



Specifying the Scholarship of Engagement

Skills for Community-based Projects in the Arts, Humanities, and Design

I. SCHOLARSHIP AND CREATIVITY IN THE REAL WORLD

Skills of Place

Ability to read and to map natural and built environments and people's experience of them

Sense of the layered histories of places, including their simultaneously local and global meanings and their potential to become "historic sites of conscience"

Willingness to ask, "where is a discipline" as well as "what is a discipline"

Interpretive and Critical Skills

Skill in the close reading of words and things

Ability to use the tools of textual and cultural criticism in unpacking how meaning is constructed, both verbally and visually

Understanding of genre and form

Creative and Aesthetic Skills

Poetic, visual, musical, dance, theatrical, craft, or other artistic literacies

Ability to describe aesthetic experience

Grasp of where, by whom, and for whom art is made

Research Skills

Understanding of the principles and methods of participatory action research

Overview of where knowledge is located, for example, in document archives, organizational records, census data, published scholarship, web resources, personal and group memory, museums

Knowing what methods are suited to finding and understanding these diverse materials

Familiarity with standards of ethical research practices

Theoretical Skills

Ability to read and understand theoretical and philosophical reflections relevant to the project

Capacity to think and talk about concepts and ideas, and about why they matter

Openness to the manifold forms of explanatory systems created by different cultures and societies

Ability to revise theoretical frameworks on the basis of experience

II. NEGOTIATING COLLABORATIVE WORK

Intercultural Skills

Ability to reflect openly on and work across social and cultural differences, including those of race, ethnicity, nationality, age, sexual orientation, language, region, and gender

Political Skills

Ability to define the public good, the public domain, “the commons” in the context of the project

Ability to reflect on and raise questions about what democracy, citizenship, ‘publicness,’ and agency mean in and for one’s work

Understanding how to map power of different kinds and manifestations

Ability to claim legitimacy for the project and public agency for oneself

Capacity to change minds, other people’s and one’s own, and to disagree

Ability to build alliances among people and groups with diverse interests

Group Skills

Capacity to form purposeful relationships and networks; to sustain them through inclusive and democratic planning; to negotiate difficulties with transparency in

meetings, over the phone, and by email; to reflect together on the import of the project; and to assess its successes and failures

Project Management Skills

Ability to organize and monitor multi-partner projects that may involve several sites and different types of organizations and groups, as well as multiple timelines, tasks, and products

Resource Skills

Knowing how to calculate the human effort that it will take to get collaborative work done, taking into account the variables of, for example, time, space, academic credit hours, and funding

Ability to construct and read a budget

Ability to talk to people about money and resources

III. REFLECTION IN CONTEXT

Skills Relating to Cultural Institutions

Understanding of the organizational character of collaborating entities, such as public cultural institutions, nonprofits, NGOs, and for-profit enterprises such as cultural tourism, entertainment, and new media

Skills Relating to Community Engagement

Familiarity with the practices and histories of activism, public service, advocacy, associations, volunteerism, and other forms of engagement, understood in cultural terms

Skills Relating to Educational Institutions

Grasp of educational systems—both K-12 and higher education--their historical outlines and recent trends

Understanding of the defining character, place, and context of one's own education

Historical map of the disciplines and professions, including one's own

Policy Skills

Overview of cultural policy as a field

Ability to locate and use cultural policy resources

IV. COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

Listening and Speaking Skills

Ability to listen to and absorb ideas from a wide variety of perspectives, fields, professional practices

Speaking abilities adequate to the purposes of introduction, presentation, persuasion, debate, critique, praise, and intergroup dialogue

Capacity to negotiate multilingual groups and occasions, including the presence of multiple U.S. and foreign languages other than English, American Sign Language, regional and ethnic dialects and accents, and different professional terminologies

Grasp of the varieties and purposes of performative or bodily speech, such as song, gesture, ritual

Writing Skills

Ability to write accessible prose in multiple genres for various audiences, including personal reflection, research reports, persuasive and critical essays, proposals, accurate summaries, life stories, pedagogical materials

Ability to write individually and collaboratively, and to write under the just-in-time conditions of project-based work

Understanding of the significance of the look and feel of texts, arising from the choices made in publishing and disseminating the written word

Ethnographic, Documentary, and Oral History Skills

Understanding of different forms of quantitative and qualitative information, and of the uses of ethnographic and survey research

Ability to develop the questions for, conduct, and edit an interview

Familiarity with modes of exchanging and documenting people's stories, including, for example, video and audio recording, Photo Voice, and story circles

