

Critical Reflection Journal

Entry 1. Letter to myself: Write a letter to yourself describing your expectations and assumptions. What are the people like at your site? What do you expect to learn from them? What do you see as the root of this social problem?

Entries 2-6. Critical reflections: Submit five reflective journal entries during the course of the semester. For each entry, choose one question to reflect on:

- Describe an observation of privilege or inequality at your site. How has this challenged your own perceptions, beliefs, and assumptions?
- Describe an observation or experience at the site that contradicted or reinforced class material.
- Identify a person, group or community that you have gotten to know at the site, who is significantly "other" for you. What are the challenges facing them that particularly got to you? What is one way in which you allowed yourself to be changed as a result of knowing these folks?
- Have you taken any risks at your service site (not physical risks, but stepping out of your comfort zone? What did you do and what were the results?
- How does your service work relate to your long-term goals (i.e., career, learning, and citizenship goals)? What is the relationship between the two areas? There may be a direct or indirect relationship—explain what you are experiencing.
- Describe an example of deviant behavior (or evidence from such behavior) that you notice either during or en route to your site. Do you believe your example is a common occurrence or a more rare phenomenon? What social factors might contribute to this deviant behavior?
- Would you categorize this organization as a social service or social change agency? If you were president of the United States, what kind of program would you devise to solve the problem?

Entry 7. Learning assessment and next steps: Begin by reviewing your initial "letter to myself" and intermediate journal entries. Identify patterns and shifts in your entries. Did you achieve your learning goals? How have your feelings about this project changed over time? What will you take away from this experience. how you have been influenced by studying this topic? How this influence might shape your future actions, if at all?

Entries will be graded on a 10-point scale:

- 0 = Student did not submit entry
- 5 = Student submitted entry, but did not provide critical reflection
- 10 = Student submitted a thoughtful, reflective entry

What is Critical Reflection?

Reflection is **critical** when it is carefully and intentionally designed to generate learning by applying theory to practice, examining causality, and raising questions.

- the process of analyzing, reconsidering, and questioning experiences within a broad context of issues and content knowledge
- the process of making meaning out of a purposeful combination of experiences and academic content
- challenging simplistic conclusions, comparing different perspectives, and asking "why" iteratively
- active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends

Four components of critical reflection:

- Continuous – occurs throughout the course, not just at the end
- Connected – builds bridges among content, personal reactions, and first hand experiences
- Challenging- avoids simplistic conclusions and views of complex issues or clinging to a single perspective without considering others, examines causality, raises deeper questions
- Contextualized- form and process guided by context (setting, critical incidents)

Critical reflection is not:

- A didactic retelling of what happened
- Only an emotional outlet
- A time for soap boxing
- A neat and tidy exercise that brings closure

"All of a Sudden...!"

Goals

1. Students will learn to develop and demonstrate a sociological perspective. The sociological perspective requires a move away from individualistic thinking and explanations and a move toward understanding how social (structural) factors influence individual behavior and outcomes. Said another way, students will locate explanations of behavior based on the context in which it occurs.
2. Students will learn to use their sociological perspectives to understand and interpret, in a sociological way, a situation, event, or "thing" they encounter at their academic service-learning field site.

Student Learning Outcome

Students will demonstrate the ability to use the sociological perspective to make sense of a specific activity, event, or experience.

Instructions

1. This assignment requires you to observe your academic service-learning experiences through a sociological lens.
2. You must use what you have learned about sociology to interpret your experiences and develop an analysis of what you observe.
3. Remember that sociology is everywhere!
4. Using the "stem" (a sentence starter) below, write an essay describing the experience you observed using the sociological perspective (including relevant course material) to make sense of your academic service learning experience. This phrase must be included at the beginning of your essay:

"All of a sudden, I found myself thinking sociologically when ..."

5. You will turn in a **first draft** of the assignment, which is required and will be graded. I will provide critical feedback for use in crafting the final draft.
6. **The final essay** (3-4 pages) you will write near the end of the semester. Remember, you must use course material to guide and interpret what you observe.
7. Remember to apply on at least two important concepts or theories and make these ideas come to life in your analysis. You must use course material to guide and interpret what you observe.

"All of a Sudden...!"

Grading Rubric

Requirement:	Points
Formats essay correctly. Lists name, course, section, assignment title, and date. Uses 10-12 pt font, 1 inch margins, and pages are numbered and stapled.	5
Student writes in complete sentences using proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling.	5
Demonstrates <i>knowledge</i> of two sociological concepts. Quotes and cites author, then explains the concept in his/her own words.	15
Demonstrates ability to <i>apply</i> two concepts, theories, data, or sociological ideas to understanding an everyday life event.	30
Relates this specific experience to larger patterns of interaction. Demonstrates ability to <i>analyze</i> everyday life event.	30
Critically reflects on the experience. Asks questions about the situation in an effort to gain sociological understanding of the situation. (Yes. I literally mean ask questions.)	10
Demonstrates ability to understand the experience or situation critically, despite the fact that the situation may have been experienced as an "inconvenient fact."	10
Alphabetically lists full references including author's name, year of publication, publication title, page number, and publishing firm.	10

Grading Breakdown:

First Draft:	35
Final Essay	<u>65</u>
	100%