

PCS 400
Senior Practicum
Fall 2011
Oral Communication Proficiency

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The Practicum for senior Public Policy and Community Service majors constitutes the final stages of a conversational journey that began for many of you four years ago, but which in many ways will express the person you have come to be throughout the course of your life. The Practicum consists of two components: an applied supervised experience in the field and a seminar designed to provide a framework in which students integrate their field experience with other components of their undergraduate education. Both components are arduous and demanding, requiring of you thoughtful, careful, deliberate work that asks of you honesty, vulnerability, and empathy for others. No other work you have done in association with your College education is as risky in as many ways as this work. Rather than viewing courses and field experiences as disparate sources of knowledge, the seminar aims to support students in developing a coherent view of their intellectual development and its expression as practice. As such, this semester's conversation will also focus on questions of identity, calling, politics, action, ethics, vocation, meaning, and the list could go on. Moreover, the field experience and seminar will lay the groundwork for the senior project and seminar scheduled to be completed during the spring semester.

The nature of, duties involved in, and learning goals of each student's field experience will be determined through conversations involving the student, professor, and site supervisor. After an understanding has been reached, a contract will be drawn up to be signed by all participating parties. The seminar will meet once a week, at a time to be determined after the students' schedules are finalized. The students will write regular journal entries related to their field experience and a final Practicum critique which evaluates their field experience and links it to the authors, theories, and texts covered in previous courses.

This course also satisfies the College's Oral Communications Proficiency. As such, students will be expected to make a public presentation along with a poster presentation to a meeting of the Appalachian Teaching Project (ATP), in December. This presentation will build on public policy questions and issues identified in the practicum sites, and make policy proposals to the program staff of the Appalachian Regional Commission, which funds the ATP. The presentation will account for 25 percent of the student's grade.

Learning Goals for the Course

1. Students will articulate a detailed analysis of the culture and dynamics of the agency/organization/place in which they are working. This analysis will draw on ideas, theories, concepts covered in all previous PPCS courses (place, sociological imagination, social capital, hegemony, ideology, class, mediating structures etc....)
2. Students will integrate their self-understanding with their academic work in journals and a final essay.
3. Students will learn and apply a process of peer evaluation and peer consultation, using their practicum placements and written work as the foundation for this process.
4. Students will engage in critical analysis of a range of public policies focused on asset-based development
5. Students will demonstrate a working knowledge of seven concepts central to the PPCS course of study: place, power (hegemony), public policy, justice, social change, social capital, sustainability
6. Students will assist communities in creative approaches to sustainability through asset development.
7. **Students will develop oral communication skills, through classroom discussion and public presentations.**
8. **Students will develop a comprehensive policy statement, and a public presentation regarding those current policies, and possible alternatives and approaches that might be more effective; students will make these public presentations to the program staff of the Appalachian Regional Commission.**

Activities that meet the goals/objectives:

1. Extensive writing: essays, journals (4-5 per week)
2. Full participation in class discussion at every class session
3. Background research on questions of policy identified in the service placement
4. Develop a public presentation bringing together the insights and ideas of the individual placements
5. Participation in the ATP meeting in December
6. Extensive discussion and writing focused on the interdisciplinary nature of service, justice, identity, personal development, society and culture, public policy, asset-based development, and sustainability in Appalachia
7. Perform 240-260 hours of service in an identified agency or organization, amounting to about 20 hours each week.

Course Requirements

Your grade will be based on the nature and quality of your work in regard to the course requirements discussed below.

Each student will perform 240-260 hours of service in the assigned practicum. This will also involve completion of a service site agreement and returning that according to the deadlines specified. (Please see below for further details.)

Based on this service, classroom discussion, and background research, students will produce a policy brief focused on the research conducted in the practicum. The policy brief will outline one or two new policy options that could address the issues identified and explored in the research. Please refer to the supplemental handout.

Students in the Practicum will travel to Washington, D.C. to make a presentation to the Appalachian Teaching Project, which the Appalachian Regional Commission sponsors. The subject and content of the presentation will be the work that students are undertaking in their practicum sites and the relationship of that work to sustainable community development and the educational process leading to sustainable community development. **The trip will take place December 1-4.**

Students have the option of attending the Appalachian Studies Conference in March 2012, to make a second presentation of the policy findings offered to the ARC.

