Practicum Analysis Seminar  
(SESP 385-0, section 20)  
Fall 2005

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Office hours arranged by appointment

Required text


Goals of the Practicum Analysis Seminar:
1. To experience, observe and record events and processes in the workplace (on-site participation, daily field notes, and interviews).
2. To process/analyze these events and patterns and your reactions to them (daily analytic notes, class discussions).
3. To integrate your observations of patterns at the workplace with concepts and theories from the social sciences (readings, professional literature references).
4. To develop the capacity to make informed responses and to take a proactive role in your current and future organizational experiences (on-site participation, class exercises, and final paper).

Determination of Grades
A single combined grade will be assigned for the Practicum (SESP 383) and the Practicum Analysis Seminar (SESP 385). Successful completion of the Practicum is required for a passing grade. Your grade will be based on the following percentages. (These are approximate percentages):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminar Participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field Notes</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<td>Interview Project</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
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The portion of your grade relating to the Practicum will be based on the evaluation of the SESP Practicum Supervisor in conjunction with the seminar instructor, with input from the site supervisor’s mid-term and final evaluations. **Attendance is required.** The Seminar Participation component of your grade will be based on attendance, promptness, participation in discussions and other in-class activities; and completion of two non-graded assignments (professional literature reference list, and final paper proposal). **Assignments turned in late will be graded down.** Improvement counts.
**Field Notes**

Your role in the Practicum is that of participant observer. In organizational life, those who are most successful and eventually become leaders are those who not only experience and react to people and events in the organization, but also objectively observe and reflect on the broader systems of the organization and initiate changes to those systems for improving the organization. Keeping daily field notes will provide you with a systematic means for impartially observing and recording details of your organization. You will also have the opportunity to reflect subjectively on patterns you detect within your organization and related issues by writing analytic notes within your daily notes.

**Guidelines for Daily Field Notes:**

- Write your notes each day immediately after work, or even better, during breaks. The idea is to record details as accurately as possible, so you don’t want to let too much time pass.
- Be discrete, no one likes to feel that they are being observed and evaluated.
- Field notes must be typed.
- Leave a 1-inch left margin for instructor’s comments.
- Length: a minimum of 10 pages per week.
- **Proof read and spell-check.**

**Objective Notes**

- These impartial observations should form the main bulk of your daily notes; this is your raw data.
- Describe. Don’t interpret. Don’t evaluate.
- Be very careful in using adjectives—usually they’re evaluations in disguise. (e.g. instead of saying, “I had a good day,” report what made it good.).
- Don’t literally transcribe discussions; summarize and paraphrase.

**Analytical Notes**

- Use the letters “AN”, bold, or italicize at the beginning of these more subjective comments to set them apart from your objective notes, bold or italicized is also acceptable.
- Use these notes to:
  - record your emotional reactions;
  - jot down your questions;
  - draw connections with concepts from your classes and outside readings;
  - note the kernel of a thought you’d like to develop in your analysis;
  - mark a topic you’d like to bring up during the week-in-review.

**Participation in Each Class Session**

The Practicum provides an experiential learning opportunity: therefore your experiences are the key. Students will learn through sharing, comparing, and analyzing each other’s experiences. Be prepared to talk about your week, share observations, insights and questions with the group.
Weekly Newspaper and Magazine Articles

Bring to class each week a newspaper or magazine article relevant to your Practicum site or field of endeavor. These will be shared in class. Read a newspaper daily (Tribune, Sun-Times, Chicago Defender, Crain’s) you’ll be surprised at the amount of press coverage there is of issues relevant to your Practicum site.

The Interview Project

The interview project consists of two interviews with people working in your field of interest. Conduct the first interview with someone at your Practicum site. The second interview should be with someone outside your Practicum site, but in a related organization. Some sample questions will be discussed during class.

In writing up the interviews, emphasize what you learned about their career pathways and the field in general. Discuss the impact of the interview on your future plans and strategies; what was particularly useful about having this kind of discussion with a potential colleague, and any insight you may have gained in relation to your field placement. Compare and contrast the perspectives of your interviewees. Paper should be typed; double-spaced; and 5-7 pages long.

Professional Literature References

Ask each interviewee to refer you to three to five relevant professional readings (books, journals, and articles) that are ‘must reads’ to stay on top of developments in your field of interest. Type up this list, citing in a sentence or two why it is important. You may cite entire books or journals, specific chapters or articles, periodicals and newspapers. Also, this could be a good opportunity to find out about good references for your final paper topic.

Final Paper

Throughout the quarter, themes will have emerged in your field note observations and analyses. Your final paper will examine one of these emerging issues.

Paper Topic Proposal

You will develop a topic for this paper that flows out of your experience and the field notes you have taken. You will turn in a one-page (typed, double-spaced) paper proposal, in which you:

1) define your topic (identify the problem, issue, theme or concern from your Practicum experience which you will be examining in your paper.
2) note any hypotheses you have regarding the topic, and;
3) cite at least one scholarly literature reference which you will use in developing your analysis. This requires a search and brief literature review (library or web based) in order to identify relevant sources.

Final Paper Format - A Research Paper

Your paper should be 10-15 pages in length, typed and double-spaced. Papers will be evaluated on use of field notes, scholarly literature references, and personal analysis.
Sept 23  Introduction to the Seminar: overview of purpose, structure, methods, syllabus and assignments. Experiential learning and ethnography.

Sept 30  Agency orientation  
Read: Becker—Tricks & Imagery  
*Collect: mission statement, organizational chart and annual report*

Oct 7   Settling in at your agency  
Important people, places, and things  
Read: Becker -- Sampling

Oct 14  Formal and informal beliefs, values, norms, rituals & traditions. Examining the culture of your organization.  
*Final paper topic proposal due*  
Read: Becker -- Concepts


Oct 28  *In class presentation of Interviews*

Nov 4   Analyzing your data –  
Gaining a greater perspective on your experience.  
Read Becker-- Logic

Nov 11  Preparing for your departure.  
References, referrals, and networking.

Nov 18  Summarizing your experience.  
Insights, meaning, and lessons learned.

Dec 2   *In class presentation of final papers.*  
(Field notes are not required for the final week of Practicum)

Students in this course are expected to comply with the policies found in the booklet, "Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic guide".  *All papers submitted for credit in this course must be sent as email attachments as well as delivered in printed form.*  Your written work may be electronically tested for plagiarized content.  For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern, visit:  
hhttp://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/.  If you need a copy of the brochure visit the SESP Student Affairs Office.
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<th>EXPERENTIAL LEARNING</th>
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<tr>
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