

CU Boulder graduate seminar: Youth Development in Community and School Settings

Youth Development Research Project Agreement

Project duration: Spring semester 2006: Jan 18 – May 4

Course instructor: Ben Kirshner, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Education

This document is intended as a tool for students and host agencies to come to an agreement about the student's project. It is purposefully open-ended because each organization's interests, goals, and schedules are distinct. Please review the different elements as a precursor to your conversation. Once you have formulated a plan please fill out and sign this document to indicate your mutual understanding.

Overview of the course

This goal of this course is to for graduate students to learn about the central developmental tasks of adolescence and the multiple institutional contexts that shape development. Developmental tasks that we will study include: identity formation; forging positive peer relationships; having a voice; forming a worldview; and overcoming adversity. We will then examine how different contexts of development, such as schools, youth organizations, workplaces, and unregulated leisure time, support (or don't support) youth's developmental tasks.

The major assignment for the course will be a small scale research project developed in partnership with a local youth-serving agency. The purpose will be for students to practice a "scholarship of engagement," characterized by projects that help students learn more about a topic while also addressing the needs of research participants.

Goals of youth development research project

- to build connections between CU researchers/students and neighboring community;
- for graduate students to learn about adolescent development by spending time in a youth-serving institution;
- for graduate students to learn how to design research that can be of practical use;
- for host agencies to gain insights about their youth development programming from a CU graduate student.

Expectations for CU students

- Observe program or classroom activities 5-8 times (weekly or bi-weekly);
- Conduct at least 1 focus group with participants;
- Co-construct research purpose and final report to share with host agency;
- Prepare report based on course readings and fieldwork.

Expectations for host agency

- Meet with student during week of Jan. 23 or Jan. 30 to discuss project and agree on goals;
- Give student opportunities to observe and, if possible, lead a focus group discussion;
- Attend final open house to discuss student projects at CU on 5/5/06 (10:00 – 11:30 am).

Examples of potential projects that students could pursue

- 1) *Informal evaluation*: Student observes activities and conducts focus group with youth participants; student delivers report outlining what she/he learned at end of semester. Potential questions to explore:

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