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**Foundations of the Resident Assistant Experience I**  
Rutgers University  
Spring 2014

Class Day: Wednesdays  
Class Time: 11:30am-2:10pm  
Class Location: Cook/Douglass Campus – Scarlet Lounge, PAL  
Instructors: Stephanie Pelham  
Email: stephanie.pelham@rutgers.edu  
Office Hours: Per Appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Welcome to Foundations of the RA Experience. This course has been designed to assist students in the development of a more comprehensive understanding of the theoretical and practical knowledge needed for the Resident Assistant position at Rutgers University. The learning experience will provide an understanding of Student and Community Development, Leadership, Communication, and Diversity theories. Through exposure to theories, experiential learning situations and the use of critical thinking and reflective analysis participants will develop the background and knowledge that will allow them to conceptually understand their new leadership role.

**REREQUISITES:**

Resident/Apartment Assistant appointment by Rutgers Residence Life.

**COURSE GOALS**

The goals of this course are for students to:

**Consider appropriate theory and context by:**

- Developing a deeper understanding of the theories and research that guide the work of the RA/AA.
- Gaining skills and comfort with applying theories and constructs to daily work with residents.

**Reflect closely and thoughtfully by:**

- Developing a deeper understanding of one's self by engaging in meaningful reflection, discussion, and interaction with peers and instructors.
- Engaging with the course content and applying it within one's role as an RA/AA.

**Integrate knowledge and skills by:**

- Applying the course principles as an RA/AA leader within a diverse campus environment.

**REQUIRED COURSE READING:**

Blimling, G. (2010). *The resident assistant: Applications & strategies for working with college students in residence halls*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS/POLICIES:**

**Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is essential to the success of the educational enterprise and breaches of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the academic community. Students are responsible for understanding the principles of academic integrity fully and abiding by them in all their work at the University. <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>  
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**Accommodating Students with Disabilities:** Rutgers University is committed to providing an environment where all students can equally participate in the academic experience. In effect, every individual and every administrative unit is pledged to make a good faith effort to provide equality of educational access/opportunity to qualified students with disabilities by making reasonable accommodations. <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~polcomp/fachand.shtml> © 2005 Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. All rights reserved. If you require special assistance, please see me as soon as possible.

**Attendance:** This class will only meet once a week for 8 weeks therefore attendance is **MANDATORY**. You are allowed to miss class if it is a legitimate excused absence (illness, death in the family, religious observance, etc.) but you must inform the instructor before the class you will miss (by email) when possible and provide documentation in the next class you can attend.

**Lateness:** Once again because this course only meets once a week for 8 weeks lateness will not be tolerated. If you are more than ten minutes late to the class you will not receive an attendance point for the day.

**Participation:** Class cannot function without your participation, therefore it is extremely important. It is a large portion of your grade and is vital to getting the most out of this class.

**Late Assignments:** Late assignments will not be accepted.

**Cell phone/laptop usage:** Cell phone usage, either calling, texting, looking things up on the web, is prohibited. In addition Laptop usage is permitted for note taking purposes only.

## **COURSE CRITERIA**

Grades will be based upon class participation, attendance, and timely completion of assignments and projects. The grading scale for the course is:

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

Please review "Rubric for Course Criteria" for point distribution:

### **Attendance and participation**

You will participate by sharing your thoughts and reactions to readings, speakers, and general class discussions. 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. Four points are given for each class, two points for attendance and two points for full participation.

### **Teambuilding Group Project:**

Each student will be assigned to a group which will be assigned the responsibility of finding/creating and implementing a teambuilding exercise for class during their assigned week. The goal of this assignment is to gather resources of potential teams experiences to use with future groups and to learn how team building experiences can aid in the development of communities.

**THIS PROJECT IS DUE THROUGHOUT THE COURSE DEPENDING ON YOUR ASSIGNED GROUP.**

### **Perceptions Paper:**

How you are perceived as a person in your everyday life translates into how you are perceived as a leader. This assignment will focus on how others perceive you, your outward perception, your inner perception and how you perceive yourself. The goal of this assignment is to gain an understanding of the differences between your outward perception and inner perception. Once you have a better understanding of how you are perceived you can make sure that your outward perception matches your inner perception. Details of the assignment can be found on the Sakai site.

DUE DATE: WEEK OF March 31<sup>st</sup>.

**Community Assessment Paper:**

You will be asked to observe a residence hall community and provide a detailed analysis. The goal of this assignment is to gain an understanding of how to assess the strength of a residence hall community and to gain an understanding of the interactions that drive how a community forms and functions. Details of the assignment can be found on the Sakai site.

DUE DATE: WEEK OF APRIL 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Shadowing Reflection Paper:**

Each student will work with their Teaching Assistant to identify a staff member in their current building who they will shadow on duty. After the shadowing experience, each student will write a reflection paper on the supports and challenges that are available when serving as a first responder. Specific stipulations regarding the abilities and limits of the shadowing student will be outlined at a later date.

DUE DATE: WEEK OF APRIL 14<sup>th</sup>.

**My Story Paper:**

Throughout class will have explored many different student development theories. Your assignment will be to choose one of those theories and discuss your development and experiences as a student at Rutgers through the lens of that chosen theory. The goal of this assignment is to gain an understanding of your growth and development to enhance your ability to see that development in others. Details of the assignment can be found on the Sakai site.

DUE DATE: WEEK OF APRIL 28<sup>th</sup>.

## **CLASS TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

The following is a summary of topics, readings, and assignments. Contact your class instructor(s) should you have questions about any of the expected assignments. All assignments should be submitted using 12-point Times New Roman font, double spaced with one-inch margins.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic and Activity</b>	<b>Homework due following week:</b>
<b>Week 1</b> (March 10 <sup>th</sup> )	<b>Overview of Student Affairs and the roles of the Resident Assistant</b>  Meet and interact Review Syllabus and assignments Overview of Student Affairs The roles of an RA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Team building group 1</li> <li>➤ Read Blimling: Chapters 8 and 9</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2</b> (March 24 <sup>th</sup> )	<b>Understanding our Students</b>  Team building group 1 Student Development Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Team building group 2</li> <li>➤ Read Blimling: Chapters 11</li> <li>➤ Perceptions paper</li> </ul>
<b>Week 3</b> (March 31 <sup>st</sup> )	<b>Communication and Relationship Building</b>  Submit Perception paper in class Team building group 2 Communication skills overview Skills clinic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Team building group 3</li> <li>➤ Read Blimling: Chapter 10</li> </ul>
<b>Week 4</b> (April 7 <sup>th</sup> )	<b>Understanding our Diversity</b>  Team building group 3 Introduction to Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Read Blimling: Chapters 6,14, and 15</li> <li>➤ Shadowing Project</li> </ul>
<b>Week 5</b> ( April 14 <sup>th</sup> )	<b>Community Development</b>  Submit Shadowing project paper in class Community Development theories and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Team building group 4</li> <li>➤ Read Blimling: Chapters 12 and 13</li> <li>➤ Community Assessment Paper</li> </ul>
<b>Week 6</b> (April 21 <sup>st</sup> )	<b>Conflict Resolution</b> Submit Community assessment Paper in class Team building group 4 Conflict Resolution Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Team building group 5</li> <li>➤ My Story paper</li> <li>➤</li> </ul>
<b>Week 7</b> (April 28 <sup>th</sup> )	<b>Leadership</b>  Submit My Story paper in class Team building group 5 Students as leaders	THANK YOU FOR A GREAT CLASS AND ENJOY THE REST OF THE SEMESTER!