

ENGL 121D: Composition Social Issues (Language, Literacy, and Identity)

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Overview

This 121 section is for multilingual students, and thus I have chosen the theme to be “language, literacy and identity.” The idea is for students 1) to engage in metacognitive reflection about the way they see their language capacities as resources and 2) through service learning, to learn about how the issues of identity—individual, linguistic, cultural, social, political—are inherently intertwined with achieving success in literacy. For this purpose, the ideal community partners would be organizations that promote literacy education such as after-school educational programs for elementary, middle and high school students, support programs for adult learners, and ESL support for refugees and immigrants. Through course readings and service learning, we will explore the topics of language diversity and issues of importance to multilingual populations especially in the current political climate in the U.S. and elsewhere in the world.

Role of Service-Learning in the Course

Readings in the course will help students think carefully about what “service” and “learning” mean in service learning contexts, ethics and power dynamics in doing community engagement, and how writing has been used as a tool for social change. In doing service within the organization, students will examine their dual roles as observer and participant, and learn about the organization and communication skills necessary for service from the organization’s staff members. They will develop research skills through interactions with people from the organizations and learn about group interviewing, on-site observation, and how to analyze texts and artifacts that the organization uses such as brochures and tutoring/teaching lesson plans.

Ideally, 3-5 students would work for an organization, and 5-6 organizations would be available for students to choose from. The community partners can feel free to use any of the artifacts that students will write and adapt them to be used for the organization. Through the service learning partnership, students will learn rhetorical strategies for audience awareness and how to make arguments both within academic and non-academic community contexts.

Assignments Related to Service-Learning

Students will abide by the UW’s policies on public writing and will have to attain written permission from the organization to be able to publish their writings from this course online or in print. There will be two assignment sequences with two short assignments (2-3 pages each) and a major paper (5-7 pages) in each sequence. One sequence will focus on writing for academic audiences and literacy resources appropriate for this context. The other sequence will focus on writing for the community partner organization by integrating ideas from the course readings and students’ experiences in service learning. Examples of assignments include academic research paper, multimodal genre for community partner and reflection paper on students’ language identity.

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