

Teaching Volunteerism: making the volunteer a subject of study

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College Year in Athens

Volunteerism is a culturally-specific endeavor.

The “taken-for-grantededs”

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

(high school graduation requirements, church programs, NGOs, fraternity and sorority activities, government funded programs, university-facilitated activities, work-place programs, etc etc)

ACTIVITY STEPS
2.

ideologies

supplemental readings or short explanations:

- neoliberalism
- history of the development of NGOs
- history of international aid
- critiques of voluntourism

ACTIVITY STEPS
3.


brainstorming

other modes of:

- “collective action”
- “helping”
- “community activity”

ACTIVITY STEPS
4.

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.

Photo credits: Emma Uri, CYA Social Media Coordinator