

JEP REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Health For Life
PA: Kevin & Linda
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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 - “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: Developing your Mini Course

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

Now that you have met the students at your JEP site, **what health issues do you think are most important to address in your mini course?** How much do your students seem to know about health, nutrition, disease, sun safety, etc.? What topics have the students expressed an interest in learning about? How will you go about developing lesson plans on these topics? What are some of the activities you have been preparing for the students? Also explain how each week's lesson will build on the last. **In sum, what are your goals for 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 its important theme; and 3) what varying 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 strength and weaknesses do you bring and what skills would you like to develop?**

ESSAY FOUR: Neighborhood Health

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

Go to the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services and review the report on “Key Indicators of Health”: <http://lapublichealth.org/docs/keyindicators.pdf>. How does the local Metro Service Planning Area (SPA 6, which includes the area surrounding USC) compare to other regions of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County as a whole, in terms of the health of its residents? How would you describe the overall health of the children at your school site? **Have you observed any of the problems that are noted in the report? Drawing upon your experiences at the site, what do you consider to be the most significant health problem or risk for children at the school and why?**

Note: if you are working outside of the USC area, please review the information for your Service Planning Area. Here is a link to a map of the LA County SPAs: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/spa/spamap.htm>. In addition, this website is searchable by specific health criteria and geographic area: <http://www.lapublichealth.org/phcommon/public/hdi/index.cfm>.

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: Schools, Health Promotion and and Disease Prevention

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

Given that the vast majority of children spend six or more hours a day in a school, schools play an important role in public health efforts. Take a look at this report, which summarizes the health policies and practices of secondary schools in California, and compares them to equivalent efforts in other states: http://wwcdc.gov/healthyyouth/profiles/pdf/facts/ca_chronic_profiles.pdf.

In general, how does California compare to the rest of the country? In what areas is California more successful than the rest of the country, and where is it falling behind? Consider this list of policies in relation to your experiences at your JEP site. **Focusing on two or three specific areas, what evidence have you seen of the school’s efforts to (for example) promote healthy eating, teach physical education courses, discourage tobacco use, etc. What other efforts—not included on this list—have you observed at the site?**

ESSAY SIX: Teaching about Health

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

You are coming towards the end of your assignment at your site and so now is 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 the progress of both your team and the students you are working with. Think about the strategies you have used so far. Did any strategies end up working in surprising ways or 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)

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.