Voices of Blackford County: Employing Counter-Normative Pedagogy in Service Learning

Sherrie M Steiner
Employing Counter-Normative Pedagogy in Service Learning

Professor Sherrie Steiner, Department of Sociology  Steiners@ipfw.edu

Problem

- The service learning movement in higher education is becoming increasingly aware of how the voices of community organizations have been marginalized from the design and implementation of partnership programs (Stoecker &Tryon, 2009).
- Service learning as ‘charity’ is said to provide a context for students to rehearse, affirm and socially reproduce White Privilege (Endres & Gould, 2009).
- Service learning as ‘justice’ is considered more conducive to development of collaborative community – academy partnerships, but innovative pedagogical approaches tend to fall outside traditional faculty reward structures (Joyner, 2003)
- Using course concepts as lenses through which to critically reflect upon experience, rather than relying on experience alone, challenges and deepens student knowledge and documents learning, but it also alters the assumptions and norms that underlie how institutions approach assessment, teaching, learning, scholarship, partnerships and engagement (Bringle, Clayton & Plater, 2013)
- Using course concepts as lenses through which to critically reflect upon experience, rather than relying on experience alone, challenges and deepens student knowledge and documents learning, but it also alters the assumptions and norms that underlie how institutions approach assessment, teaching, learning, scholarship, partnerships and engagement (Bringle, Clayton & Plater, 2013)
- Employment of reciprocity is essential to collaborative relationships, but it is also a counter normative pedagogy (Harrison & Clayton, 2012).

SOC S360-01 ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIOLOGY SPRING 2015

CRN: #24166 Meets Tuesday/Thursday 9-10:15 AM  Jan 12-May 10  30 hours of service required

A unique ‘hands on’ environmental justice course. Learn about white privilege & environmental racism. Struggle to understand how development can continue given evidence of limits to growth. Readings include Fagin’s Tom’s River. Students will create videos and GIS maps with technical support from Studio M & Env. Resources Center. Approved by COAS Distribution Behavioral & Social Sciences and General Ed B5 Ways of Knowing

Course Design

- Employing reciprocity as a threshold concept, the service learning component has been collaboratively designed in conversation with our partners.
- The voice of the community has moved from margin to center in project course design; students will video members of the community sharing their environmental concerns and map the history of industry in Blackford County using ArcGIS software.
- The course employs a justice rather than charity model; our primary community partner, Hoosier Environmental Council, is Indiana’s largest environmental policy organization with more than 30 years’ experience in environmental advocacy and education.
- Counter normative pedagogical techniques are employed but made explicit and justified as best practices within the service learning literature to strengthen the collaborative partnership and root it soundly in academic critical reflection.
- The collaborative partnership includes on-campus as well as off-campus community partners.

Collaborators

- BLACKFORD COUNTY CONCERNED CITIZENS: Residents of Blackford County formed this organization because too many people were getting sick, suffering from cancer and serious neurological illnesses. Their mission is to improve the quality of life of Blackford County’s residents by reducing the incidence of diseases, primarily through citizen action to investigate the diseases that are prevalent and by advocating to have these diseases investigated.
- BLACKFORD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY: They preserve research materials on the history of Blackford County and have published material on the county’s glass industry.
- ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES CENTER: They promote the understanding and conservation of the natural resources of the region through scientific research, educational opportunities and outreach.
- HOOSIER ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL: Indiana’s largest environmental policy organization with more than 30 years’ experience in environmental advocacy and education. They believe that work like this project is part of their goal to help Indiana to a healthier future.
- IPFW STUDIO M: This high performance multimedia production studio specializes in 3D production, graphic design, CD/DVD authoring, audio/video production, & web presentation software ipfw.edu/studiom

Context

The 2014 report on county health for Indiana ranks Blackford County as 90 out of 92 counties for Health Outcomes (based on length and quality of life) and 84 out of 92 counties for health factors (which includes health behaviors and the physical environment)

Citations


