Project Guidelines

A successful project (one worthy of a passing grade) must meet the following guidelines. These guidelines will be used in grading your action and final project.

1. Community-Based. The project derives from a problem in a community (not solely a personal concern). Also, the research, the approach, and the process must be centered in the community and developed around its concerns in coordination with community members. A thorough understanding of the problem results in insight that leads to effective, collaborative, and sustainable solutions.

Local. Successful projects are rooted in a community of which an individual is a part and involve a problem in which an individual is invested. Projects attempting to solve a perceived problem for another community or group of people to which one does not belong do not meet the local requirement and violate a number of other guidelines (community based, deliberative, and ethical).

Collaborative. The project must involve others in the community. Researching or acting alone without involving others is not an option. Collaboration is a key communication skill and required for effective action in any community.

Sustainable. The plan must be sustainable. A one-time event to raise money or awareness does little to address a problem long term and may do more harm than good. Sustainability is an important test for determining how best to address a problem.

Audience-centered. The problem and the eventual plan to address that problem must be appropriate to the context and adapted to the specific community audience. A successful project is a substantial undertaking, something worthy of a semester-long project and of the community's needs and support. Actual change is not a measure of success, but taking a significant step to address the problem is required.

2. Deliberative. Perspectives from all sides of the problem, including voices not at the table or not often heard, are essential for developing a full understanding of the problem and possible ways to address it. Solely utilizing library research or one or two experts in the community is not sufficient to move forward with a successful project. The problem must be fully explored to determine how it influences people throughout the community and to develop a plan that best honors the diversity of viewpoints.

Evidence-Based. Civic advocacy must be based in the best available community-based and library research. The description of the problem and a viable plan to address the problem must be supported by available research. Prior to taking a stand on the problem or developing a plan to address the problem, thorough research is imperative.

3. Ethical. Of course, all pieces of the project must be pursued ethically. Research must be accurate, be correctly cited, and include all points of view on the problem. The action must be undertaken in a way that takes into account other voices, particularly those not often considered. Overall, no portion of the project (research, assignments, or action) should harm others or put anyone at risk.

Reflexive. A successful project demonstrates thoughtfulness and reflection throughout. Both failures and successes should be acknowledged and analyzed. Failures and mistakes will happen; how they are handled is much more important. The entire project should provide insight into personal growth and development.