Story, Portraits, and Civic Action
UNST 421-558
Winter 2019

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Text: Loeb, Paul Rogat, ed. *The Impossible Will Take a Little While, 2nd Edition*. Basic Books, 2014.

Course Description:
This online course explores how civic action, and the process of story finding and telling through the medium of digital portraiture can effect change in our community. Each student is expected to volunteer thirty hours with a community organization of their choice over the duration of the term. Positions must be arranged before the term begins.

Over the course of the term, students are expected to photograph and interview three people with whom they come in contact while volunteering at their respective sites. Students will submit a portfolio of their favorite portraits, paired with compelling excerpts of their interviews, as inspired by Brandon Stanton's ongoing Humans of New York project. These will then be published on a course Instagram account, and made available to our community and the public at large. Not only will the project showcase the great spectrum of volunteer work and civic action that our students are participating in and contributing to, but importantly, this work will be humanized with particular stories, voices, and faces. The objective of this project, and indeed, the entire course, is to shift perception from "their issues and problems" to "our issues and problems". Until we see ourselves in those around us - and vice versa - we are ill-equipped to make the world a better place

Course Objectives:
- To facilitate positive change in our local communities through committed volunteer work and the development of community partnerships.

- To explore the role of story finding and telling in the effecting change process by creating digital portraits.

- To support the effecting change process and to maximize student learning by creating a vibrant online community through regular, respectful and thoughtful participation in readings, reflections, discussion, and group work.

- To identify and analyze how the University Studies' goals (*critical thinking;*

communication; diversity, equity and social justice; *ethics and social responsibility*)
connect and contribute to the effecting change process.

Course Content and Grading
- Community service and field notes 40%
- Reading and discussion 25%
- Portrait project 25%
- Portfolio 10%

Community service and field notes
Due Sundays by midnight, Community Partner Evaluation due Friday, March 22nd
Participation in this course is contingent upon regular volunteer work (a minimum of 30 hours total) with a community organization of your choice. You will submit the name and contact information of your supervisor along with your signed Volunteer Agreement at the beginning of the term, and while I do reserve the right to check in with this individual, it is my intention to judge the quality and consistency of your work by your weekly field notes, and by the score of your Community Partner Evaluation due at the end of the term.

Field notes should consist of two main parts: 1) Context and 2) A story or significant observation you make while serving with your community partner that week.

I will be breaking this first piece - context - into ten discrete prompts over the course of the term. The purpose of these prompts is to facilitate a cursory investigation of the history and scope of the issue your Community Partner is addressing in the community, and to ultimately provide background and perspective on the volunteer work you are doing. When writing your context portion of the field notes, be sure to
- Spend between 30-90 minutes researching the topic online when appropriate. Google Books, Google Scholar, and PSU's library databases will prove helpful in addition to whatever credible information you can find on the web.
- Be succinct.
- When referencing information, hot link to the online source (and to save time on your final paper, I suggest you also cite according to MLA or APA guidelines; it will make formatting easier at the end).
- Range between 2-4 paragraphs
- Keep in mind this portion of your field notes will be compiled at the end of the term, to create an academic paper. Keep the quality high throughout the term, and save yourself time and effort at the end.

The story portion of your field notes should
- Range between 2-4 paragraphs
- Be written shortly after your weekly volunteer experience
- Describe an event or interaction that unfolded while volunteering
- Explore the significance of this event. Why did it catch your attention? What did it leave

you thinking about or feeling? What sense do you make of it? Why did you/others respond the way you/they did? Are there any revelations or insights to be gleaned? About yourself? About the population you are serving? About the way you (your organization) is attempting to serve?
- End with a question if you have one. What does your story leave you wondering about?

You are expected to respond to at least one classmate's post by the following Sunday by midnight, as well as to any replies you get to your field notes post. Responses should engage the story and information provided, and explore the question presented at the end. Draw on your own experience and expertise to develop or illustrate your ideas. Have a conversation.

Grading: Each weekly field notes post is worth up to 3 points each (a point for a well executed context, story, and response), and the Community Partner Evaluation is worth up to 10 points, totaling 40% of your final grade.

Reading and Discussion - *due Sundays by midnight*
This portion of the course allows us to draw from the wisdom of the social change community collected in the second edition of the excellent anthology *The Impossible Takes a Little While,* and to connect this wisdom to the work we are doing in class and in the community. The readings and reflections are organized around the University Studies' goals as indicated in the calendar. See the D2L site for weekly readings and prompts.

Note: I will *not* be grading the discussions; you will be. Each of you will sign up to facilitate one of the discussions at the beginning of the term. When it is your turn to facilitate, you will be responsible for monitoring and guiding the conversations, making strategic contributions when appropriate, and ultimately determining a fair grade for each participant. You will do this by submitting a grade report to me privately the following week. See D2L for more information.

