

**FOUNDATIONS OF THE RESIDENT ASSISTANT EXPERIENCE 201**  
**Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey – New Brunswick**  
**Fall 2015**

Course Time and Location: **Scarlet Lounge, PAL Building, Cook/Douglass**  
**Thursdays 2:15 pm- 4:50 pm INDEX: 10049 SECTION: 5**

**INSTRUCTOR'S INFORMATION**

Name: **Jason Hunt & Rachael Padula**  
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Teaching Assistant: **Liz Riordan; ter46@scarletmail.rutgers.edu**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is designed to assist in the development of a more comprehensive understanding of the theoretical and practical knowledge needed for the Resident Assistant and Apartment Assistant (RA/AA) positions at Rutgers University. This learning experience provides an understanding of the theories and their practical implications for peer counseling/advising; behavioral and mental health issues; conflict mediation; ethical and moral development; and group development. Through theories, experiential learning, and current experiences in the RA/AA position, participants will integrate their new knowledge and skills in order to advance their personal and professional development, as well as the development of their residents and the Rutgers community.

**PREREQUISITE**

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.
- Additional Materials as needed.

## **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 Rutgers University. For full details, visit: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>

### **Accommodating students with disabilities**

Rutgers University is committed to providing an equitable environment where all students can participate in the academic experience. If you require special assistance or accommodations, please contact the instructor(s) as soon as possible. For more details, visit: <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>

### **Attendance**

This class meets once a week for 7 weeks of the semester and attendance is mandatory. An excused absence (illness, death in the family, religious observance, etc.) can be granted by the instructor(s) but you must inform the instructor(s) before the class you will miss (by email) when possible and provide documentation in the next class you can attend.

If you are unable to attend your section's session, contact your class facilitator(s) as soon as possible. You can attend another section with prior approval of both instructors.

### **Lateness**

This course is built on active participation. Being late to class is not permissible. If you are more than ten minutes late to the class, you will not receive an attendance point for the day.

### **Participation**

The course is designed to build a community of learners. In order to do this, you are required to actively participate in all group discussions, activities, and assignments. Be prepared to discuss all assigned readings, homework assignments, and other class projects. Course participation is essential to your learning and is incorporated into your grade for the semester.

### **Late assignments**

Late assignments will not be accepted unless you are given permission by the instructor(s) prior to the due date. Any late assignments will receive zero points.

### **Cell phone/laptop usage**

Any use of a mobile phone is prohibited. Laptop usage is permitted for note taking purposes only. Points can be deducted from class participation for inappropriate use of electronic devices during the class.

## **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 =90 – 100; B + =88 – 89; B =80 – 87; C+ =78 – 79; C =70 – 77; D =61 – 69; F =0 – 60**

A total of 100 points will be distributed for the following assignments:

**Attendance and participation** (28 points)

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.

**Journal Reflection** (14 points)

There will be a journal entry due before the beginning of each class to your Sakai drop box. Each entry should be approximately 200 – 250 words in length and answer the appropriate prompt. Entries will be graded on the level and length of content. **Journals are due via Sakai by midnight 12am every Sunday (going into Monday)!**

**Self-Assessment Reflection Paper** (8 points)

There will be a two page reflection paper regarding your assessment regarding your growth as a staff members. What are areas you feel you are exceling in, and where are areas for you to grow. How will you go about improving your areas of growth? This paper is worth 8 points.

**Community map** (50 points)

All RA/AA's are expected to build a relationship with each resident within their respective communities. For this activity, you will create a map of your community that includes the names and information for each resident. Each part is worth 25 points.

**Part 1** (Due Week 4)

Using your community map, indicate who you have gotten to know. Include at least one non-demographic piece of information about the residents. Who hangs out with each other? Who are the informal leaders? Why were you able to connect with them so quickly? What activities keep them busy?

Also, clearly indicate any residents who you do not know well and why.

**Part 2** (Due Week 5)

Once the map is completed, you will write a 3-4 page synthesis paper. Prior to writing the paper, you will meet with your supervisor to discuss your community. The paper should include the following sections: (a) strengths of your community, (b) strategy for enhancing relationships with residents, and (c) immediate next steps for enhancing your community.

