

Civic Engagement Project
Phil 2994: Topics: Socially Engaged Philosophy, Fall 2013

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Cody and I are here to help you accomplish your goals: we will meet throughout the semester to help you problem-solve and stay on track.

Project Description

Your civic engagement project is a way for you to make a difference in your community. Working on the project will help you investigate the relationship between philosophy and social issues. You have a wide range of options: You may choose to work in groups or alone, on campus or in the surrounding community, to engage in service or activism, to start a new project or deepen a current involvement.

Project Objectives:

The aim of this project is to help you:

- Make a difference.
- Engage the public in an issue that is important to you.
- Learn some ways in which the philosophical theories learned in class relate to your own life and the lives of other people.
- Learn some ways in which your own life and the lives of other people raise questions about the philosophical theories learned in class.
- Learn more about the topic you are addressing, and be in a better position to have and defend your own views on this topic.
- Take a project from start to finish: Define, plan, and carry out social action and activities.
- Develop civic engagement and leadership skills.
- Practice your organizational skills and ability to delegate tasks.
- Attain experience and skills to act on social problems.

Pick a project that:

- You are passionate about!!
- Shows that you can take initiative (rather than just following someone else)
- Shows that you have (or are working on) organizational skills
- Allows you to use campus and/or community resources to accomplish your goals
- Allows you to make a measurable/visible difference
- Interests and challenges you.
- You can complete in the time available.

Basic Alternatives:

1. Devise your own activist/justice or service project, working alone or with another student in class.

Activism/justice—what needs changing?

- Promotion
- Politics: Get involved in local politics—attend town meetings, assist a legislator
- Protest

Service—what needs doing?

- Poverty
- Racism
- Health
- Environment

2. Volunteer or intern with a local organization

The project cannot consist of passive volunteer work alone. If you volunteer, you must also find a way to share or communicate your experience, and/or take significant initiative in shaping your volunteer contribution.

That said, two ways to volunteer are to:

A. Deepen your commitment to an activist or social justice group you are already working with.

B. Work with one of the following groups interested in working with Phil 2994 students:

Alley Shoppe
CommonBond Communities
Dakota County Jail
The Family Place
Jane Addams School for Democracy
Minnesota Internship Center
Open Arms of Minnesota
Southside Family Charter
St. Stephen's Human Services
Youth Farm in Frogtown
Sustainable Ely

Please see "Partners 2013" document for more details about each of these community partners and their needs.

CHOOSE TO VOLUNTEER ONLY IF YOU ARE FULLY COMMITTED. Fully committed volunteers are a great asset to the organizations they serve! But lack of commitment (missing sessions, not completing tasks, etc.) causes problems for the organization and may limit opportunities for future St. Catherine University students.

Time Commitment—All Projects

This project is worth 1.33 credits out of the 4 credits you get for Phil 2994. St. Kate's says that you are expected to spend an average of 2 hours a week outside of class per credit, so you'll be spending about 27 hours this semester actually doing the project, about 3 hrs documenting your activities (taking photos or videos, completing your timetable, gathering documents), problem solving, etc., and another 10 hours producing your e-portfolio. When you work in groups, each of you will need to create a separate e-portfolio (and do your own written work), and each of you will need to put in about 27 hours on the project itself. Make sure you pick something you are passionate about, or it will be very hard for you to dedicate the necessary amount of time to your project!

Timeline

Sept 5: First day of class

Sept 5-16: Choose project. Meet with Hawthorne or Flaherty as necessary to consider ideas, work out details.

Sept 17: Draft proposal due. No class. Meet with Hawthorne to get OK to proceed on project or work out revisions.

Sept 19: Final proposal due.

Sept. 20: Final day to get OK to start project!

Sept 23-Dec 6: 10+ full weeks on project (through Dec 5). Check in as needed with Hawthorne or Flaherty if problems arise.

Oct 15: Required meeting with Flaherty: Project check-in

Oct 31: In-class instructions on creating e-portfolios.

Nov 1-Dec 6: Flaherty available for e-portfolio help: sign-up required.

Nov 21: Required meeting with Flaherty: Project wrap-up

Dec 9: Final reflection and e-portfolio due.

Dec 10-12: Presentation of projects, e-portfolios.

Project Requirements and Grading

The project will constitute 100 points: 1/3 of your grade for the class. The 100 points will be broken into the following components:

- Oct 15 check-in with Flaherty: 5
- Nov 21 check-in with Flaherty: 5

- Presentation: 20
- E-Portfolio: 40
 - Required elements present
 - Does the e-portfolio tell the story?
 - Appearance, organization, clarity
 - Creativity, interest

Extra credit for including a 1-minute video showcasing your project and its results: 10 points

- Overall project (level of difficulty, work involved, organizational skills, seeking help when you are stuck, type and quality of presentation, etc.): 30 points

Required elements of e-portfolio:

Each portfolio must include the following elements. But how you organize and present the elements is up to you: Be creative!

1. Introduction. Explain your project in an interesting way. Let people know right away why it is important.

2. Proposal. This is your original proposal, due Sept 19. Your proposal should carefully explain:

- A. What your project is. Are you volunteering with an existing group, or devising your own project?
- B. Your goal. What are you trying to achieve? Why is your goal important?
- C. How the project will help you achieve the project objectives.
- D. Your detailed plans for accomplishing your goals. Who will you work with? Where? What will you do? Be specific about what you will do each week. Set goals that challenge you, but that are also doable. (You will likely need to change some aspects of your project/goals as you go along. This is fine as long as long as you are making good efforts to achieve worthy goals.)

3) Documentation, telling the story. Documentation helps you complete your project effectively and is a great skill to develop for future work/school assignments. Meeting with Flaherty will help you keep your documentation up to date throughout the semester. Your documentation should tell whoever sees it what you did, how you did it, and why it was important.

Documentation *must include*: a timetable: what you have done (be specific about the task you worked on), the date, how long it took, and a weekly total. For example:

<i>Date</i>	<i>What I did</i>	<i>Time spent</i>
Sept 23	Met with land stewardship organization mentor	30 min.
Sept 27	Researched ownership of tract 1	1 hr
Sept 30	Researched ownership of tract 2; prepared report on two tracts for organization	2 hrs
...	<i>Etc.</i>	
Total		XXX

You will also need some of the following, specifics depending on the project:

- a) Copies of materials you created (lesson plans, reports, correspondence, notes from meetings, etc.).
- b) Photos, videos, sound recordings.
- c) Feedback: Letters or notes from other people about your work
- d) Research that explains why your project was important, useful, along with narrative explaining the connections.
- e) Reflections or papers that are well connected to your project.
- f) 1-minute video showcasing your project and its results (extra credit!)
- g) Etc.—creativity welcome!

Completeness and good presentation of the documentation are very important to the portfolio grade!

4) **Final reflection.** The final piece of your Portfolio is a report that should be titled, “What My Project Accomplished.” Include all the following in your report:

First, in two or three sentences, *summarize* what your project was, how much time you spent, and what you accomplished. Here’s an example for you to follow:

I spent about 40 hours working with middle school students to do an energy audit of their school. The students found leaky windows and broken thermometers. We found out that fixing these would save the school \$30,000 over 5 years.*

Second, *reflect* on your experience with your civic engagement project, answering the following questions (not necessarily in this order):

- Review the project objectives (see above). Which objectives did you reach or make progress toward? Which did you not reach or make progress toward? Carefully explain your answers.
- Did your project accomplish what you hoped for? Explain.
- What would you do differently next time?
- What would you recommend to others if they wanted to continue your project?
- Should Hawthorne assign civic engagement projects again?