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Foundations of the Resident Assistant Experience II  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey - New Brunswick

**Instructor Information**

Name	Office Location and Hours
Phone Number	Email Address
Course Time and Location	

**Course Description**

This course has been designed to assist in the development of a more comprehensive understanding of the theoretical and practical knowledge needed for the Resident Assistant (RA) position at Rutgers University. The learning experience will provide an understanding of the theories and their practical implementation processes for peer counseling/advising; behavioral and mental health issues; conflict mediation; ethical and moral development; and group development. Through exposure to theories, experiential learning situations and the use of critical thinking and using their current experiences in the Resident Assistant position, participants will develop the knowledge to create a richer, more comprehensive experience in the RA position and subsequently enhancing the experience for the RA's students.

**Prerequisites**

Resident Assistant appointment by Rutgers Residence Life.

**Course Objectives and Goals**

1. Identify the issues and problems facing college students and ways to challenge and support students through those issues.
2. Learn the fundamentals of leadership development and group development and how to apply this knowledge within their residence hall community.
3. Understand and be able to identify the behavioral indicators, in students, for the more complex mental health issues.
4. Learn the theory being ethical and moral development and understand how this type of development impacts your role as an RA.
5. Build relationships with classmates.

**Course Readings**

1. Blimling, G. (2003). *The resident assistant: Applications and strategies for working with college students in residence halls*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.
2. Additional Reading such as:  
Evans, N.J., Forney, D.S., Guido, F.M., Patton, L., & Renn, K.A. (2010). *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (selected readings)  
Piper, T., & Buckley, J.A. (2004). Community standards model: Developing Learning Partnerships in campus housing. In M. Baxter Magolda and P.M. King, *Learning partnerships: Theory and models of practice to educate for self-authorship*, pp. 185-212.

**Methods of Instruction**

Lecture, required readings, case studies, class discussions, guest lectures, student presentations, and online discussions

## Notice to Students with Disabilities

Rutgers University recognizes its responsibility for creating an institutional climate in which students with disabilities can thrive. If you have any type of disability for which you require special accommodations to promote your learning in this class, please register with Disability Support Services immediately. If you are registered with Disability Support Services and require accommodations, please make an appointment with me to go over your needs no later than the end of the first week of class. You will need to have your Letter of Accommodation. For more information, go to <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html>.

## Statement on Academic Integrity

Any student found to have engaged in the academic dishonesty will be subject to disciplinary action by the university. Please refer to the university statement on academic integrity.

## Violations of Academic Integrity

Various ways in which academic integrity can be violated are described below. The comments and examples within each section provide explanations and illustrative material, but do not exhaust the scope of possible violations. For context and specific details, the [University Code of Student Conduct](#) as well as the [Student Judicial Affairs website](#) should be consulted.

### A. Cheating

Cheating is the use of impermissible and/or unacknowledged materials, information, or study aids in any academic activity. Using books, notes, calculators, conversations with others, etc. when their use is restricted or forbidden, constitutes cheating. Similarly, students may not request others (including commercial term paper companies) to conduct research or prepare any work for them. Students may not submit identical work, or portions thereof, for credit or honors more than once without prior approval of the instructor to whom the work is being submitted for the second or subsequent time.

### B. Fabrication

Fabrication is the falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic work. "Invented" information may not be used in any laboratory report or other academic work without authorization from the instructor. It is improper, for example, to analyze one sample in an experiment and "invent" data based on that single experiment for several more required analyses. Students must also acknowledge the actual source from which cited information was obtained. A student should not, for example, reproduce a quotation from a book review and claim that the quotation was obtained from the book itself.

### C. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the representation of the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic work. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must be identified by quotation marks, or by appropriate indentation, and must be cited properly according to the accepted format for the particular discipline. Acknowledgment is also required when material from any source is paraphrased or summarized in whole or in part in one's own words. To acknowledge a paraphrase properly, one might state: to paraphrase Plato's comment... and conclude with a footnote or appropriate citation to identify the exact reference. A footnote acknowledging only a directly quoted statement does not suffice to notify the reader of any preceding or succeeding paraphrased material. Information that is common knowledge, such as names of leaders of prominent nations, basic scientific laws, etc, need not be cited; however, the sources of all facts or information obtained in reading or research that are not common knowledge among students in the course must be acknowledged. In addition to materials specifically cited in the text, other materials that

contribute to one's general understanding of the subject may be acknowledged in the bibliography.

Sometimes, plagiarism can be a subtle issue. Students should be encouraged to discuss any questions about what constitutes plagiarism with the faculty member teaching the course.

#### D. Denying others access to information or material

It is a violation of academic integrity to deny others access to scholarly resources or to deliberately impede the progress of another student or scholar. Examples of violations of this type include giving other students false or misleading information; making library material unavailable to others by stealing or defacing books or journals; deliberately misplacing or destroying reserve materials; and altering someone else's computer files.

#### E. Facilitating Violations of Academic Integrity

It is a violation of academic integrity for a student to aid others in violating academic integrity. A student who knowingly or negligently facilitates a violation of academic integrity is as culpable as the student who receives the impermissible aid, even if the former student does not benefit from the violation.

