GENERAL GUIDELINES

You are to develop a paper INTEGRATING your service experience with the theoretical and empirical discussions which have occurred in the classroom and that are contained in the texts and handouts. (The structure of the paper you must follow is found below.)

I encourage you to look over your journals and note any progression/changes in your perception, understanding, emotions … which might have occurred over the course of your service. But more importantly, try to explain those changes from a sociological viewpoint.

While the following list of objectives may not have been fully realized in your service, I encourage you to look back on your experience and evaluate the extent to which you did gain a greater understanding of these issues. You should try to incorporate that understanding into your paper. Additionally, some objectives may involve you talking to or interviewing the “regular” staff of the organization. It is often important and necessary to get some of the history to understand the present.

Objectives for Service-Learning in Sociology 2s:
1. To increase understanding of the theoretical issues being addressed in the classroom;
2. To stimulate critical thinking about the social arrangements discussed in the classroom;
3. To gain insight into the interrelated nature and underlying causes of social problems;
4. To gain a comprehensive view of the needs of the community being served (beyond just the service being provided);
5. To increase understanding of the operation of community agencies (their existence, goals, objectives, limitations, challenges, obstacles and successes);
6. To gain exposure to economic, racial and/or ethnic communities which may differ from the students own; and
7. To encourage future community work and social service career exploration.

Keep in mind the following objective I had of the course: “identify the underlying characteristics of sociologically defined social problems and distinguish a sociological perspective from others—that is, to analyze social problems “sociologically”. Thus, make sure your paper is SOCIOLOGICAL in nature.

The paper is due Thursday, June 10th by 3:00pm. Late papers will not be accepted. However, papers may be submitted earlier.

It must be typed (12 point font), double-spaced and stapled in the top left corner.

REQUIRED STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER

- Your paper will contain 7 specific sections. There should be a theme that runs through your paper and is introduced in section 2. This will help you from contradicting yourself.

- Mark each section with a heading / LABEL YOUR SECTIONS. Sections should be written in complete sentences and paragraphs with a well-thought out, logical flow of ideas that relate to the theme/thesis of your paper.

- You should NOT repeat yourself in the various sections.

- Remember, the most important aspect of the paper is your INTEGRATION of the course material with your experiences and observations. If you have to make a choice, it is more important to discuss the course material. You will be graded on—the extent to which you demonstrate an understanding of the course material and can apply it to your experiences/observations. Below is the structure you must follow.
Section 1
Introduction and Overview of Service-Learning Site and Experiences

1. Describe your service-learning site.
   A. In general terms, why does your site exist? What does it do? What is its history? From where does it receive funding?

2. Describe your service-learning experience as a whole.

3. Discuss at least 2 of the following:
   A. The most important thing I have contributed to this site is …
   B. What have you learned about yourself through doing this work?
   C. What have you learned about the community through doing this project?
   D. What have they learned from you? How do you know?

4. Discuss at least 2 of the following:
   A. What did you do that was fun/satisfying? Why do you think you felt that way?
   B. What criticisms or compliments did you receive and how did you respond to them?
   C. What made you feel uncomfortable/unhappy? Why do you think you felt that way?
   D. What were some of the things you wanted to say but did not? Why not?
   E. What is the hardest part of this type of work? Why?
   F. What is the most frustrating thing about working there?

Section 2
Identifying, Explaining, and Assessing Approaches to Social Problems

1. What "social problem" does your site address? Discuss the evidence that it fits our working definition of social problems.

2. What is your impression of the agency in terms of which paradigm (conflict or functionalist) it adheres to most?

3. How would you characterize the approach of the agency in terms of "person-blame" or "system-blame"? How about the staff? How about the clients?

4. Provide an explanation AND assessment of the agency’s approach (in particular, discuss any contradictions you might observe).

Section 3
Explaining and Assessing the Thesis of the Text

1. Do your experiences/observations and knowledge of the situation confirm or refute the following argument? "the problems of US society (i.e., the problem addressed by your site) are the result of the distribution of power and the form of the economy"

2. Do your experiences/observations and knowledge of the situation confirm or refute the following argument? "the state is not a neutral agent of the people but is biased in favor of those with wealth."

3. Given that society as a whole considers the clients (or their parents) as “norm violators,” do your experiences/observations confirm or refute the following assumption: "norm violators are symptoms of social problems, not the disease itself"?
Section 4
Critically Analyzing and Integrating Systems of Domination: Class, Race, & Gender Inequality

1. Discuss 2 of the following theoretical areas based on your experiences, observations, and understanding of the course material:
   A. CLASS: Theories explaining poverty/class inequality:
      Consider "Deficiency Theory 2: Cultural Inferiority" and "Structural Theories". Discuss the merit (or lack of merit) of these theories based on your observations/experiences. Which one do you find more accurate and why?
   B. RACE: Theories explaining racial/ethnic inequality:
      Consider "Cultural Deficiency Theory," "Bias Theory," and "Structural Discrimination Theories". Discuss the merit (or lack of merit) of these theories based on your observations/experiences. Which one do you find more accurate and why?
   C. GENDER: Theories explaining gender inequality:
      Consider "Socialization Approach," and "Structural Approach" to explaining gender inequality. Discuss the evidence you have experienced/observed at your site related to each of these. Which approach do you find more accurate in explaining gender inequality and why?

Section 5
Critically Analyzing and Integrating Institutions: Work, Family, & Education

1. Discuss 1 of the following areas based on your experiences, observations, and understanding of the course material:
   A. WORK: Do you see any evidence of the issues discussed in the “Problems of Work” section.
      • In particular, try to apply notion of “alienation” to either your clients—if they are adults—or to the parents of your clients—if they are children?
      • Also try to apply the issues related to the “segmented labor market”.
   B. FAMILY: Discuss issues of "the family" as they are discussed in the text and in class. Relate this to your site and your experiences/observations?
   C. EDUCATION: Critically think through the issues of education in our society as they are discussed in the text and in class. Relate this to your site and experiences/observations.

Section 6
Critical Analysis/Assessment of the Agency

1. What would be the ULTIMATE success (goal) of the agency?
2. Does the agency try to achieve that goal? If so, how? If not, why doesn’t it?
3. What approach/strategy would you recommend for an agency that deals with the social problems yours does? In essence, what changes would you recommend?

Section 7
Critical Evaluation of the Course Material:
The Sociological Imagination, the Promise of Sociology, and our Role as “Agents of Social Change” (Tying it all together)

1. Discuss in a sociologically informed manner what you see as possible solutions to the social problem(s) addressed by your site. This involves identifying the root cause of the problem and thinking through possible solutions.
2. Try to articulate HOW the necessary changes can be made to solve the problem.
3. Why haven’t current approaches been measurably successful?
4. What do you see as society’s first step toward solving the problems discussed in this course?
5. What steps can YOU take toward that goal?