

# MSUS 321 / 621 Journal of Community Engagement Experiences Assignment Guidelines

**Due at Date and Time Established by the Registrar for the MSUS 321/621 Final Exam**

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I expect your journal to be critical to learning from your community engagement experience. The number of entries will depend on the number of times you work at your community engagement placement, which should be about ten times, plus an initial entry prior to your first day of work and a final entry after you complete all of your work. Details of what to write about in each type of entry are explained below. **Date all entries.**

**You must write your first journal entry before your first day working at your community engagement placement and must address the following questions:**

1. What do you hope to accomplish in your community engagement placement this semester?
2. What do you expect to be most challenging for you? Are you nervous / anxious about anything? What most excites you about this placement?

**As soon as possible after each time you work at your community engagement placement, you should write a journal entry.** Your entries will probably average about a half-page each, but may be highly variable – from a single paragraph to multiple pages depending on what happens and what you are thinking about your experience. **At the top of each journal entry, record three things – the date you wrote the entry, the date you did the work this entry is about, and the number of hours you worked on that date.** Your journal entries should both describe 1) what you did, observed, heard, and felt during your community engagement work, including key interactions with your placement organization's personnel, other volunteers, the people your organization serves, etc., and 2) reflect on what sense you make of these experiences. What meaning do these experiences hold for you? How do your experiences relate to things we are studying in this class about structural inequality and multiple ways to organize to promote justice and social change? I encourage you to be introspective. What are you learning about your own privilege and power? Your own strengths and limitations? How are you growing and changing? Does the work you are doing matter? How and to whom?

**In addition, at the end of the semester, you must thoroughly answer all eight of the following sets of questions in a final journal entry. Note that adequately answering these questions will likely require that you interview key people in your organization. It will certainly require that you be honest and introspective. I expect it will take a minimum of four pages to write this final entry, but feel free to use whatever space you need.**

1. What is the central systemic justice issue / structural inequality that the organization in which you did your community engagement work exists to address? In what ways do you now better understand this issue than you did before working in the organization?
2. What are your organization's explicit goals in regards to the justice issue discussed in answer to the previous question? Describe your organization's strategy, structure, and key methods for pursuing those goals.
3. Describe the nature of the interaction with people in the community – including clients, donors, volunteers, public officials, and other key stakeholders – that pursuing your organization's goals requires. What have you learned about power relationships between the organization and its key constituents through the relationships that you formed and observed? To what extent and how are inequalities negotiated in a mutually beneficial way?
4. How has your organization and its primary stakeholders been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?
5. How effective and efficient is your organization in making the difference it seeks? What obstacles to reaching its goals does it face (both from within and from without)? What might help your organization to be more effective and/or efficient without undermining its core values?
6. How might one organize significantly differently to reach the same goals? Explain alternative ways you or others could organize to respond to the structural inequality / justice issue that your organization is trying to solve.
7. Look back at your first journal entry. How do you feel about what you wrote then?
  - a. Did you accomplish everything that you hoped to do in your community engagement placement? Explain.
  - b. What surprised you about the organization and your experience in it? What was different from what you expected?
  - c. What turned out to be most challenging for you? Most scary? Most exciting?
8. What have you learned about yourself – your capabilities, passions, privilege, insecurities, etc. – through your community engagement experience?

Feel free to be creative – to write poems, draw pictures, include photographs, newspaper articles, or other material relevant to your community engagement work. I encourage you to use a comfortable, conversational writing style. Let the words come without worrying about the technical aspects of writing. You will not be graded on that stuff in your journal as long as your journal is comprehensible. Word-process your journal. **You must submit your complete journal by uploading it on Moodle on the day and time set by the registrar as the final exam date for this class, but I reserve the right to ask you to submit interim journals at any time.**