

JEP REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

ALIVE
PA: Jana
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These JEP Reflective Questions are designed to help you reflect upon your experiences as a member of a mini-team so that you can make the most of your community teaching experiences. 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 regular basis. These JEP Reflective Questions 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.
- **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 with 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 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.
- **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: Assessing your Plan

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

Consider the seven-week plan that you will soon be developing with your mini-team. **How will you bring ALIVE's goal of increasing environmental awareness to the classroom in the next few weeks?** How are you going to put these themes together into a mini-course? That is, explain how each week will build on the last and explain how you think students will be able to learn the larger lessons about the environment that you want to develop with the mini-course. The most important themes are often the most difficult to address, so pick one major theme that you think will be particularly challenging to address over the coming weeks and explain **1) why you think it will be difficult; 2) why you think it is an important theme; and 3) what various strategies you will use over the course of the next few weeks to make this theme meaningful for your students.**

EIGHT-WEEK PLAN DUE

(due: 10/10-10/14)

See your PA agreement for details.

ESSAY THREE: The Team

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

Describe your impressions of your mini-course team. How well are you gelling as a team? What strengths do you think each member brings to the table? What weaknesses are you concerned about, if any? How do you think about your own role in the team? **That is, what strengths and weaknesses do you bring and what skills would you like to develop?**

ESSAY FOUR: From the Individual to the Structural

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

Teaching about environmental issues means confronting some serious structural problems and inequalities in the environment that are very difficult to change and can feel daunting to address – for instance, various water crises around the globe. There is a strong impulse to offer solutions to such problems and inequalities; however, there is often an equally strong impulse to offer solutions that focus on the individual, such as “green” campaigns that encourage “you” to save the environment through individual acts of conservation – when, for instance, in the case of water crisis, individual consumption is only a small part of the problem.

Take an example of an action designed to “help/save/conserve” the environment that has come up in your mini-course, explain the example in detail, and then explore the larger issues related the action: What are the underlying environmental issues? What ethical concerns frame the issue? What can individual acts accomplish in this case and what aspects of this issue might require different sorts of solutions? What might these solutions look like? How can individual conservation be linked to larger structural changes that would address this issue?

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: Environment Redevelopment

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

For this essay you will walk the area around your JEP site and prepare an informal environmental redevelopment recommendation for the area around your JEP site. Before going to your site this week take a look at the City of Chicago's “Green Alley Guide” for some inspiration as to the sort of transformations that are possible:

http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/cdot/Green_Alley_Handbook_2010.pdf

Walking and observing is a simple method that allows you to take the time to reflect on the landscape and people around you and to see things you would miss from a car, or even a bike. So, this week, walk (don't bike, take the bus or drive) to your JEP site and use walking as a method to research the neighborhood.* Document your walking with detail, describe the landscape in a manner that will allow your PA understand what you see. **Based on what you observe, what recommendations would you make to redevelop the environment in the area you walked?** Think broadly and imaginatively about reuse and redevelopment. And remember that many environment issues are not readily visible in landscape and have effects that cross neighborhood, regulatory jurisdiction and other boundaries. Take a look at these two fact sheets from USC's Program for Environment and Regional Equality for examples:

http://college.usc.edu/pere/documents/California_ClimateGap_Fact_Sheet_FINAL.pdf
http://college.usc.edu/pere/documents/mindingthegap_factsheet.pdf

**If for any reason you are unable to walk to your site, just take a walk around the block of your JEP site. As always, be safe, and use common sense.*

ESSAY SIX: Teaching Strategies

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

You are coming towards the end of your assignment at your site and now may be a good time to reflect on your team's work. **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 the progress of both your team and the students you are working with.** 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 one strategy, technique or lesson 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.

ESSAY SEVEN: Final Reflections

(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, how do you think service-learning and environmental education work together? What did you learn in the process—from the process of teaching, from your fellow team members, and from the students with whom you worked? Do any of the benefits above seem more or less likely to occur, based in your experience with JEP?**