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Project Based Learning: Applying PBL in a Social Theory Course

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Project Based Learning: Applying PBL in a Social Theory Course

Step 1: Project Description and Goals

1. I will be using PBL in SOC 311 Social theory, which is a course required of sociology majors and covers both classical and contemporary sociological theory.
2. The Condition of Work Under Late Capitalism:
Work is an activity we all are expected to engage in for at least 40 years of our lives and is probably the most relevant topic for college students who are thinking about the next stage of their lives, which inevitably involves work. Through this project, students will examine an issue related to work, whether it is a specific occupation, a company, how people get jobs, dead-end jobs, non-fulfilling jobs, or addressing whether we live to work or work to live, etc. Throughout the course, students working in groups will workshop ideas, gather information about the topic, write interview questions and conduct interviews to produce a podcast/short documentary that examines an aspect of work through the theories introduced in the course. This will allow students to apply sociological theory to current issues around work under late capitalism.
3. Students will form groups of 4-5.
 - a. The group will decide on an aspect of work they will examine (a specific occupation, how people get jobs, unemployment, working multiple jobs, dead end jobs, jobs that aren't fulfilling, etc).
 - b. Throughout the course, they will examine their aspect of work from each theoretical perspective
 - c. They will then come up with interview questions and interview people who can discuss personally their experiences that pertain to their topic and are relevant to the theoretical perspectives
 - d. They will also have to address how race, class or gender impacts the issue they are working on and how capitalism might impact people differently based on their social position.
 - e. Then, they will have to come up with at least one policy or solution to address the problem or issue based on how we understand the problem from a theoretical perspective.
 - f. They will have to identify their audience and communicate the content in an appropriate way that will engage the audience and they will be able to talk about sociological concepts and theories in a way that is easily understood by most people through a storytelling format.
 - g. Then they will create a podcast, or short documentary that highlights the experiences of the interviewee and then tells her/his personal story through sociological theory or concepts learned in the course. Throughout the course, I will show students examples of podcasts and short documentaries that will help them in creating their own. Additionally, time will be set aside for students to work in groups on the technical aspects of making a podcast/short documentary with visits to the multi-media center at the library.
4. This project is PBL in many respects. First it requires **sustained inquiry** over the quarter as students learn the concepts and theories and develop their project in groups.

Throughout the process, students will pose questions, gather information about the topic, write interview questions and conduct interviews, and they will focus on a real occupation or work issue of a real person, which aligns with the **authenticity and student voice/choice** dimensions of PBL. It will result in a **public product** that will be uploaded to a public format so they can share their project. As they are working on the storytelling component of the project, they will be actively engaged in **critiquing and revising**.

5. Assessment: I will create a rubric for the final project which will assess appropriate issue; application of theories (theorists); intersectionality (race, class, gender); incorporation of 3 concepts; policy recommendation or some solution to problem; group collaboration (soft skill).

Step 2: Project Design Primers Worksheet

Subject

Applying sociological theory to a current aspect of work in today's economy

Key Concepts

Sociological Theory

Late Capitalism

Work and Occupations

Significance and Relevance: Why are these subjects important to teach?

Required course for Sociology majors that introduce them to sociological theories.

Out of the classroom, who engages in these topics? How might students engage in these topics in an interdisciplinary real-life way?

Work is an aspect of life most adults engage in. It is a highly relevant topic for our students as they are going to college to eventually gain access to better paying jobs. Since we are all expected to work, we hardly question the nature of work and how it is undertaken.

Therefore, looking at it through sociological theories, it will help students question the taken-for-granted nature of work and capitalism. Additionally, it will allow them to apply the theories in a real-life way that other assignments lack.

Engage Critical Thinking

Students will use critical thinking in applying the theories to their aspect of work.

Project Sketch

see above.

Project Title

Condition of Work Under Late Capitalism

Entry Event

Online viewing of podcasts and videos

Driving Question

How can sociological theory help us understand different aspects of working in our economy today?