turned in at the JEP House and analysis submitted via Blackboard by Tuesday, November 22nd. End-of-semester showcase date TBA.