

Phil 2100: Critical Thinking
Fall 2013
Drafts: 3x 20= 60 points
Final: 5x40= 200 points

Problem-Solving Project

Completed Project Due: Dec. 11, 2013

Project Description

This project is an investigation of the relationship between applied critical thinking and issues affecting the community in which we live. First, you need to identify a problem in your community, family, city, or on campus. Once you have selected a problem you feel passionate about, you will work to creatively find and implement a solution to this problem. Your solution to the problem must involve the public in some way. In other words, you must work to solve a problem that affects others besides just yourself.

You will choose this project in consultation me. You will write a draft of the introduction for this project. At that time, I will let you know if your project is appropriate for our class. (You may certainly contact me earlier with ideas!) Don't overestimate how much work you can get done, but try to pick something interesting and challenging. And remember that I am here to help you accomplish your goals.

Pick a problem that:

- you would like to solve because it affects you and those around you
- you can work on during the time this class is in session
- shows that you can take initiative
- shows that you have (or are working on your) organizational skills
- allows you to **get something done, to make a difference. This is NOT a research project.**

Time

This project is worth a large portion of your grade. I expect you to be working on it throughout the semester. You should expect to work about 2 hours each week on this project (about 15 hours total). You will need to pick a problem that you really want to solve, or this project will be very difficult for you.

Project Objectives

- Develop civic engagement and leadership skills.
- Take a project from start to finish: defining, planning, and carrying out social action and activities. Attain experience and skills to act on social problems.
- Learn more about the topic you are addressing, and be in a better position to have and defend your own views on this topic.
- Think about the relevance of the critical thinking theories learned in class to your own life.
- Use creative and critical thinking skills to solve a problem and make a difference.
- Engage the public in an issue that is important to you.

Ideas for Projects

Students have done a variety of things for projects. The most important thing is that you do something you feel passionate about. This is an opportunity for you to solve a real problem and do something to improve your life or the lives of those around you. Here are some successful past projects:

- Build a trailer for aluminum can recycling at a church.
- Plan a fun activity to meet neighbors and build community (for example, a Dodge ball tournament, Halloween party, community garden)

- Work with neighbors to remove invasive species of plants in your neighborhood.

- Work to end hunger problems by planning a party or event to raise money for a cause you want to support. (For example, plan a pancake breakfast and charge friends \$3 each. You could donate the money raised to Famine relief for Somalia).
- Plan a neighborhood, school, or community coat and mitten drive.
- Work with your community in the US and your home country to solve a problem there. For example, students have worked in flood relief and building libraries in Liberia or building playgrounds in Somalia.
- Go Green: set up a carpool to work, start a bike group, or develop systems within your own house (or workplace) to live (or work) in a more environmentally sound way. Teach others to do this too!
- Develop ways to connect with relatives around the country despite busy lives.
- Donate electrical work at a local rifle range as a way to volunteer and meet new people.
- Find alternative places for kids in apartment building to play so they don't play in the parking lot.
- Create a women's walking group as a way to make friends and exercise.
- Start an activity group at a local nursing home as a way to help residents be more active and engaged with others.

Project Portfolio

The main purpose of the portfolio is to help you document what your problem is, what steps you took to solve it, and apply our coursework to your project. Each item in the portfolio should be about 2, double spaced page (12 point font, 1 inch margins). Your final portfolio will include all of the following pieces and be turned in all together on Dec. 11th in this order:

➤ **Title and Your Name**

➤ **Introduction**

Draft due date: 9/25

Give a description of the problem:

- What is the problem? Why is it a problem? Be sure to explain the problem clearly so that I understand what the problem actually is.
- How does this problem affect your life? Here, think about why you might consider this a problem. Does it make your life harder? In what ways? Try to be specific.
- Do other people have this problem too? How does this problem affect other people? Here, you need to relate your problem to the larger community in which you live. Think about how *your* problem might be a problem for others too.
- Is this problem important? Would solving this problem make lives better? How? Remember, you should not have a particular solution in mind just yet. Try to focus on the problem at hand.
- Is there any background information that would be helpful to understanding your problem?

➤ **Creative Thinking and Analogies (from Workbook Ch 3)**

Draft due date: 10/9

- Document how you used one of the creative thinking tools (exotic association, ask around; compare and contrast; exaggeration; the intermediate impossible; mix and match; lateral thinking; problem as an opportunity; think preventively) to think of ideas to solve your problem. Be sure to define the creative thinking tool and explain how it helps unleash creativity.
- Include a sketch of ideas you came up with when you used these creative thinking techniques. For example, you could include a sketch of your ideas in an exotic association.
- What is your problem like? Write an argument from analogy. To do this, compare your problem to another thing and explain why these two things are similar. Be sure to define what an analogy is.
- Is using an analogy helpful? Why or why not? When are arguments from analogy helpful?

