

"Positioning Essay – due 2/1/08

THE BROADER CONTEXT

Fieldworking tells us that successful fieldwriters regularly practice “positioning,” or discovering all of the factors that affect how they understand the cultures they are studying (Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater 131-134). Since fieldwriters are essentially training themselves to uncover the assumptions that they bring to their own work, “positioning” is a good way of avoiding ethnocentrism and checking in on how these assumptions frequently change (134). Because this is a course in English studies, we will approach positioning in a textual way.

THE ASSIGNMENT

Analyze your own motives for community involvement by triangulating your theoretical readings, your site-specific readings, and your assumptions and realizations so far. By *triangulate* I mean consider how these readings interact with one another and with your own understanding of community involvement (Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater 159). In other words, you are implicitly answering the question of “How do I understand community involvement?” and bringing specific passages from these texts into conversation with each other to help you do that. Please choose one of the following sets of readings to work with:

OPTION ONE

theoretical readings: Garbus on “Service-Learning 1902,” Hatcher on “Moral Dimensions of Dewey’s Philosophy”

site-specific readings: Quinn on “Youth Development Programs,” Dickens on “Facts”

OPTION TWO

theoretical readings: Garbus on “Service-Learning 1902,” Franklin on “Charity, Civic Engagement, and Social Action”

site-specific readings: Moses (either chapter)

OPTION THREE

theoretical readings: Garbus on “Service-Learning 1902,” Hatcher on “Moral Dimensions of Dewey’s Philosophy”

site-specific readings: Taylor on *Toxic Literacies*

OPTION FOUR

theoretical readings: Garbus on “Service-Learning 1902,” Franklin on “Charity, Civic Engagement, and Social Action”

site-specific readings: Bennholdt-Thomsen on “Subsistence Perspective”

EVALUATION CRITERIA

This assignment is worth **100 points**. Here are some specific criteria I will use to make my evaluation:

- **Scope & Depth** – Your analysis should demonstrate a knowledgeable (even sophisticated) use of the service-learning concepts we have been discussing and the texts we have been reading. If page length helps you get a sense of scope, then plan on about 3-4 pages, with a separate “Works Cited” page in MLA format.
- **Content & Argument** – Your goal is to come up with a purposeful claim about your motives for community involvement, based on how you triangulate the readings with your

assumptions and realizations so far. Your analysis should be guided by some kind of thesis statement that demonstrates the complexity of your claim. Your essay should bring specific passages into conversation with each other (rather than vaguely discuss how passages are alike or different).

- **Organization & Coherence** – How you organize your analysis should ultimately reflect the claim you want to make, so long as your main and supporting points stay “threaded” together. This includes a clear introduction and conclusion, useful transitions, and adequate development of each point you make. Think of your conclusion as a synthesis rather than a summary or restatement.
- **Evidence & Examples** – Above all, your thesis should be well developed with relevant and specific examples from the texts you read and from your own experience. Aim for textual accuracy, so as not to misrepresent an author or take their words out of context. You should adequately set up or introduce any quoted passages and explain any outside references that you make. Please use in-text citations when you paraphrase or quote directly from any text.
- **Language & Clarity** – Your analysis can be confident and still carry a balanced tone, with well-focused paragraphs and strong sentences. The way in which you draw on passages from the readings should make it clear who’s saying what throughout, and no major patterns of sentence- or paragraph-level error should get in the way of meaning.
- **Audience Awareness** – Write for an audience who is not in this class or related to your field/site in any way, and be sensitive to specific keywords you’ll have to explain, different value terms you’ll need to “unpack,” and any context details you’ll need to provide. Find a way to implicitly introduce your purpose for writing.
- **Formatting & Discourse Conventions** – Follow MLA citation style for both in-text citations and your “Works Cited” page (see “Appendix A” in our *Fieldworking* textbook or see the MLA Style links from our online course resources page). Compose a title that engages your reader and also reflects your argument. Your analysis should be typed, double-spaced with 1” margins, in 11 or 12 pt. Times New Roman. Please put your name, course number, assignment name (Positioning Paper), and due date in the top left corner of the first page.

Please feel free to ask me if any part of the assignment is unclear or if you’re stuck while working through an idea.