Students are expected to make a presentation about their Practicum work at the PPCS Fall Gathering. The date for this gathering will be set later in the semester.

In preparation for our conversation this semester, students are asked to read a short story, "Il Colore Ritrovato," in preparation for the first class session. This story focuses on questions of calling, identity, purpose, and vocation. "Il Colore Ritrovato," was written by Mark Helprin and appears in his *The Pacific and Other Stories* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004).

Field Experience

Each student must complete a **minimum** of 240-260 hours of fieldwork over the course of the semester (these hours include travel time to and from the sites and meetings). **Students who do not complete this requirement in a satisfactory fashion will not pass the course.**

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all seminar sessions and all work sessions as well as designated Lyceum events. Absences will result in a lower grade.

Class Participation in the Seminar

Students are expected to come to each seminar session prepared to discuss their field experience during the previous week and any specific assignments made by the instructor. You will be graded on the following criteria:

- (a) the seriousness of your effort (i.e., whether or not you come to class prepared, and whether or not you are physically, emotionally, and intellectually present);
- (b) the nature of your interaction with other class members (i.e., whether you listen carefully and respectfully to what others say, your willingness to challenge others and defend your points of view, and whether you provide opportunity and encouragement for others to participate);
- (c) Your willingness to share and critically evaluate experiences from your field site
- (d) The quality of your overall effort.

Part of effective class participation also means that all cell phones and paging devices will be turned off. Students who are observed using cell phones, texting, utilizing other social networking programs or devices, or employing laptops during class will find their class participation grade significantly and adversely affected.

Practicum Critique

This critique constitutes an important part of your final practicum grade. The guidelines for writing the critique are at the end of this syllabus.



Grading

In addition to a satisfactory completion of the 240-260 hour requirement for the practicum, the final grade for the course will be determined based on the overall quality, willingness to take risks with difficult questions, and honesty of reflection in the Practicum Journal and if that improved and expanded over time. Additionally, weekly class participation, willingness to be collegial and supportive of others, and the depth and quality of the Practicum Critique Essay will all be factored into the final grade. It is difficult, if not impossible, to give exact percentages to these components, as they are merely indicators of the level of honesty and commitment a student is willing to give to this experience.

Distribution of Grades

Area of Evaluation	Points
Class Participation	100
Journals	100
Practicum Critique	100
ATP Presentation	100
Total Points	400

Total Points	Letter Grade	Percentage
400-372	A	100-93%
371-360	A-	92-90%
359-348	B+	89-87%
347-332	B	86-83%
331-320	B-	82-80%
319-308	C+	79-77%
307-292	C	76-73%
292-280	C-	72-70%
279-268	D+	69-67%
267-252	D	66-63%
251-240	D-	62-60%
239---	F	59%--

The Practicum Journal

Purpose of the Journal: The journal is meant as a tool for learning and reflection and as a basis for dialogue with the professor. For both purposes, it is crucial that you write in the journal regularly and turn it in when requested.

Content of the Journal: The journal should contain (at least) two kinds of writing. The first is descriptive. You should describe every occasion at your site, with dates, times, activities. Example:

Aug. 30

Today I was at my practicum site from 8:00 am to 11:30 am. I met with my supervisor for a half hour or so. She showed me how the filing system works. Then I went with Assistant Director on a tour of the building and she explained what goes on there.

You must **describe, in detail, your activities each day**. ***While the journal requires detail, it does not need to be exclusively a recitation of the events of the day. If it is only that, then the journal is incomplete and will be graded as such.***

Much more of your journal writing will be **reflective**. Good ways to reflect on your experience include asking yourself what you have learned; what are your reactions to what you have learned; does what you have learned fit with other things you have thought about or heard about in classes or elsewhere; are you learning things about yourself, about the community, about society. In reflecting, you may find yourself asking questions more than making summary statements. This is fine because questioning is a great way to learn. Use your journal writing to wonder and think things through as well as to record what is going on.