#### Course Criteria

Grades will be based upon class participation, attendance, and timely completion of assignments and projects. Below is the scale that will be used to determine your earned mark:

Attendance and Participation (8 class sessions)	15 points
SAKAI Discussions (4 postings)	10 points
Community Assessment Map/Paper	25 points
Goals Paper	10 points
Online personality test	5 points
Issues group paper	15 points
Final - Issues - group presentation	20 points
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<b>100 points</b>

#### **Attendance and Participation**

Students will participate by sharing their thoughts and reactions to readings, speakers, and general class discussions. The input of each student is valued and valuable. Therefore, active and thoughtful participation is necessary. Your attendance for the full class period is expected, and you are responsible for everything that is covered, distributed, or announced during class. High quality participation is essential and will be evaluated in the following manner

#### **Sakai Discussions**

Students will be divided into groups of four or five for web-based discussions. Students will read and respond to their group members' commentary, summarize key points of the discussion, and post the summary to the course website prior to class. Within the group, one person will be responsible for posting the group summary each week. Each summary posting should be 2-3 paragraphs long and should reflect the group online discussion. SAKAI discussions will be assigned when a major assignment isn't due.

#### **Issues Group Presentation and Paper**

You will be divided into groups for this assignment (3-5 people per group). In your group, you are going to do an evaluation of a current issue or problem in residence hall communities. First your group will pick a topic and submit a topic request at the latest by Week 3 only one group per topic,

first come first serve. Topics could be an issue you see in your residence hall community or an issue that students in your community are facing.

The evaluation of the issue should include current research (2-3 sources), a summary of the causes and impact of the issue and the identification of possible alternatives and solutions. As a group you will write a 6 - 8 page paper and you will conduct a 15 minute group presentation to explain your campus issue and your solutions.

### **Community Assignment**

Each student will be asked to create a map of their community that includes the name of each resident with at least on non demographic piece of information about them. The map should indicate who (which resident or which apartment) hangs out with each other, who are the informal leaders, who hasn't made connections in the community.

Once the map is completed and discussed in class each student will be asked to write a 2-4 page community reflection paper. Prior to writing the paper each student will meet with their supervisor to discuss their community. The paper should include how you went about developing your community, an assessment of what is strength of the community is and what needs to be improved and how you are going to go about improving your community.

### **Goals Assignment**

Students will write a 2-3 page paper identifying their learning goals for the year. Included with each goal should be strategies on how to achieve it and how to measure that you have.

### **Online Personality Test**

Students will be asked to complete an online personality inventory which will be used as part of the lecture during week 7.

### **Grading Scale**

- A 93 - 100 points
- B + 89 - 92 points
- B 83 - 88 points
- C+ 78 - 82 points
- C 70 - 77 points
- D 61 - 69 points
- F 0 - 60 points

The following are additional expectations of the course:

1. In order to take full advantage of the class, you are expected to arrive on time. If you are not going to attend a session, please be sure that you contact your class facilitator(s) as soon as possible. You are not permitted to make up the session by attending another class session. Class attendance accounts for a large portion of your final grade, so lack of attendance can drastically impact your final evaluation.
2. Late assignments will not be accepted unless given permission from the instructor.
3. Please be prepared to discuss **all** assigned readings, homework assignments, and other class projects. Your attention to these details will facilitate your ability to successfully contribute to the active nature of the class environment.

## Class Topics and Assignments

The following is a summary of topics, readings, and homework assignments for the Resident Advisor Class. Please contact your class instructor should you have questions about any of the expected assignments.

### **Week #1 - Introduction/ Leadership Development**

- Introductions
- Icebreaker
- Review course syllabus and assignments
- Overview of Leadership Development
- In-class Case Study
- Introduce and create groups for the Issues assignment
- SAKAI posting and discussion overview

### Work to be completed for Week #2:

- SAKAI posting #1 due
- Read: find a handout on leadership( possibly from social change model or relational leadership model)
- Read handouts on Diversity

### **Week #2 - Diversity Revisited - Using Theories to Shape experiences**

- Departmental Announcements
- SAKAI posting discussion # 1
- Guest Presenter

### Work to be completed for Week #3:

- SAKAI posting #2 due
- Issues Topic due
- Read handouts
- Read *Blimling: Peer Counseling: Chapter 8*

### **Week #3 - RA Role being a helper Part Two - Understanding Mental Health Issues**

- Departmental Announcements
- SAKAI posting discussion #2
- Guest Presenter in depth information on eating disorders/cutting/bi-polar and other specific mental health issues
- In-class discussion: What issues are we seeing? Where might they be coming from?

### Work to be completed for Week #4:

- SAKAI posting #3
- Read handout on legal issues relating to residence life (maybe a packet of articles)
- Bring questions for outside presenter

#### **Week #4 - Legal Considerations in Residence Life**

- Departmental Announcements
- SAKAI posting discussion #3
- Outside presenter/readings on court cases

#### **Work to be completed for Week #5:**

- Community Map Assignment Due
- Review *Blimling: Community Development: Chapter 20*
- Read Handout on community leadership

#### **Week #5 - Who is in our Communities? Learning Assessment**

- Departmental Announcements
- Review of Community Development
- Review of Community Maps
- Introduction to Assessment Theories and applications

#### **Work to be completed for Week #6**

- SAKAI posting #4 due
- Community Assessment paper due
- Read *Blimling: the RA as a Role model: Chapter 1*
- Read: Find handouts on the theories of ethical and moral development

#### **Week #6 - Ethical and Moral Development**

- Departmental Announcements
- SAKAI posting discussion #4
- Ethical and Moral Development Lecture
- Balancing resident friendships and boundaries
- Values Continuum exercise

#### **Work to be completed for Week #7:**

- Goals Paper due
- Read handout on group development
- Complete online personality assessment - email to professor

#### **Week #7 - Group Development**

- Departmental Announcements
- Group Development Theories overview
- Overview of Personality type assessments
- Discussion: How has your staff team developed? How do your personality strengths and weakness impact your work?
- In-class case studies

#### **Work to be completed for Week #8:**

- Issues presentations and papers due

#### **Week #8 - Final Presentations**

- Departmental Announcements/ Course wrap-up
- Issues Presentations