**Addressing the Food Gap at p:ear**

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University Studies Capstone, Fall 2012

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What do homeless kids eat? And why should this matter to us? As the public discourse about food -- good, bad and otherwise -- grabs our attention, sometimes the eaters get lost. The general questions of who eats what and why make some assumptions about food eating (and buying) practices that may cut some people out of the discourse. Homeless teenagers are a difficult group to study: they are not particularly "good" consumers, nor are they slated for good consumer behavior in the future, since by most assessments they come from poverty and not expected to overcome it. They don't have functional parental relationships and they don't go to school. Who advocates for them? What are their needs? How can those needs be met? Why should those needs be meet?

p:ear is a downtown Portland organization that engages homeless and transitional youth, aged 15-24, using mentorship and the tools of education, art and recreation.  p:ear’s Kitchen and Food Program provides hands-on training for youth in the areas of food preparation, nutrition, and the economics of eating. This capstone will partner with p:ear to engage students in scholarship about food culture, social justice and sustainability, developing independent research about homeless adolescents and food insecurity. Students will work with the staff at p:ear and their instructor to determine appropriate modes of engagement with the organization. Direct service with youth is not a focus of this capstone, although you will be visiting the facility to cook and interact with staff and students.

This class lasts for ten weeks, and is a 6-credit course. Since we will be meeting most weeks for 4 hours inside the classroom, you should plan on spending at least two hours each week working outside of the regular class periods (in addition to reading, and preparation of assignments for the course.) It is important that you do not schedule other work or school obligations during the days scheduled for “Group work outside the classroom.”

**Learning objectives for this cours**e:

Students become familiar with the basic facts associated with youth homelessness, as well as the variety of modalities in addressing the issue;

Students learn about what resources exist for homeless youth in Portland, and how each of these agencies serves the population, particularly in the area of nutrition;

Students consider the interrelated mechanisms of poverty and food insecurity, in the local and national context;

Students will learn effective strategies for working in groups, according to the needs of our community partner. This quarter, the staff at p:ear has determined that it would be most helpful for the capstone class to undertake an education project for the people who utilize p:ear. This is a significant project and will have a number of components, which we will work to break down into achievable goals, so that we create a program with outcomes that are not only helpful for the organization, but useful for ourselves.

**REQUIREMENTS**

1. *Come to class prepared to participate, having completed the assigned reading for the week*.

It is very important to me that you are engaged with the material of the course, and complete the assigned readings so that you may actively participate in our conversations. This is one of the central learning activities for the course. Please notify me in advance of your absence, and get notes from the missed material from your colleagues. It is REQUIRED that you attend class on September 27th in order to undergo a formal training by p:ear staff.  Your cooking experience at p:ear will count for three attendance and participation grades. If you have to miss class, you need to arrange make-up work with me in order to receive credit for that class day, and deliver any agreed-upon work within one week of the absence.

At times I will assign reading that is NOT listed on this syllabus (usually news articles that come up during the term), so be sure to check with me or one of your classmates if you miss class to make sure you are prepared for the subsequent class.

2. *Write one reflection paper for each week of the class.*

Except for the last week of classes, you need to turn in a paper each Thursday. The week of Thanksgiving, your assignment is due on Tuesday. Your entries should be at least two pages long, typed and double-spaced. Please make sure you write your name and the date at the top of each entry. When we are meeting on a Thursday, you need to bring a printed copy of your reflection. On Thursdays when we don’t meet, you may email me your assignment.

What should you write in the reflection? Except where you have specific assignments, write thoughts you have on the reading, discussion, or project work. Additionally, you can write about your experiences with the class, or other thoughts that come up about the material. If you feel stuck, start with a question, i.e. "Why does Mark Winne launch such a harsh critique of food banks?" Don't be afraid to use your own voice, i.e. "It makes me feel angry that..." or "I don't understand why..." etc., or to discuss your feelings about the material.

3. *Group Projects*

Between the second and tenth week of class, we will be working on two or more distinct group projects, which will more than likely be interrelated with one another. You will choose one group to work with, defined by p:ear’s needs and your personal learning objectives. You will be expected to participate as an engaged, equitable partner in your group work by bringing your strengths to the table, identifying and addressing your gaps in knowledge and experience, and working with a cheerful and open-minded approach. You will have plenty of guidance about this project, and you are expected to ask for help and/or clarification if you are unsure about assignments, processes and outcomes. You will work with your group to identify goals, make work plans, create time lines, divide work load, work constructively outside of formal class meeting time, and provide progress reports. Additionally, you will make a final evaluation of your group work, both as a group and as an individual.

