

**Instructions: Community Engagement Project Outline (10%)**  
**GSR 707: Knowledge in Action**  
**McMaster University**  
**2015-16**

**CE Project Outlines**

The project outline allows all parties (students, mentors, instructor) to be as clear as possible at the outset about the scope of the CE project and about who will be responsible for which parts. When students meet with mentors the week of Oct. 6-10 they should discuss the brief project descriptions they have been given, ask questions, raise any concerns/anxieties, and work with mentors to establish priorities for the project (i.e. which parts/tasks should be tackled first? Which parts/tasks are less important? Which parts/tasks can be set aside if the project seems too large, or if students lack the specific skills to complete them?). An outline is not set in stone – priorities and tasks may necessarily change or evolve as the project moves along, and students will have an opportunity to revisit the outline with mentors following the winter break.

After the meeting the week of Oct. 6-10 students should begin to draft a written outline for their CE projects. **Please use the template provided in Avenue.** Only one completed outline is required per learning team/project.

The outline should include a one-paragraph summary/overview of the project that explains what the project will involve and why it is important to the organization/group/committee.

Following the overview paragraph, learning teams should list 1 to 3 (3 being the maximum) goals that they plan to work towards completing by Dec. 11, and another 1 to 3 goals to be completed between Jan. 13 and Mar. 18. Point form is fine here.

Then, for each goal, outline the concrete steps (objectives) that you imagine will be necessary for its successful completion, and explain who will be responsible for (or take the lead on) the completion of each step. Point form is fine here as well.

Fill in dates/times/locations for bi-weekly meetings with mentors (these should be established, ideally, when you meet the week of Oct. 6-10, at least up until the winter break). Also fill in the dates/times of any scheduled orientation sessions or times when you will be working on-site at the organization (attending committee/board meetings, meeting at the organization for an orientation from your mentor, etc.)

Please outline the working agreement that learning team members and the mentor(s) have come to regarding the regularity and method by which communication will take place outside of in-person meetings.

Finally, list any challenges *specific to your project* that you anticipate might arise, and briefly discuss how as a team you will address these challenges. Realizing that the challenges to University-Community Engagement are myriad, please do limit yourselves to 2-3 specific challenges that you anticipate might arise as you pursue your particular projects.

A complete first version of your project outline is due to Avenue no later than Fri. Oct 23. **Each learning team will set up a specific time to meet with Melinda to discuss the outlines on Tuesday Oct 27 or Wednesday Oct 28.** (These meetings will take the place of our regularly scheduled class that week.) Depending on the outcome of these meetings, additional changes to the outline may be necessary, and students are responsible for communicating such changes (and delivering a revised copy of the outline) to their mentors. Once learning teams have received feedback from Melinda, they will review your project outline with mentors during the week of Nov. 2-6. Make any changes recommended by mentors, ensure that everyone (including mentors) signs the document, and submit the final revised version to the Avenue Dropbox on Fri Nov. 6. **(Please Note:** if your mentor's schedule makes it impossible to incorporate their feedback prior to Nov. 6, please send an email to Melinda to make alternative arrangements.)

### **CE Projects**

Students will use the goals and objectives established in project outlines, as well as the expectations for CE projects indicated in the Project Manual, to describe and evaluate their own participation in the learning team's CE project. The course instructor will also seek input from mentors about student participation in the learning team projects. Ultimately, however, the instructor is responsible for determining student learning team participation grades.

**Students are expected to meet with their learning team each week and with their mentor(s) once every two weeks from the start of project planning through to the conclusion of the projects (with the exception of the December break).** These meetings are to be scheduled independently at a time that works for the mentor and the learning team. To accommodate these meetings you will note that our classes are scheduled for only 2 hrs/wk as opposed to the usual three, allowing additional time to be dedicated to learning team and mentor meetings throughout the year.

**NOTE: In addition to team meetings, each student is expected to spend at least 75 hours over the course of the year on her or his CE Project. This works out to approx. 5 hours per week for the 15 week period from Monday Nov. 9 to Friday Mar. 18, not including the December break. Note that these hours will likely be dispersed differently across weeks depending on the nature of the project.**

Please see the GSFR 707 Project Manual (available on Avenue) for additional descriptions of student, mentor, and instructor roles and responsibilities in relation to the CE Projects.

#### ***A few things to keep in mind as you work on your CE Projects:***

- Mentors are often constrained for time – some of them work for their organizations/committees in an entirely voluntary capacity; others may be employed by their organizations but their paid hours are often stretched in multiple directions. Be considerate of your mentor's time. Before consulting them outside of regularly-scheduled mentor meetings, consider whether another member of your learning team or your

instructor might be able to answer your question or assist you. Be punctual for meetings with your mentors and keep to the agreed-upon length of time for these meetings. Consider that their time might be even more restricted than your own, and try to schedule meetings at times and locations that work best for them (recognizing, of course, that we all have busy lives and multiple commitments and it may be necessary to negotiate meeting times/locations accordingly). Also, while you might be keen to assist the mentor/organization by taking on additional work beyond the scope of your agreed-upon project, consider that to do so might require an additional commitment of time and resources from your mentor. Similarly, if you are unable to complete a task you've committed to, keep in mind that this task may then fall on the shoulders of your mentor. As a result, if you are for any reason unable to complete any task you've committed to within the agreed-upon timeframe you should communicate this to your mentor, instructor, and the rest of the learning team as soon as possible.

- Don't assume that any work undertaken or statements made by mentors on behalf of their organizations offers a 'true' reflection of their political beliefs or commitments. Given what we've learned in class about the regulatory political restraints on advocacy/activism for non-profit or charitable organizations, consider that your mentor may be acting strategically to achieve a particular aim/goal of the organization. Our mentors tend to be people with extensive experience in a range of feminist/social justice struggles in Hamilton, so before reacting with critique or judgment about their politics consider how the broader funding and other constraints on their work might delimit what they are able to say or do in their official capacities.
- Don't speak publicly on behalf of the organization or identify yourself as a representative of the organization/committee you are working for without first clearing this with your mentor. If asked or when necessary, identify yourself as a Master's student in the GSFR program at McMaster who is completing a project on behalf of the organization. Many of our organizations require extensive training/screening for anyone who volunteers or is employed with them, and even then only certain individuals are permitted to represent the organization publicly. While it may at times make sense to say "I'm calling on behalf of [organization]" or "I'm seeking donations on behalf of [organization]" etc. etc., please consult with your mentors about how to best describe/explain your relationship with the organization in any public context/situation.
- You will not be able to do everything that the organization/committee needs done. As a result it is important that you be realistic about what you can contribute. Better to do a fantastic job on a smaller project than to over-commit and leave your mentor/organization hanging. Your contribution to the organization through your work on this project is part of an ongoing commitment/relationship that is being developed between the GSFR program as a whole and the organization/committee. If it is not possible to do some aspect of the proposed project this year, consider that students next year may be able to take it on, or faculty might be able to pursue some aspect of it. Remember, it is not your role to "save" the organization from the myriad challenges it may face (and will continue to face). Instead, try to see your role and project as contributing in some small way to the ongoing formation of a local feminist community struggling together towards greater forms of justice – a struggle that has a long history and will of course continue long into the future!