

Discovering Community Final Reflection

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When I think of the “Discovering Community” course, I first look at the course goals and how I did achieving those goals.

Goals of Course:

1. **To bring together the methods of ethnographic field research and the techniques of Documentary production in order to facilitate the development of the projects that both draws knowledge from –and returns knowledge to – students’ home communities.**

I have two units already planned out for the fall semester. These two units bring the techniques of documentary production into the classroom. The first unit looks at my students’ place in their school community. The Audio Story that will be the final project of the unit will be used to educate future students and the current High School community. The second unit will look at our local history through the stories of immigrants. This project will be Audio and or Photographs made into a slide show with an audio track.

2. **To provide a rich, hands-on learning environment that nurtures creativity, modeling ways to structure a similar environment in participants’ own work with students.**

My time in the field and in the studio was well used. The time and effort put into the projects were significantly greater than I could of imagined, especially the time editing. I spent several hours making a minute and a half audio piece and I still didn’t finish it to my own satisfaction. Practicing interviewing skills was also vital. I have worked with Michelle Foreman for six years. I learned more about her in twenty minutes than all those years combined. Having the opportunity to practice it at Blue Ledge Farm was invaluable also. Again, the time we put into the actual interview was surprising.

3. **To present a range of possibilities for student research, offering guidelines for exploring both community history and the rich tapestry of community life in the present, as well as students documenting their own lives, interests, and daily experiences.**

This course has opened the doors to so many possibilities for my Social Studies, Health, and Human Sexuality classes. The students I work with at the Alternative Education do not do well with “the read the textbook, listen to the lecture, and do the class work” type of class. The use of digital equipment with place-based education can truly allow for an “alternative” educational experience. Getting my students out of the classroom and out in the community for hands-on experiential learning opportunities will enhance their school experience.

4. **To assist participants in developing individual curriculum plans and to offer guidance as they return to their classrooms or programs prepared to initiate local projects.**

This course has given me many ideas for many units and lessons. Placed based learning will definitely become a major component of my classes. I also have become re-committed to service learning. I have used service learning in other programs but I have moved away from this in recent years. I'm unsure why I have moved from it. What has always struck me as ironic is how service learning is recommended for both Gifted and Special Education students. I don't know why it is not used for all students but it would seem to make sense that all students would benefit from service learning.

Some other thoughts from the class:

Monday was a long day. If there is any other way to re-organize the first day that would be beneficial. Sitting for the whole day is very difficult for me.

The presenters were outstanding. Their enthusiasm was contagious. I wish I could of spent more time with each of them.

I originally thought I would be in the video section but after thinking about it, I ended up choosing the audio component. I thought of Vermont Public Radio and National Public Radio and all of the times I sat in my car listening to a story. I really enjoyed the audio technology and was pleased with my choice.

I think that the course could be more than a three credit course. Each strand could almost be a course and I would of liked to have been able to chose more than one strand. The three types of technology combined with ethnography, service learning, and place based learning made for a jam packed week. I look forward to using all the technologies with my students in my classes.

I am looking forward to using the supports and resources the course has offered me. We plan to visit the Folklife Center and have Gregg come out to our program to assist in teaching the interview skills.