- **Research** (Workbook Ch 4 [Sources], Workbook Ch 5 [Causes],) Draft due date: 11/6
- Research what may have caused your problem. There might be a number of possible causes of your problem. How do you know this is the cause? Remember, the most obvious cause might not be the *real* cause of the problem.
 - Here, you will begin to think about how you might solve your problem. You should research what other people have done to solve problems like yours. What do other people say? What did other people do to solve their problems? You need to include citations about sources and claims other people make about this problem. (This means that you must do research on this problem rather than just asking friends.)
 - Analyze how the information you find is specifically related to your own problem. How will your solution differ or be similar to the research you find? Will your solution be different because you have less time or resources?
 - You may use online resources like websites or blogs, but you must be careful. Please review what we have learned about online resources in Workbook Ch 4.
 - Include citations of your research. You can choose any style of citation—but you must have them included for full points.
- **Solution and Anticipate Objections:**
- What did you do to solve your problem? What steps did you take? Summarize your project in a few sentences.
 - Then, use bullet points to list all the steps you took. Be sure to explain what each step entailed. For example, don't just list "asked my friends to help" as one of your actions. Explain how you contacted your friends, who specifically you asked, and who ended up helping. Give details.
 - Remember that many projects run into "dead ends", despite lots of hard work. Explain why or why not something you tried worked or didn't turn out as you had planned.
 - Be sure I understand everything you have done. Show me that you worked hard on your project. **I should be able to tell from looking at your list how you spent 15 hours working on this project.**
 - Imagine an objection someone might have to your solution. State this objection clearly. For example, does your solution really solve the problem? Does your solution help just you or your community as well? Then, write what would you say in response to this possible objection. Why do you think your solution worked or didn't work? Considering what you learned, would you propose a better solution now?
- **Accomplishments**
- Reflect on your experience with your civic engagement project, answering the following questions (not necessarily in this order):
 - Review the project objectives (see below). 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?
 - How did you engage the public?
 - Should I assign civic engagement projects again?
 - Please be honest in your assessment and your answers.
- **Extra Credit (pick one)**

- Create a 1 minute video explaining/showing what you did for your project. Upload it to the discussion board. 15 points
- OR Upload photos (2-5) of your project showing what you did. 10 points

Important Details:

- Each section should be at least 1-2 double spaced pages (12 point font).
- Draft due dates:
 - Draft of Introduction: Due 9/25
 - Draft of Creative Thinking and Analogies: Due 10/9
 - Draft of Research: Due 11/6
- Each draft is worth 20 points.
- After you turn in a draft, I expect you to revise that section based on the feedback I give you. The final Civic Engagement Project is due Dec 11th. It will include the revised drafts (1.Introduction, 2. Creative Thinking and Analogies, 3.Research,) as well as the last two sections mentioned here: 4. Solution and Anticipate Objections and 5. Accomplishments. You will create one document with the five parts of the project labeled and submit it to the Dropbox on D2L by Dec. 11th at 11:59pm.
- The final versions of the five parts of the project will be worth 40 points each for a total of 200 points.

Tips for Good Writing

- Proofread and edit your papers. In addition to spellchecking your writing, ask a trusted friend to see if your writing makes sense. Or better yet, visit the Learning Center on campus for help.
- Find your voice. Don't try to write in a fancy way using big or complicated words. Use your "natural" voice. (But be careful **not** to write too casually using texting abbreviations!!)
- Be honest. If something you tried didn't work, say so. You will not be graded on your "success" but rather on your writing and your effort.
- If you need help writing, get it. You know you have a big project due at the end of the semester. You also have chances to draft parts of your paper. Don't leave this to the last minute. Turn in quality work. If you need help to do this, plan ahead and give yourself plenty of time to visit the LRC or Writing Center.

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| <p>Learning Resource Center Brooklyn Park Campus Room G241</p> <p>Monday-Thursday 8am - 6pm Friday 8am - 4:30pm 763-488-2451</p> | <p>Learning Resource Center Eden Prairie Campus Room E150</p> <p>Monday-Thursday 8:00am - 5pm 952-995-1548</p> |
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Problem Solving Project Portfolio Grading Sheet

Title and Author (no points)

| | Possible | Earned |
|--|----------|--------|
| 1. Introduction | | |
| a. Description of Problem | 8 | _____ |
| b. How does problem affect your life? | 8 | _____ |
| c. Do other people have this problem? | 8 | _____ |
| d. Importance and/or Background information | 8 | _____ |
| e. Writing/ clarity | 8 | _____ |
| Total: | 40 | _____ |
| 2. Creative Thinking and Analogies | | |
| a. Defines 1 creative thinking tool | 8 | _____ |
| b. Explains how the tool was used/ sketch | 8 | _____ |
| c. Defines an argument by analogy | 8 | _____ |
| d. Explains problem using arg. By analogy | 8 | _____ |
| e. Writing/ Clarity | 8 | _____ |
| Total: | 40 | _____ |
| 3. Research | | |
| a. Possible causes of your problem | 8 | _____ |
| b. Analysis related to your project | 8 | _____ |
| c. Do other people have this problem? | 8 | _____ |
| d. Sources/ citations (if appropriate) | 8 | _____ |
| e. Writing/ clarity | 8 | _____ |
| Total: | 40 | _____ |
| 4. Solution and Anticipate Objections | | |
| a. What did you do to solve your problem? | 10 | _____ |
| b. Possible objections/ weaknesses with your solution | 10 | _____ |
| c. Explanation of why your solution is the best | 10 | _____ |
| d. Writing/ Grammar | 10 | _____ |
| Total: | 40 | _____ |
| 5. Accomplishments | | |
| a. Summary of project | 10 | _____ |
| b. Public engagement and recommendations | 10 | _____ |
| c. Objectives reached | 10 | _____ |
| d. Writing/Grammar | 10 | _____ |
| Total: | 40 | _____ |
| Portfolio Total: | 200 | _____ |