Teaching Volunteerism: making the volunteer a subject of study

Dr. Aimee Placas
College Year in Athens

Volunteerism is a culturally-specific endeavor.

The “taken-for-granteds”

What it’s for.
Why we consider it important.
What it should look like.
And that Good People Volunteer.

“What do we think of societies, and citizens, where people don’t volunteer?”
Ethnocentrism: how to fight it

Self-reflexive journaling isn’t enough.
Seeing these personal motivations as cultural expressions

Ethnocentrism: how to fight it

Around 3 hours at the beginning of the semester.
Continuous touchstone for the rest of the term.

ACTIVITY STEPS

motivations categories
(religious faith, social justice, personal fulfillment, privilege and responsibility, resume building, expression of identity, etc etc etc)

ACTIVITY STEPS

1.
Institutions

Social structures

ACTIVITY STEPS

1. Institutions

ACTIVITY STEPS

2. Social structures

Ideologies

Supplemental readings or short explanations:
- neoliberalism
- history of the development of NGOs
- history of international aid
- critiques of voluntourism

ACTIVITY STEPS

3. Ideologies

Brainstorming

Other modes of:
- "collective action"
- "helping"
- "community activity"

ACTIVITY STEPS

4. Brainstorming

Why is this exercise one of ethics?

[Implicated in a structure of power]
Important path to making sense of their experiences

“I got frustrated this week!”
“Things aren’t going the way I expected!”
“Something is really bugging me!”
“I learned something about my cultural expectations!”

Conclusion

Four steps.
Volunteerism as valuable, but something they can critique.
And they’re ready to hear local critiques of it as well.

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