Please keep a record of the hours outside of class that you spend on your group project. This is important information for both me and our community partner.

4. *Cooking at p:ear*

Plan to cook three days at p:ear. There will be a sign-up sheet on the first day of class. You will obviously miss class to do this, but it is an imperative element of your learning for the course.

**Please note that p:ear is spelled with a lowercase p, even at the beginning of a sentence!**

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1**

**Tuesday September 25,:** *Who are we and why are we here?*

An explanation of the class, an introduction to each other, and other mysteries dispelled.

**Thursday, September 27**:

*Training at p:ear:* ***Mandatory!***

Meet at p:ear, 338 NW 6th Ave (at Flanders)

Reading: p:ear volunteer handbook

\*First reflection due\*

This reflection should define your reasons for taking the class, and what you hope to achieve in your own work for the class. What are your impressions after having the training at p:ear?

**Week 2**

**Tuesday, October 2**:

*Who are these people and why are they here?*

An introduction to p:ear and discussion of resources for homeless youth in Portland.

Reading: Pollan, *In Defense of Food*, introduction and section I, (Age of Nutritionism)

p:ear website: www.pearmentor.org

New Avenues for Youth website: www.newavenues.org

Janus Youth Services website: www.jyp.org

Multnomah County's website about the Homeless Youth Continuum:

http://www.co.multnomah.or.us/oscp/yd\_homeless.shtml

Outside In’s website: www.outsidein.org

**Thursday, October 4**: *Defining the projects before us.*

*Creating working groups*

Pollan, *In Defense of Food*, section II (The Western Diet and Diseases of Civilization) and section III (Getting Over Nutritionism)

Group assembly and initial work session: brainstorming

\*second reflection entry due\*

Now that you know what we are going to try to achieve during the quarter, what are your hopes and your fears about this project? What strengths do you bring to the project, and what areas of your knowledge and skills would you like to improve?

**Week 3**

**Tuesday, October 9:** *What is the food gap?*

Reading: Winne, *Closing the Food Gap* chapters 1-2

**Thursday, October 11**: *Working for a definition of the projects*

Reading: Winne, *Closing the Food Gap* chapters 3-5

First deep group working sessions, in the classroom

\*third reflection entry due\*

**Week 4**

**Tuesday, October 16:** *The food gap and homeless kids*

Winne, *Closing the Food Gap* chapters 6-conclusion

In-class group work:On-going project and outcome definition: setting goals and managing time

**Thursday, October 18:** Discussion and group work session in the classroom

For your fifth reflection (due October 25), make a food diary beginning on October 17 and going through October 24. Make note of what you eat, where you got it, where it came from, who you ate it with.

\*fourth reflection due\*

As you gain further insight into the issues related to food scarcity and the people who utilize the services at p:ear,

what, in your view, are the issues facing our community with respect to what Mark Winne describes as the food gap? How does the food gap impact your life?

**Week 5**

**Tuesday, October 23**: *Assessing where we are and what we need to do*

First Group Progress Assignment due – be prepared to present your work to your colleagues

**Thursday, October 25**: Group work session outside the classroom

\*fifth reflection due: food diary – please send by email to sarahdougher@gmail.com\*

**Week 6**

**Tuesday, October 30** On-going group working sessions **in** the classroom

**Thursday, November 1** On-going group working sessions outside the classroom

\*sixth reflection due – please send by email to sarahdougher@gmail.com\*

**Week 7 – NO FORMAL CLASS MEETINGS THIS WEEK**

**Tuesday, November 6**: Group work outside the classroom

**Thursday, November 8**: Group work outside the classroom

\*seventh reflection due – please send by e-mail to sarahdougher@gmail.com\*

**Week 8**

**Tuesday, November 13**:

Second Group Progress Assignment due -- be prepared to present your work to your colleagues

**Thursday, November 15**

Group work in the classroom

\*eighth reflection due – please send by e-mail to sarahdougher@gmail.com\*

**Week 9**

**Tuesday, November 20**

Group work in the classroom

\*ninth reflection due\*

Assignment: Blog entry (details of assignment forthcoming)

**Thursday, November 22 Thanksgiving – no class**

**Week 10**

**Tuesday, November 27**

Class work TBD depending on need.

**Thursday, November 29**

Conclusion and celebration potluck

Turn in all group materials in an organized format (including all process-based materials) from the entire quarter.

Also, turn in both a group evaluation and an individual evaluation.

