ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY
EVELYN T. STONE COLLEGE
OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

SUST 350 Service & Sustainability
Action Research Project
Prof. Mike Bryson

Action Research Project Assignment

As part of our service learning contribution to the operation and mission of the Chicago Lights Urban Farm, you will work in small groups on a specific project to be completed by the end of our semester. While the end result may not be completely finished, it should represent a tangible contribution to the education, outreach, and/or business operations of the farm. During Weeks 4-5 you will indicate your topic preferences on the 350 Bb site, and I will assign groups by Friday 3/1.

Potential Topics for Research and Development

- Business plan for farm-based entrepreneurial endeavors (compost exporting, "Good Foodmobile," etc.)
- Age-appropriate farm/sustainability curriculum for visiting school groups (one day vs several weeks)
- Self-guided tour materials for farm (written, video, audio, etc.)
- Guide for community gardeners (determine target audience in consultation with Natasha)
- Interactive online map of community assets
- Other (group chooses from ideas posted on DB during Week 4, in consultation with Natasha)

Communication and Planning within Groups

Good communication and concrete planning within your group is vital, for you'll be expected to produce a short Project Proposal (due Week 7) and then develop your actual Project (due Week 13). Everyone in each group is expected to communicate regularly, contribute to the planning process, and fulfill their responsibilities for the project's completion in line with the group's Proposal. Checking in regularly via the 350 Bb site and/or email is important to keeping your group's project on track.

I will set up a special DB forum on our Bb site expressly for group communication. This way, by using the DB, I can monitor the progress of each group and offer help and encouragement along the way. Groups may also discuss how/when they can meet to plan/work in person or via the phone, since this may be helpful at times. Most of the work on the project, as with a writing assignment, will necessarily take place outside of class time -- but I will give groups time here and there to confer briefly during of weekly meetings.

The Proposal

This is a short (1-2 pages) document in which your designated group describes its project and maps out a plan for its completion. The Proposal should contain the following information, organized under headings (as in these instructions). Feel free to use a table or other visual aid if that is helpful for displaying your information. All group members should contribute to the writing/editing of the Proposal.

- **Focus of the Project**: its scope and goals, how it will benefit the CLUF, potential relevance to other audiences
- **Format of Finished Project**: what form the project will take, such as a document, an online resource, a video, etc.

- **Research Methods**: what kind of information and/or resources you'll need to complete the project, and the methods by which you'll obtain them
- **Division of Labor**: how each group member will contribute to the project (there should be equity here, so that one member doesn't shoulder the majority of the work)
- **Timeline**: your group's week-by-week plan for completing the project by Week 13 (you may combine this with the Division of Labor section, if you'd like)

Updating the Proposal

At some point in the second half of the course, your group may feel its proposal needs to be updated (e.g., with a revised Timeline and/or Division of Labor). That's fine, if need be. Your group may upload a revised proposal (not for re-grading, but for information purposes only) to the 350 DB Project forum.

The Project

While the proposal is a relatively straightforward writing assignment, the project itself will take different forms, depending upon the group. You are encouraged to be creative in how you design, organize, and execute the project. Because there are no hard-and-fast guidelines for what form projects take, I will be liberal in assessing them, taking into account the stated goals, etc. of the project that your group delineates in your proposal, the amount of work evident in completing the project, and the overall quality of its execution.

One concern here, of course, is how much is enough? How in-depth should a project be? That's a bit hard to say, but one rough guideline your group can use is to estimate the equivalent amount of work to produce a more traditional project, such as the research papers my 350 groups group-authored last year (8-10 pages, double-spaced). In that case, each group consisted of 2-3 people. I will provide you with access to those reports on our 350 Bb site, as they may prove useful to you.

The Self-Assessment (Updated 23 April 2013)

As part of the Project, <u>each group member will write a one-page assessment</u> (1" margins, single-spaced, 12-point font size) of your group's work and, most importantly, your specific contributions to your group's effort. It will be useful to make reference to the stated Division of Labor in your group's proposal. Here are some questions to prompt your self-assessment:

- Discuss how your group's ARP project developed and/or evolved after the proposal was submitted. Did you have to change the focus, scope, and/or organization of the project? If so, how?
- Based on what you've learned about the CLUF and Growing Power, how do you see the project benefitting the farm and furthering its mission? If it has limitations, what are they? If it has potential for future expansion, what direction might that take (e.g., for future 350 students to continue working on)?
- Discuss your contributions to the project in detail. Note what research, writing, and/or editing you did on the project, including the proposal. Put that in the context of the contributions made

by other group members. If you had to honestly assess the effort and quality of the work you put into your group's project on a 1-10 scale (10 being the highest), what would you give yourself?

Assessment and Grading

The **Proposal** is a group-authored document worth 30 points, and will be graded according to the general writing assignment rubric detailed on the Assignment page of our Syllabus. Each group member will receive the same grade.

The **Project** is worth 70 points total. 50 of those points will be based on the project itself, and each group member will receive the same grade. 20 of those points will be individually-based on the 1-page self assessment written by each group member (as noted above). For the latter, I will consider both the quality and substance of the document itself, as well as the assessment of your individual contribution to the project made by yourself as well as your group members.

Updated 23 April 2013