**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.

DATE	TOPICS AND ACTIVITIES	READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS DUE
<b>Week 1</b> 09/01 - 09/04	<p><b><u>Introduction and RA/Student Balance</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Introductions</li> <li>2. Review syllabus, expectations, and ground rules</li> <li>3. Meet the Professional Staff &amp; Organizational Chart</li> <li>4. Role of a Resident/Apartment Assistant</li> <li>5. Discuss readings</li> <li>6. Activity</li> </ol> <p>Learning Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students will understand expectations and requirements of the RA Class.</li> <li>- Students will be familiar with the professional Residence Life staff</li> <li>- Students will analyze time management practices</li> <li>- Students will create a week long schedule including their RA, student, and personal responsibilities</li> </ul> <p>Journal Prompt #1: - <i>Reflect on your life before and after becoming an RA/AA. What are the most significant changes you can identify? What excites or scares you about these differences? How will you take advantage of the exciting changes and overcomes the challenging ones?</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Read Blimling Chapter 16 <input type="checkbox"/> Journal # 1
<b>Week 2</b> 09/07 - 09/11	<p><b><u>Confronting Confrontation</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review of confrontation case studies and perceptions paper from the spring</li> <li>2. Review perceptions of confrontation and its impact (Case Study 9.1 and 9.2).</li> <li>3. Engage with a staff member from the community standards office to review the process and importance.</li> </ol> <p>Learning Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students will analyze how they are perceived by their residents and others</li> <li>- Students will understand the function of the Community Standards Office and how they adjudicate the incident reports submitted by staff</li> <li>- Staff will reflect on the perceptions paper they wrote in the spring semester</li> </ul> <p>Journal Prompt #2 - <i>“Being as honest as possible, reflect on your residents’ and fellow staff members’ perception of you. Describe positive interactions you have had with your residents at move in, floor meetings, informal and formal programs, and conversations. Also describe negative resident interactions. What happened and how did you respond? What perception did your residents get from you during your interaction? How did you use the knowledge you gained from your Perceptions Paper from the spring semester influence your reaction? Finally, consider your relationship with your staff. What conflicts exist and how have/will you address(ed) them? How have these conflicts affected your work?”</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Journal # 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Read Blimling chapter 17

<b>Week 3</b> 09/14 - 09/18	<u><b>Community Map/Development</b></u> 1. Review of expectations of community map 2. Begin to identify community members 3. Vote on Master Class Topics  Learning Outcomes: - Students will analyze their community's development - Students will learn about the community map and how to complete the assignment - Staff will apply their understanding of community development to case studies Journal Prompt #3 - <i>The Community Map assignment is a great way to learn about your community and see what work still needs to be completed. What do you hope to learn/what have you learned in completing your Community Map?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Journal #3 <input type="checkbox"/> Community Map to complete
<b>Week 4</b> 09/21 - 09/25	<u><b>Alcohol and Other Drugs Assistance Program</b></u> 1. Thoughtful Eyes: Life of an RA/AA  Learning Outcomes: - Students will learn about the resources available at ADAPS - Students will be able to identify warning signs of students in need of help Journal Prompt #4 - <i>What are your take-aways from the ADAPS session? How will this information benefit your community?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Blimling Chapters 20 & 21 <input type="checkbox"/> Journal # 4 <input type="checkbox"/> Community Map due
DATE	TOPICS AND ACTIVITIES	READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS DUE
<b>Week 5</b> 09/28 - 10/02	<u><b>Guest Speakers from CAPS</b></u> 1. Case Study 11.2  Learning Outcomes: - Students will learn about the resources available at CAPS - Students will be able to identify warning signs of students in need of help  Journal Prompt #5 - <i>What are your take-aways from the CAPS session? How will this information benefit your community?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Read Blimling chapters 18, 22 and 23 <input type="checkbox"/> Journal Prompt #5 <input type="checkbox"/> Community map paper submit
<b>Week 6</b> 10/05- 10/09	<u><b>Analysis of Community &amp; Self-Assessment</b></u> 1. Case Study with all community measurements (Case Study 17.2) 2. True Colors 2.0 Learning Outcomes: - Students will learn about the impact of a community based on multiple factors - Students will be able to better assess their own community and begin to create a plan to better their community with supervisor  Journal Prompt #6 - <i>Think back to your first year as a member of a residential community. What made this community successful? What made this community unsuccessful? How can you take observations from the past, and your observations of your current community, and look to even better the live-on experience for residents?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Journal Prompt #6  <input type="checkbox"/> Self-Assessment Reflection Paper Due

<p><b>Week 7</b> 10/12 - 10/16</p>	<p><b><u>Master Class and Future Planning</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Topical Skill Set Areas</li> <li>2. Opportunity for future community planning</li> </ol> <p>Learning Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students will be able to gain a set of skills by selecting topical areas they would like to grow in</li> <li>- Students will be able to identify specific community development/programming endeavors to take part in for the remainder of the fall semester and into spring semester.</li> </ul> <p>Journal Prompt #7 – <i>Seeing this course come to a close, describe your “Ah-Ha” moment. What was this moment? How has this moment better prepared you for the RA/AA position?</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Journal #7</p>
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