Below are some questions to help guide your reflections. Be sure to respond to the first two questions during the first week at your practicum site.

1. Your practicum this year differs considerably from those of previous years. What is your reaction to this? How do you feel about this? What worries do you have? What questions do you have? What will you do to ensure the experience is successful?
2. Describe, in detail, your practicum work...the site/s, the clients, the staff, volunteers, the location, and the general surroundings (what does it look like, smell like, sound like, feel like...).
3. Discuss your first experience at your practicum work. Be very specific: when did you go (date and time); how long were you there; who did you see, talk with; what did you do. Include any first reactions: did you feel useful, anxious, bored, etc., and do you think you will be able to learn anything from this experience.
4. What are your general duties and responsibilities? What do you do on a typical day at your placement? Describe, in detail, your activities each week.
5. How do people see you at your practicum site/s? As a staff member? a friend? a student?... What do you feel like when you are there? How has this changed over time?
6. What surprised you the most this week while at your practicum site/s? What moved you the most this week during your work?
7. 6. What was the best thing that happened to you at your site this week? Was it something someone said or did, something you said or did, a feeling, an insight, a goal accomplished? What did you do that made you feel proud? Why? What did you do that was fun or satisfying?
8. What did you like least about your practicum this week? Why? What happened that made you feel uncomfortable or unhappy?
9. In what ways, if any, are you finding your commitments to your practicum difficult to keep? What is helping you to follow through with these commitments despite the difficulties you encounter?
10. What new skill(s) did you learn this week? What did you do that helped you get along and work with others? What did you do that seemed to be effective or ineffective? What feeling or idea about yourself seemed especially strong this week?
11. Did you take (or avoid taking) some risk this week? What were things you wanted to say or do but didn't?
12. What did you discover about other people during your practicum work this week? Who was the most interesting person you met this week? Why? How did your feelings about any person change as a result of this week's activities?
13. What are some things you have in common with the people you worked with this week (your peers, the staff, the person you served)? How are you different?
14. Did you get an idea this week that would improve your own work? The program? The world?

15. What criticisms and compliments did you receive this week in regard to your practicum work and how did you respond?
16. How does what you have learned in your courses at E&H relate to and/or help you better understand various aspects of your practicum experience?
17. What do you perceive as the underlying cause(s) of the social problem(s) with which you are dealing at your practicum placement? Elaborate on each. What do you suggest as strategies, policies, and/or programs that could be implemented to try and lessen these problems? Who do you think should take the responsibility for formulating and implementing your suggestions?
18. In what ways are you growing and learning from your practicum?
19. Is it changing you in any way: your ideas, beliefs, habits, values, or goals?

Guidelines for Journals

1. Journals are to be kept in a folder for loose sheets of paper.
2. Date your journal entries. This is helpful if at a later date you want to return to a topic you have previously discussed, or if you want to make a comment about one of your entries.
3. Number your pages.
4. All entries must be typed.
5. Do not be reluctant to put your thoughts on paper. I am not interested in unnecessary verbiage, but I am interested in your insights, questions, comments, criticisms, and discoveries.
6. Periodically during the semester, read your journal entries and write a “summary” entry: see if particular themes have appeared in earlier entries; see if you are able to answer questions you raised earlier in the semester; see if you can arrive at any conclusions based on your previous entries.
7. You must respond in your journal to all my written comments.
8. The journal is a central part of the course and will constitute an important part of the course grade. You must write regularly and follow the guidelines listed above. Bring your journal to class. I will collect new journal entries at each seminar session. Failure to turn in completed and satisfactory entries each seminar session will result in a lower grade.
9. The following criteria will be used in grading journals.
 - (a) The seriousness of effort--whether you write regularly in the journal; how thorough your entries are; how well you follow the guidelines described above; and how willing you are to engage in dialogue with the instructor by responding thoughtfully and honestly to his comments on and responses to your entries.
 - (b) The quality of the effort--how well you reflect on your field experience using the questions provided above by the instructor; how well you ground all of your responses in what you have read in previous courses; originality and diversity of

the entries; honesty of the entries; willingness to take risks by tackling tough intellectual and personal issues; willingness to let the “self” speak; and willingness to challenge the instructor when you disagree with his comments.

