

Experiential Learning

Faculty Name: Email	Rachel V. Smydra Smydra@oakland.edu
Course Name	English 200: Making Literary Connections
Type of Strategy	Off-campus Learning Activity
Type of Course	Undergraduate
Total Number of Students	20-25
Application/Modification Level	Medium
Purposes/Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitates critical thinking, reflection, and application of course materials. • Fulfills need for an organization and engages students to meet community needs. • Builds communities between students and community partners. • Prepares students to contribute as citizens in local communities.
<p><u>General Overview:</u> Community Engagement/Service Learning involves choosing a community partner to facilitate a class project. Any course can offer this type of experiential learning with careful planning and effective implementation. Creating a program with obtainable, focused goals and objectives for everyone involved helps create an enriching opportunity for students and participants to learn, interact, and reflect on course materials.</p> <p><u>English 200 Overview:</u> My project involved student-lead weekly book club sessions at Grace Centers of Hope in Pontiac, Michigan. My goals with this project were to have my students introduce literature to Grace Centers of Hope Program Residents and to offer them a vehicle to extend discussions to reflect on life choices. For OU students, my goals were to create a situation that offered them the opportunity for active learning and to evaluate what they know and think about literature, the homeless, and connections to their communities. My objectives on completion of the interactions were for OU students and Grace participants to walk away with a lifelong appreciation for literature as a vehicle for fueling discussions about aesthetic and critical thinking components. I also wanted students to leave class with a sense of community and their responsibilities to connecting with diverse groups of people.</p> <p>Students were required to lead one session and attend another at Grace Centers of Hope. After a general session overview, an OU group leader led a focused discussion by posing questions and fostering a discussion to allow group members to offer their own interpretations of short stories in addition to connections to life choices.</p>	

<p>In their post-experience reflections, many students produced publishable papers (OU Journal/Penn State Berks Undergraduate Journal of Service Learning and Community-Based Research) and will be meeting over the course of the next few months as a writing community to edit materials. Grace Center of Hope participants decided to continue the book club on their own, so OU students designed materials to organize and facilitate discussion. As a result of our project, two Grace students signed up for college courses.</p>																					
<p>Step-by-Step Instructions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Find a community partner (see additional comments) to design a program that fits your and your partner's needs. 2) Off-campus meetings should take the time of class-time so best to send students in groups. A Bear Bus is available to rent; this provides a great way to move a large group and to avoid problems with parking and safety issues. 3) Discuss activity and expectations thoroughly with partner and students prior to activities. Role-play and trouble-shoot. Prior to activities, it is best to have students sign a <i>Traveler Hold Harmless and Indemnity Agreement</i>. 4) Best for instructor to attend sections to monitor and facilitate sessions; creates a shared experience. 5) Evaluate and accept feedback from students, participants, and community partner liaison and adapt materials/interaction as necessary throughout the activity. 6) Sessions should end with a reflection project (paper, blog, poster, etc...) that allows students to make connections between materials and experience. 																				
<p>Additional Comments:</p>	<p>Logistical planning is essential to project success, so start planning early. Several partners in local communities are open to building relationships with OU. A brief list is below.</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Grace Centers for Hope</td><td>Above and Beyond</td></tr> <tr> <td>Pontiac Downtown Business Association</td><td>Circle K</td></tr> <tr> <td>Baldwin Center</td><td>Global Brigades</td></tr> <tr> <td>Haven</td><td>Mission: Kindness</td></tr> <tr> <td>Habitat for Humanity</td><td>Rebuilding Together</td></tr> <tr> <td>Beyond Basics</td><td>She's the First</td></tr> <tr> <td>Lighthouse of Oakland County</td><td>The Big Read</td></tr> <tr> <td>Children's Charity Coalition</td><td>American Red Cross</td></tr> <tr> <td>Rochester Neighborhood House</td><td>Salvation Army</td></tr> <tr> <td>FISH (Lake Orion/Oxford)</td><td></td></tr> </table>	Grace Centers for Hope	Above and Beyond	Pontiac Downtown Business Association	Circle K	Baldwin Center	Global Brigades	Haven	Mission: Kindness	Habitat for Humanity	Rebuilding Together	Beyond Basics	She's the First	Lighthouse of Oakland County	The Big Read	Children's Charity Coalition	American Red Cross	Rochester Neighborhood House	Salvation Army	FISH (Lake Orion/Oxford)	
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<p>Resources, citations, references for strategy</p>	<p>Michigan Campus Compact Service Learning Clearing House National Coalition for Academic Service Learning</p>																				