Week 1 and 2: Introduction
Reflection due January 13, reflection responses due January 20, grade report due January 27

Week 3 and 4: Communication
Reflection due January 27, reflection responses due February 3, grade report due February 10

Week 5 and 6: Diversity, Equity, and Social Justice
Reflection due February 10, reflection responses due February 17, grade report due February 24

Week 7 and 8: Inquiry and Critical Thinking
Reflection due February 24, reflection responses due March 3, grade report due March 10

Week 9 and 10: Ethics and Social Responsibility
Reflection due March 10, reflection responses due March 17, grade report due March 24

Reflections are due every other Sunday by midnight in the appropriate D2L discussion folder, and should

- Range between 3-5 paragraphs
- Fully engage the prompt (to be posted on the D2L site)
- Reflect a thoughtful reading of the text
- Make relevant application to your life, work, and experience as a change agent
- Be written clearly, with no grammatical errors
- Anticipate the following discussion, and be crafted in such a way that will elicit a diversity of response and interaction
- Have a compelling thread title (please no "Week 3 Reflection" business).

You are to respond to at least two of your classmates' reflections by the following Sunday, **as well as to anyone who replies to your own reflection**. I understand that if someone posts something at 11:59pm it makes it difficult to respond by the deadline, so my expectation is that you respond early the next week. This gives you one week to read, consider and expand on each other's posts. When responding, remember to

- Be respectful, affirming, *and* provocative. No need to waste each other's time with dullness, unnecessary length or repetitive ideas.
- Develop ideas through personal application, respectful critique and/or connection to other course readings or concepts.
- Generate discussion! The more back and forth, the better. Support and learn from one another. Look for opportunities to follow a common path of thought, and endeavor to both hear and be heard in the process.

Grading: Reflections and responses are worth up to 2 points per week, and your one-time discussion facilitation duties are worth up to 5 points, totaling 25% of your final grade.

Digital Portrait Project
Process blog participation due Sundays by midnight;
Final project due March 22nd
The portraiture project is organized into weekly assignments that explore the practice of story finding and telling in the context of our volunteer sites - as inspired by Brandon Stanton's Humans of New York project - and ultimately culminates with the final submission of three portraits and interview excerpts, to be published on the class instagram account @foundandtold. This term-long creative process will unfold within the pages of a class Wordpress blog. Note: I am still in the development phase for this final project (in the past we tackled podcasts and video making). Winter and spring (2018) term students turned in the first batch of portraits, and these are being published every Monday on Instagram. Follow @foundandtold and get a sense for the work we will be doing in class.

Grading: Project process (as reflected in your weekly blog participation) is worth up to 20 points total (2 per week); and the final portrait submission is worth up to an additional 5 points, totaling

25% of your final grade.

Portfolio *– due Friday, March 22nd*
This assignment is an opportunity to compile your best work in one place, and to reflect upon the capstone learning experience as a whole. When compiling your portfolio, be sure to
- Follow the outline provided
- Write clearly, with no grammatical errors
- Format it like a standard paper (double spaced, 1 inch margins, Times New Roman font, size 12, works cited, etc.)
- Title all reflection and field note selections with original name and submission date
- Submit it as a **pdf file** in the appropriate D2L Dropbox folder

Portfolio Outline:
I. Introduction and Context for Volunteer Work
Compile the Context portions of your weekly field notes into one cohesive piece. Refine, pair down, and edit as needed.

        i. Introduction (Week 1)
        ii. The Need (Week 2)
        iii. Addressing that Need (Week 3)
        iv. My Community Partner (Week 4)
        v. Perspectives from the Population Being Served (Week 5)
        vi. Perspectives from the Opposition (Week 6)
        vii. Beyond the Single Story (Week 7)

II. Story from Field Notes
Select your favorite piece from the story portions of your field notes that you posted over the term, and in italics, add one or two paragraphs discussing the story's significance and connection to your learning.

III. Discussion
Choose your favorite discussion that you participated in over the term. Briefly describe the nature and scope of thread, quoting only the most pertinent material (Note: Please do not copy and paste the entire discussion here). Then explain the significance of this discussion, and its connection to your learning.

IV. Portrait Project
(prompt forthcoming)

V. Conclusion
At the end of your introduction you state what you hope to accomplish over the term. Do you feel you met this goal? Do you have any deeper insights about the effecting change process in the area you are working (needs, solutions, resources, conflicts, cultural considerations, etc.?) How does your video production experience relate? Looking back over the term, what did you

learn that will be of particular value to your future, both professionally and personally?

Grading: Your portfolio is worth up to 10 points, or 10% of your final grade.

Final Grading Scale
93-100% A, 90-92% A -, 87-89% B+, 83-86% B, 80-82% B-, 77-79% C+, 73-76% C, 70-72% C-, 67-69% D+, 63-66% D, 60-62% D-, <60% F.

Announcements
The homepage of the course D2L site will be regularly updated with news and instruction. I expect all students to regularly consult this section.

Late Work Policy
I do not accept late work unless an alternate arrangement has been discussed previous to the assignment deadline. Please contact me in advance if you foresee late submission. Grace periods will be granted at my discretion according to individual circumstance, and are not guaranteed.

PSU Code of Conduct
It is encouraged that you read the Student Conduct Code (see http://www.pdx.edu/dos/conduct.html). It details your rights and responsibilities as a student and as a member of Portland State Community.

Students with Disabilities
Students with accommodations approved through the DRC are responsible for contacting the course instructor 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 (see http://www.drc.pdx.edu/).