ALL PROJECT MATERIAL AND ACTIVITIES MUST BE COMPLETED BY FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2

**How you will be evaluated for this class:**

Elements of evaluation:

1. Reflection papers (9)

    10 points each for a total of 90 points.

Evaluation criteria: does the writing reflect engagement with the reading or with the subject of your group project? Does the writing reflect engagement with discussion in the classroom? With the project and the group dynamics with respect to the project? Does the entry use good spelling, grammar, and well-thought and constructed prose? Does the entry follow an assignment, if there is one?

2. Class attendance and participation in discussion

    5 points each for a total of 100 points.

Evaluation criteria: you will get 5 points if you come to class and participate. You will get 3 points if you arrive late or leave early. You will get one point if you come to class and don't talk (barring laryngitis). Your cooking experience at p:ear will count for three attendance and participation grades. If you have to miss class, you need to arrange make-up work with me in order to receive credit for that class day.

4. Group progress assignments (2)

    50 points each with a total of 100 points. This grade will be given to your group.

Each of your project check-ins is graded as group work. I will be evaluating this assignment to see if the reports you give me reflect appropriate progress on your project – both in terms of actually getting your objectives accomplished, but also to make sure you are putting some good thought and work into the organization and completeness of the project. Please create a neat, organized document to turn in to me.

**Project Check-in One**

Each group should write up a page or two that answers the following questions:

What are the objectives and outcomes of the project? (Be specific)

How have you divided responsibilities? Who is doing what? (Be sure to note what you have already done up to this point. I’d like an accounting of the project as a whole)

What is your accountability plan, and who is checking in on whom?

What is the timeline?

Does your group need help? If so, what?

**Project Check-in Two**

Are your objectives and outcomes the same as when you started?

Are you on track with your timeline as presented in the first check in? Do you need to revise it? If so, please present a revised timeline.

Give a full accounting of your final project.

Has the committee encountered any barriers? If so, have you dealt with it?

Does your committee need help? If so, what?

Evaluation criteria: does the report reflect appropriate progress on the project? Does the report address the specific questions above?

5. Group and individual evaluation/documentation of project

    100 points total -- 50 to the group, 50 to the individual.

    Your group will prepare a well-organized document that thoroughly describes all work you have done over the quarter. Depending on the scope of your group’s part of the larger project, you may not have a lot of written material, and may include other media. You can work these details out with me as we approach the end of the quarter. It is imperative that you include any and all contacts with community partners in this document, as it will stand as a guide for the next group of students who take up where you leave off.

Additionally, you will write a self-evaluation (4 pages in length)

Evaluation criteria: do you describe the expectations you had for the project? Do you discuss the process of making the project happen, including your own specific strengths you brought to the group? Do you explain the gaps in knowledge and ability you had, and what you did to address those gaps? Do you describe the outcomes of the project, and how these might relate to your expectations? Do you provide a thoughtful inquiry on the impact this project has had in your life as a student, an eater, a consumer, and a citizen?

6. My assessment of your overall progress throughout the quarter. This does not have a point value attached to it. In addition to your scores, your grade consists of my subjective opinion of where you started out, and how much you improved over the quarter, and your demonstrated work in mastering the material. In addition, my observations of your participation in your group's work play a role in my grading.

Texts required for this class:

Pollan, Michael. *In Defense of Food*, Penguin, 2008.

Winne, Mark. *Closing the Food Gap: Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty*, Beacon Press, 2008.

Throughout the term, research articles will be available via email, in PDF form. There are both assigned articles on your syllabus, as well as articles that will come up in the course of our work which I will assign to you. Please make sure that the computer that you use is updated with the latest version of Adobe Reader.

**General group project guidelines**

Make a plan and create both objectives and outcomes

Create a list of guiding questions your group would like to answer through the project.

Divide responsibilities and create individual and group work plans

Create an accountability plan -- who checks on whom?

Create a timeline

Revisit objectives and outcomes half-way through

Ask for help and clarification

**Plagiarism policy:**Plagiarism is the act of claiming someone else’s work as one’s own, and may show up in the following forms: a. Verbatim copying without proper acknowledgment; b. Paraphrasing without proper acknowledgment; c. Theft of ideas without proper acknowledgment. One key to understanding plagiarism is that the student’s intentions are not necessarily the problem. A student can be guilty of plagiarism without necessarily intending to “cheat” on an assignment. Any student found plagiarizing risks losing credit. For more information about the PSU Student Conduct Code, please refer to www.pdx.edu/dos/conduct.html.

**Disability Accommodations:** Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty, and the Disability Resource Center. Students with accommodations approved through the DRC are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through the DRC should contact the DRC immediately.