

Public Document Project

BROADER CONTEXT FOR THE ASSIGNMENT

Critics of service learning often say that when “town” and “gown” try to work together, what ends up happening is “gown” imposes its influential, dominant discourse onto the community it serves. We are going to show those critics that this need not be the case. While we are using our own classroom discourse to theorize about the experiences you have as fieldwriters and researchers, you are also participating as a member of a community and learning about the language, values, and issues that are relevant to the community you serve. This project allows you to demonstrate that in a structured way. Using your textual knowledge and visual literacy skills, your group will produce some kind of public document that will help your Community Partner enhance its public programming.

GUIDELINES AND EVALUATION CRITERIA

This project is worth **200 points**. *Here are the major components:*

Document (Genre Form): The actual document or genre form you create will vary according to your Community Partner’s need, but *keep it manageable*. In the past, student writers have created brochures, instructional material (e.g., a training guide or piece of curriculum), PowerPoint presentations that they actually delivered on behalf of the agency, policy statements, and mission statements. Whatever you create should effectively incorporate text and images, should reflect what you have been learning this semester about fieldwriting and research, and should allow you to demonstrate your individual interests and expertise. It should be more substantial than just a single-page text, but it need not be a 20-page document. It should also be something that you create specifically for this occasion and context. Finally, it should reflect that you have done some careful research, either to construct the content or to better understand the agency’s need for your document. Keep track of your sources using a “Works Cited” page. And use your Community Partner as a source of continued information gathering once you get started.

Group Proposal (1-2 pages): Your Community Partner should spend some time talking with you about the need for this document as well as some of the challenges that might come from distributing it. Once you have conferred with them and each other, your group will write a brief proposal in which you explain and justify the document you would like to create. The most helpful proposals are those that discuss the aim, objectives, major components, and audience(s) for the document, and include a tentative timeline of the steps that are needed to complete it. What critical problem, question, or need is your Community Partner trying to solve? Why will this genre form solve it and not another? How will it reach its intended audience in a rhetorically effective way? How will the Community Partner use it once it is completed? You’ll submit one copy of the proposal to your Community Partner and one copy to me.

Individual Reflection (1-2 pages): At the end of the project, I will ask each person to submit a brief reflection (for my eyes only) in which you discuss your role in the group, reflect on your most valuable experience, and describe how it went for you. As part of that reflection, I will ask you to consider what you learned as a researcher, writer and community agent this semester.

Showcase Presentation: We will have an in-class showcase, during which time you and your group will present the finished version of the Public Document project to your Community Partner and get their final approval. In addition to showing off the finished version of your project, I will ask your group to create a poster depicting your process of researching and constructing the document. The poster gives your audience a more visible representation of all of the work that you did. It also allows you to discuss the Public Document project in terms of key concepts you have learned this semester. Attendance at the showcase is required; please dress and conduct yourselves professionally for this event. Have fun with it!

Additional Guidelines:

Professional Rendering: Any work that is circulated to your Community Partner or created on their behalf must be of professional quality. This means intelligent, thoughtful prose free of major patterns of grammatical or linguistic error. If you are unsure of how to represent something in words, you should feel free to ask for their feedback on it. You should plan to spend time substantially revising and editing this document so that you and they can feel good about it when it is completed.

Group and Community Cooperation: I expect to see that you can engage cooperatively in group work. When you work with each other, you may designate tasks and divide up the labor, but you should not leave any member of your group hanging. Everyone in the group should shoulder equal weight. When you work with your Community Partner, expect some initial negotiation in terms of what document would best meet their needs. Be sure to listen as they talk to you about their needs and about who they think would ultimately benefit from this document. I highly recommend that you use your field notebook to keep track of ongoing reflections, especially when things go well or when you run into problems.

PROJECT TIMELINE

- weeks 7-8:** Contact group members. Designate a leader or coordinator to keep the group on schedule. Contact Community Partner to talk to them about agency needs, decide on a genre form for the project, and get any essential background information you need for the project. Have an onsite reflection session with your ACE and other group members.
- week 9:** Submit project proposal to your agency with a copy to Dr. Graban. Receive final approval from Community Partner regarding your project goals, aims, and genre form.
- weeks 10-14:** Schedule working time. Check in with your agency contact person as needed.
- week 12:** Send Dr. Graban a brief progress report via e-mail.
- 4/16/08:** Bring to class a completed draft of the project in electronic form or hard copy for in-class workshop. Bring any other materials to class that you can use to construct a showcase poster.
- 4/21/08:** Present final project and poster to Community Partners, ACEs, and other visitors in a classroom showcase. **Due: Final copy of the document, Works Cited page, revised proposal, individual reflections.**