**Ben David Orlando**

**Discipline Awareness Exercise**

**Instructor’s Notes**

I use this exercise early in the semester. In terms of sequencing, I think it’s important that students spend a few weeks digging into their own disciplines before they work with classmates in different disciplines. I have students begin investigating ongoing conversations in their disciplines from Week 1, and I introduce this exercise by Week 4 or Week 5. I first designed this exercise for FTF classes but have since adapted it for online courses.

**Lesson Plan Breakdown**

I deliver this exercise in two parts. The links to the relevant articles are listed below and in each exercise.

* Weber, Christopher. 2017. America’s homeless population rises for the first time in years. *A.P. News.* <https://www.apnews.com/47662ad74baf4bb09f40619e4fd25a94>
* Key Findings page of the Housing and Urban Development’s 2017 *Annual Homeless Assessment Report.* Page 5*.*<https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2017-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

**Part 1** (25-30 minutes)

*Steps 1 and 2 are simply review from Research Assignment #1, so they will only need a few minutes to complete.*

1. Students read the two sources attached to the exercise.
2. In a Word document, students write down the name of their discipline and three possible career paths within their discipline. Ideally, they will be able to think of careers that have some connection to the problem of homelessness.
3. Next, students write three foundational questions that professionals in their field might ask about homelessness. (We defined “foundational questions” in a previous activity.)
4. Based on the readings, students write down three causes or consequences of homelessness related to their disciplines or opinions.
5. At this point, students should imagine themselves working as a professional in their discipline. Their first job will be to tackle some aspect of the problems described in #4. But before they decide to focus on a cause or solution, they need to brainstorm 6-10 specific questions to help them further narrow their options. They should be thinking about these questions through the lens of their discipline.
6. Based on their questions, students will describe in detail a specific area where they would like to focus in order to address/resolve some aspect of the problem. Again, they research a specific cause of the problem, or they might focus on a possible solution.

**Part 2** (20-25 minutes)

1. In groups of three (or four if necessary), students describe their disciplines and the ideas they created for #6.
2. Working together, students must create an action plan in which they integrate disciplinary elements from each of their original ideas. These new composite action plans should accomplish one or more of the following:
	* Shed light on a specific cause of the problem
	* Raise awareness of the problem
	* Describe a solution to the problem

**Part 3**

In the time remaining, groups will present their action plans, and we will discuss the merits of each, along with the insights gained from collaborating with other disciplines.

**Part 4** (as either a homework assignment or a short, written response to begin the next class)

Students reflect on the exercise. Specifically, they explain how they might use the ideas specific to one classmate’s discipline to influence their own findings. For instance, a psychology student might explain how the ideas of a political science major influenced the way she tackled the homelessness problem through her psychology lens.

*This is a key component to the exercise because here students have to really think about how to make connections between disciplines. Later, in the Annotated Bibliography assignment, I have students find at least two sources from outside their discipline. They need to explain how they might use these sources within the context of their disciplinary research question. One of the learning objectives I fervently stress in my class is the goal of adding something to the conversation in one’s discipline. A great way to do this is by looking at your discipline through the lens of another discipline.*

**For Online Classes**

I have included a separate document with the lesson plan for the online version of this exercise (OrlandoActivityDL). I use the Discussion Board and break groups into 6-8 students. What’s different from my FTF class is that students online choose two other classmates from different disciplines. Also, while students in the discussion board do communicate with each other, I have more emphasis on individual work based on the work of others. I’ve found it’s difficult to have students communicate at the same time, so this method has proved the most successful for me.

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