Be the Change Final Project

This semester, you will turn your Women Studies’ knowledge into action by completing an action research project. We will have spent a significant amount of time reading theory this semester. Almost every theorist has offered a call to action, but very few have put forth an actual plan as to how to make that change happen. The tension between theory and practice pulses through writing about gender. For your final project, you will do the hard work of thinking about a problem and bridging the gap between theory and praxis.

Your final paper will define a problem you see in your world, engage with theory to consider why such a problem exists, and then—most importantly—offer a clearly outlined strategy in hopes of remedying said problem. I encourage you to think locally—campus, local community, schools, church—and not try to solve some gigantic problem. Change starts in ways that seem to be small—those are the changes that echo into larger cultural change.

In the classroom, you will learn theories and methods of analyzing women’s roles in history and contemporary society and the importance of activism on behalf of women. You will take that knowledge into the community and learn, with the help of community organizations, how to make social change. You will present your work to your peers and write a final reflective paper that links your community activism with their classroom knowledge of women’s and gender issues.

Objectives:

- Students apply their classroom knowledge in non-academic situations.
- Students interact with real-world audiences, and agency liaisons and community members provide feedback on their work
- Students gain experience outside of the classroom and learn valuable time- and resource- management skills.
- Students face live dilemmas, both ethical and everyday, and similar to those they would confront in their chosen careers.
- Students make valuable connections with community leaders and community organizations.
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Process:

I expect you to turn in the following components. All page amounts are minimums (double spaced, 12-point font, Times New Roman):

Define the Problem: In this section, you will convince me that something is a problem. Think about the “who, what, when, where” questions. What is the audience? Where is the issue occurring? What is the problem? Imagine yourself standing in front of a school board or a supervisory meeting—you must define the problem for people who didn’t even know a problem existed. This section would benefit from the use of first person. (2 pages) (20%)

Engage with Theory: In this section, you will attempt to answer why this problem exists. You must engage with at least three theoretical articles to help you offer a critical framework to contextualize your problem and enter your voice into the larger discussion already happening. I think the articles from the class offer you a good start, but you must also seek out a third piece research from a library resource. Include a works cited page at the end of your project. (2 pages) (20%)

Outline a Strategy: Once you have convinced me there is a problem and explained to me why this problem exists, your toughest job is to envision a plan for remediating the problem. This section can take many forms: traditional paper, lesson plans, artistic artifacts, creative work. I have no interest in prescribing a format to you because I don’t want to squelch your imagination. Let’s face it—these problems need all of our imaginations and creativity thrown at them. However, you do need to offer a plan of implementation. SOLELY “raising awareness” is not an option. #makeithappen For example, if you are making posters, where would you put them? Who would do it? How would you plan to get funding to print them? Some of this section must offer practical information about implementation. The feminist movement is really good at having great ideas, but putting them into practice has often fallen short. I can’t offer a page amount for this section. If you are doing some kind of creative or non-paper strategy, discuss with me how best to document and turn in your work. (40%)

The other 20% of your grade will be determined by your writing. Be sure to draft, draft, draft and proofread, proofread, proofread. Go to the writing center—it’s free. Come see me for a conference or two. Read each other’s work. Don’t forget that clarity of writing is the ONLY way that you will get people to listen to you.