

Service-Learning Weekly Reflection Pages

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Sociology 3452: Education and Society

Due: October 15, November 12, December 10

Overview

The Service Learning reflection pages provide an opportunity to think about your service learning activities and help integrate ideas from class with the real-world experiences you have. I want you to sit down at your computer each week and write notes and reflections about your service learning experience. You may write informally (like a journal) if you wish, but your pages should be clear and understandable. All you need to write is a single page (double-spaced) each week, totaling about ten pages by the end of the semester. Of course, feel free to write more if you wish. I will collect and grade your notes periodically throughout the semester.

Topics

The goal of this assignment is reflection. You will have many experiences in your service learning time. In part, reflection involves the recounting of experiences and observations. However, reflection also implies thoughtful consideration. What did you infer from those experience and observations? How did they make you (or others) feel? How do they fit with (or depart from) the ideas and expectations you came with? How do they fit with (or depart from) ideas from class? What have you learned from those experiences? How have those experiences changed your thinking about schooling?

In any given week you may write about whatever you wish. I want you to have the flexibility to reflect on any experiences or issues that come up. You may describe your activities, the people you work with, a particularly good (or bad) interaction with a student or co-worker, problems or conflict in class, the social setting of your service learning site, student subcultures, the urban environment you are in, the goals or effectiveness of your service learning organization, etc. You may also be creative and choose some wholly innovative topic. Also, feel free to include additional materials to supplement your pages (e.g., photos, examples of student work [with permission!], etc).

But, over the course of the semester *I want you to spend some time systematically addressing ideas related to this class*. Consequently, I suggest some general issues that you might reflect upon at different times over the course of the semester. You need not follow this schedule exactly, but you should touch on these issues with some regularity.

Weeks 1 and 2 (Oct 1/3, 8/10): Notes Due October 15

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In these first weeks, spend some time focusing on how your organization fits into the larger educational system. What are your organizations goals and purposes? What problems in education are they trying to fix? How do they go about doing that? Also, what role will you play in this organization? What are your tasks and duties?

Weeks 3 to 6 (Oct 15/17 to Nov 5/7): Notes Due November 12

In these weeks, spend time focusing especially on issues of social inequality. Try to relate your experience to some of the following issues: 1. The functional versus conflict theories of education. 2. Differences between homes and family backgrounds of students. 3. Differences between schools (e.g., compared to schools you've experienced). 4. Tracking and ability grouping. 5. Various dimensions of inequality, such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, immigrant status/citizenship, etc. 6. Cultural and/or social capital.

Weeks 7 to 10 (Nov 12/14 to Dec 3/5): Notes Due December 10

In these weeks I want you to focus on the school reform. If your Service Learning site represents a particular reform strategy, try to describe it. Even if you are not actually working in a school, your organization is trying to change schooling in some way or provide assistance to those who were not served by the existing system. How does your organization hope to change schooling? What obstacles does it face? In your opinion, is it successful? What strategies do they use to overcome differences in family backgrounds? How would various educational reform strategies affect your organization, your students, or your school (e.g., high stakes testing, equalization of school funding, "back to basics" reforms, "de-tracking", school vouchers and school choice, etc)?

Evaluation

I will grade your reflection pages at regular intervals, as indicated above. My grading criteria is not particularly harsh. I mainly want to see evidence that you put in an earnest effort and gave things some thought.

Each time I collect papers I will assign a single grade to the full set. (That is, I'll grade weeks 3-6 together, rather than grading each week individually). I will assign grades of "check minus", "check", or "check plus". A grade of "check" indicates that you are doing work of the quality that I expect. "Check plus" indicates that you have done an outstanding job. "Check minus" indicates that your reflection notes are substantially below the quality standards that I expect from you. In order to earn your unit of service learning credit, you must have no more than *one* check minus grade.

Schofer, Evan. Service Learning Weekly Reflection Pages, Sociology 3452. Department of Sociology, University of Minnesota. 06 Jan 2003.