(c) Improvement over time--the degree to which your entries improve as the semester progresses.



PPCS 400: Guidelines for Writing the Practicum Critique

Due: TBD

This critique constitutes an important part of your final practicum grade. It should be a coherent essay, with strong introductory and concluding paragraphs. Grammatical and punctuation errors, misspelled words, and the failure to use inclusive language will result in a lower grade. The essay should be typed (double-spaced) and should be no longer than 20 pages in length. Late papers will not be accepted.

You are not limited to, but must address, the following points.

What were your initial reactions to your practicum assignment? In what ways did the news of the practicum challenge or scare you? Why? Why not?

What were your initial expectations as you began your practicum?

How, in what ways, did the practicum interrelate or challenge your sense of who you are?

What relationship can you discern between your practicum and what you said about who you are in your essay last spring?

Describe the work of the practicum. Giving reference to your journal entries, construct a chronological, thematic, **or** topical history of what you did. Who was your direct supervisor, and what was the nature of your relationship with him/her? Who else did you work with on a day-to-day basis? What was your relationship to them? What were your responsibilities, and how did they contribute to the organization? Did your responsibilities change over time? If so, how and why? What independent projects did you participate in? Did you attend meetings, hearings, or conferences that increased your knowledge of the organization? What did you learn of the ethos of the agency? Were there aspects of teamwork or conflicts that you found significant? What were the major obstacles you faced, and what steps did you take to try and overcome them? What were your major contributions to the work of the organization? Did you feel as though your contributions were useful and worthwhile; were they acknowledged, and if so, by whom? Were there things you wanted to accomplish, but were unable to (what and why)? Do you have any documents, reports, announcements, photographs, tapes, or other texts (print, visual, sound, or electronic media) that you could compile in a folder as a portfolio of your practicum?

What do you perceive as the underlying cause(s) of the social problems with which you were dealing in your practicum? (Use here C. Wright Mills' Sociological Imagination)

Discuss your policy brief and the report to the Appalachian Teaching Project. What do you suggest as strategies, policies, and/or programs that should be implemented to address these problems? Who do you think should take responsibility for formulating and implementing your suggestions? You might consider discussing this part of the question with your site supervisor and others at your work site and comparing your ideas/answers to theirs. Was the presentation effective? Why? Why not?

How does your practicum reflect or build upon texts or theories that you have encountered as part of your PPCS work? Give attention here to such concepts and ideas as place, social capital, hegemony, ideology. How did you see these issues involved in your service and/or your practicum site? In what ways have these same issues helped to clarify your thinking and experience in the practicum? How did you view the issues related to your site as you began the practicum? Did your views change during the course of your work? How, why? What did your practical experience contribute to your knowledge base? Be as specific as possible: discuss authors, texts, or theories that are relevant.

Did you find your personal values, beliefs, or needs challenged or supported by your practicum? How, why?

What new skills did you learn as a result of your work? What skills did you discover that you still need to learn or develop further?

What risks did you take throughout the practicum? What risks did you avoid taking? Why?

If you had it to do all over again, would you choose for yourself the same practicum as was assigned? Explain your answer. Would you take different courses, choose a different focus area? What adjustments would you make to the work environment? Do you wish you had learned something different? Formed different types of relationships? If you were to be the supervisor for a student in a PPCS practicum, based on your own experience, how would you structure the opportunity?

Does your practicum lead you to research the topic or continue performing similar activities? How or why/why not? What have you learned about yourself, about the field you worked in, or about your colleagues that makes you want to continue or look elsewhere? Could you build a fellowship opportunity, a job search, or a graduate research project from your work?

Self Evaluation (To be included as a separate sheet with your Practicum Critique)

Evaluate your own work on all aspects of this project. Give attention not only to the quality of your service work per se, but also to your interaction with the staff and clients you worked with. Based on your work at the practicum site, your journal entries, your policy brief, the quality of your class participation, and the quality of the practicum essay, what grade do you deserve on this practicum? Why?

