

General Criteria for Evaluating Service-Learning Reflections

Purpose:

From time to time, you will be asked to compose a reflection. The primary purpose of the reflections is to encourage you to read the texts and/or your service experience more deeply. Your entries should be more controlled than freewrites, but they are not “mini essays.” For example, you do not always need to come to a conclusion in your reflection; you may simply be left with a question. The entries are designed to provide an opportunity for you to speculate freely, and possibly playfully, without having to feel sure of your outcome. A successful entry might explore a question or topic by considering a relevant example or by working through an analogy. There are numerous possibilities you may explore as long as your journal indicates real intellectual engagement.

Your reflections will be evaluated on three criteria: commitment, ambition, and engagement. Style is a consideration only to the extent that it influences your ability to communicate your ideas clearly. The focus is your ability to engage in critical thinking.

A journals

Commitment: The writer turns in entry on time. Entries may vary in length, but an “A” entry goes on long enough to reflect and accommodate extended thought.

Ambition: Writer considers issues or poses questions that engage the writer, although the writer may not have the answers to these queries. The writer is willing to speculate and try to make connections between this course and his or her experience. The writer is not afraid to address complex ideas.

Engagement: The writer is clearly using the reflections to “push” his or her understanding of the experience and of the course material in general.

B journals

Commitment: The reflections often demonstrate and accommodate extended thought, but at times they seem merely to summarize or, in an unengaged way, to comment on the topic.

Ambition: Reflections often try to speculate about issues and questions. But the writer discusses conclusions, summarizes, and/or responds in an unfocused way to the topic. The writer is also less comfortable with tension, dissonance, and paradox and tries to “iron out” complexity.

Engagement: The writer rarely “pushes” his or her understanding of the experience and of the course material in general. Reflection may be somewhat formulaic or perfunctory.

C journals

Commitment: The writer may not turn the work in on time.

Ambition: The reflection seems cursory, the result of coercion rather than interest. There is little effort to speculate or to reach for more than obvious conclusions.

Engagement: The writer does not attempt to deepen, much less “push,” his or her understanding of the text or question in particular and of the course material in general.

*Much of the above content is from an assignment by Lisa Ede