EXPLICIT PATHWAYS TO SOCIAL CHANGE

Student-Centered Learning & Community-Based Learning Approaches

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OVERVIEW

- Diversity as a goal and issue to address in higher education with changing demographics
- Portland State University’s General Education Program
- Sample Student-Centered & Community-Based Learning Processes
- Implications on social work education in undergraduate & student learning
**Why University Studies?**

**The future matters.** University Studies wants PSU’s graduates to be engaged citizens and lifelong learners who are not only poised for success in the workplace, but who are also prepared to grapple with the challenges that face our society.

**Innovative learning.** Most universities have a required general education program. At Portland State, our interdisciplinary core curriculum is called University Studies (UNST). In UNST, students discuss big ideas, ask questions, and examine assumptions. We expect students to be active participants in their education. As a result, we combine hands-on, student-centered learning with content from a wide variety of academic disciplines. We also study students’ experience in order to support their learning and success. These practices help students thrive, and the UNST curriculum enriches the learning that occurs in the other classes and activities at Portland State.

**Transferable skills.** UNST equips students with the core skills and perspectives to be successful throughout life. These include an ability to communicate effectively, to think creatively and critically, to be curious about the diversity of the human experience, and to wrestle with understandings of ethics and social responsibility. These are the Four Goals of the UNST curriculum, and employers report that they desire graduates with mastery in each of these areas.

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**Senior Capstone:**
As the culminuation of UNST, Capstone courses connect the classroom to the community by immersing teams of students in service-learning projects that address real-world issues. [MORE INFO]

**Upper Division Cluster:**
Composed from a variety of academic fields and linked to a single SINQ theme, Cluster courses build upon the knowledge and the core skills that students developed in FRINQ and SINQ courses. [MORE INFO]

**Sophomore Inquiry (SINQ):**
These thematic, focused inquiry courses introduce students to the key concepts, questions, research methods, and other content that will be further explored in the Upper Division Cluster. [MORE INFO]

**Freshman Inquiry (FRINQ):**
This year-long, interactive, and theme-based course uses an interdisciplinary approach to examine topics and show how content can be understood from different academic and personal perspectives. [MORE INFO]

**Questions?**
Come by and visit us in Cramer Hall, 117, or you can reach us at:
AskUNST@pdx.edu 503-725-5890
UNST’S LEARNING OUTCOMES

Communication
- Students will enhance their capacity to communicate in various ways—writing, graphics, numeracy, & visual and oral means—to collaborate with others in group work, and be competent in appropriate communication technologies.

Inquiry & Critical Thinking
- Students will learn various modes of inquiry through interdisciplinary curricula—problem-posing, investigating, conceptualizing—in order to become active, self-motivated, and empowered learners.

Diversity of Human Experience
- Students will enhance their appreciation for and understanding of the rich complexity of the human experience through the study of differences in ethnic and cultural perspectives, class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and ability.

Ethics and Social Responsibility
- Students will expand their understanding of the impact and value of individuals and their choices on society, both intellectually and socially, through group projects and collaboration in learning communities.
STUDENT-CENTERED & COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING PROCESSES

Critical consciousness by centering the learner in deconstructing knowledge production

Connecting knowledge building and critical praxis in the context of people and places

Understanding race/ethnicity, social justice, and anti-oppression as concepts
# PROCESS: CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS THROUGH DECONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

## Instrumental-Technical
- Objective reality beyond subjective perception
- Laws that govern human behaviors discovered through empirical research
- Human needs can be addressed by learning the laws of human behaviors so predictions can help control life situations
- In practice—giving knowledge, skills & methods by expert

## Interpretive Paradigm
- Based on human need to understand self and others
- Focus on developing interpretation of meanings of life’s realities
- Views individuals having different realities and sees opportunities for individuals to reflect on their life experiences as it is essential to social change

## Critical-Emancipatory
- Assumes that when individuals develop insights into their way their lives being oppressed by systemic forces, they become empowered from these situations through individual and collective action
- Goal is to understanding how the social context affects personal experiences to social action
PROCESS: UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL LOCATION & IDENTITIES

Activities

- Where I’m From Poems
- Social Identities Wheel
- Creative Piece that demonstrate identities, social locations, etc.
- Privilege Walk/Line
I am from brown skin and mango
From rice for breakfast and chicken tocino
I am from “hoy ano ba?” and mahal kita
I am from my parents who came from overseas
I am from tchinilas [slippers] and white trees
From the land where people represent their pride
  ▶ From the party that always has Pac-man’s side
I am from red, white, and blue plus gold sun and stars
From where I walk instead of taking cars.
  I am from lumpia and adobo
  From Lapu-Lapu, you know yo?
I am from the bataan death march when our nation cried.
From where Tagalog and Spanish coincide.
I am from where I ponder what the language means
Kumusta na my name’s Jeremy.
I represent the Philippines.
ACTIVITY: SOCIAL IDENTITY WHEEL

(Adapted from "Voices of Discovery", Intergroup Relations Center, Arizona State University)

1. Identities you think about most often
2. Identities you think about least often
3. Your own identities you would like to learn more about.
4. Identities that have the strongest effect on how you see yourself as a person.
PROCESS: KNOWLEDGE BUILDING & CRITICAL PRAXIS WITH PEOPLE & PLACE

- Approach
  - Team/Group work
  - Student led
  - Scaffolded mentoring

- Samples
  - Youth Summit
  - Art for Change
  - Conference for Change
  - Product for community based partner
VIDEO: HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/49697558
IMPLICATIONS

- Role of university in creating inquiry courses before declaring majors
- Professional development for faculty
- Coaching faculty through fellowships
- Workload issue for faculty—more engaged teaching which requires more infrastructure
- Need to align with tenure expectations
- Alignment of learning outcomes in context of local-global context for social change
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- Mahalo, salamat, thanks!
- Please contact me at:

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