

The Semester:

There were 16 undergraduates enrolled in the course, including 3 majors and minors but the majority of students were interested in fulfilling Fine Arts and US Diversity requirements. The project was explained on the first day and the organizational representatives were introduced in the second week of classes. At the beginning of the third week, students chose the organizations that they wanted to work with and further chose to work with the “Picture Group” versus “Video Group” in these organizations.

Logistics: It felt that it necessary, though it was impossible, for me to be present at the field service meetings for both organizations. My presence was the best way to assess the success of the sessions and the progress of each group over the semester. However, because there was only one student driver in the GYA/Yeyo group (7 students), I had to accompany that group, as a driver, for most of their off-campus sessions. There were enough student drivers in the OBS group but the long transportation time between campus and the site became such an issue that we decided to move those meetings to campus. There are two potential resolutions: a) by developing better lead-up and debrief practices with each organizational liaison I may not need to be present at each meeting (see “Content” section), or b) I may need to consider only working with one organization.

Also, many of the students were athletes, or worked multiple jobs, or were simply overscheduled. These time constraints made it difficult for students to spend any extra-class time on-site with the organizations, or do the scanning/video conversion work. This was an

In retrospect, the field service component may be more manageable if it occurred over a shorter time period during the course, perhaps every Friday over a four week period.

Over the course of the semester, it was clear that the amount of work (readings, field service trips, and assignments) was too much for a 200 level course and students were completing some assignments but not others. There are a couple of remedies to this issue;

Limit the field service component of the course to four weeks, cut the number of course readings/ assignments, and develop more dynamic field service projects, or
Make the field service component a new class altogether with more potential for in-depth analysis.

Projects: Initially, OBS requested that students create a visual banner but, it became clear by mid-semester that there was a miscommunication with students. So, instead, students agreed to establish an online presence for the images (Wikimedia.com). Similarly, the video conversion group created a Youtube page for the organization and uploaded a few of the older converted video onto it. Although, I was hopeful that students working with GYA/Yeyo would be able to help with programming, it was clearly more feasible to have them complete a visual banner and a short original video clip on the organization.

Initially, I did not expect that I would have to monitor the organizational liaisons too closely, but it became clear that would be the case. Even after our summer planning conversations, there were a few things that slipped through the cracks.

Students were encouraged to interact with organization members (aside from our liaison) as they completed their projects, but because both sites had unusual operating hours and students had transportation and time constraints, students largely interacted with our one primary liaison.

Need to be more deliberate in making sure other collective members are present by scheduling them explicitly.

The projects were successfully completed and well-received by the organizations. I had students complete an informal end of year assessment of the course which I can make available.

Technology: Using the IMC worked well although the tech-related tasks—picture scanning, video conversion, etc.—eventually became monotonous for students. Moreover, the video conversion group experienced technical difficulties with their project early on in a way that impacted their subsequent engagement with the project. The laptop and scanner assigned to OBS came in very handy during the few on-site visits and the subsequent on-campus visits. The hard drives also worked very well—one was held at the IMC front desk for students to check-in/out and the other was held by OBS.

The Future:

After this first offering of the course, it is clear that it requires a great deal more work than is appropriate for a 200-level course. In the future, I would like to implement one of two options:

- a) Keep the field service component in the course. Limit the field service component of the course to four weeks. Cut the number of assigned course readings, and develop more dynamic field service projects.

b) Develop the field service component as a new 200-level with more potential for in-depth analysis. Frame this new course as an exploration of the scholar/activist tradition in African American studies, through a visual arts lens.

With either of these options, it is also important to resolve the logistics issues: transportation and my presence at each meeting.