

Spring 2016
RA Experience I

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Fridays 11:30am -2:10pm Scarlet Lounge, PAL Cook/Douglass

Instructors' Names: Brian Cousin	Email address: Brian.Cousin@echo.rutgers.edu
Phone Number: (848) 932-9363	
Office Hours: Per Appointment	Prerequisites or other limitations: Resident/Apartment Assistant or Alternate appointment by Rutgers Residence Life.
Mode of Instruction: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lecture <input type="checkbox"/> Seminar <input type="checkbox"/> Hybrid <input type="checkbox"/> Online <input type="checkbox"/> Other	Permission required: <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes Directions about where to get permission numbers: Rachael Padula

Learning 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.

Course catalog 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.

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

Other description of course purposes, context, methods, etc:

Grading policy: 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

Please review “Rubric for Course Criteria” for point distribution:

Structured Rubric	Most Points	Some Points	Minimal Points	No Points
Grammar/Spelling	1-2 grammar and/or spelling errors	3-6 grammar and/or spelling errors	7-9 grammar and/or spelling errors	10-12 grammar and/or spelling errors
Themes	All Themes discussed from syllabus are present/integrated in assignment	Missing one of the key themes of the paper	Missing two of themes required as outlined by the Syllabus	Assignment misses requirements outlined by the syllabus
Content	Paper was well planned and executed. The paper flowed appropriately with an appropriate conclusion	Paper had a few sections that could have been elaborated or connected better. Overall, good paper.	Paper has some sections that were not necessary or did not add anything to the paper.	The paper was disjointed and did not flow. Made a few good points but overall was not a good paper.
Formatting - ½ inch margins - 12 point font - Double-spaced - Length: check syllabus	The Paper is the correct length, in the correct font, and has no glaring formatting mistakes	Minor formatting errors are present in the paper. Margins may be larger than needed or the paper is not the correct length	The paper does not meet the length requirements. Other mistakes present such as font, or paper not typed	The paper does not meet any of the formatting requirements. The font size/type is incorrect. Paper is not appropriate length.

Assignments¹:

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 assignment is worth 10points.**THIS PROJECT IS DUE THROUGHOUT THE COURSE DEPENDING ON 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,

¹ Including exams, papers etc.

and 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. This assignment is worth 20 points.

DUE DATE: WEEK OF MARCH 28th.

Perceptions: the result or product of perceiving, as distinguished from the act of perceiving; percept.

Perceiving - to recognize, discern, envision, or understand (Dictionary.com)

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, and how you perceive yourself, your inner perception. The goal of this assignment is to gain an understanding of the difference 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.

There are a couple of tasks that you will need to complete and include with your final paper.

1. Self-reflection perception profile. Fill out the profile honestly and with a lot of thought.
2. Have three friends or family members fill out the perception profile form. Choose three people that know you well and will be willing to give you honest feedback. Try to get three people from different aspects of your life (family, friends, co-worker, floormates, RA/AA, etc.). At least one person should be someone who you have been on a team or in a group with. No more than 1 family member.
3. Once you have all four perception profiles (three others and your own). Begin reflecting on these statements:
 - a. What are your overall strengths and weaknesses as outlined based on the categories in the perception profile?
 - b. What are your strengths and weaknesses that others identify based on the categories in the perception profile?
 - c. What is your reaction to your outward perception?
 - d. How will knowing your perceptions make you a successful leader?
 - e. What are some strengths you will draw on and some weaknesses you think you should address to be successful?
 - f. How comfortable were you answering the questions about yourself and asking others to answer the questions?

The above questions are there to get you thinking about the reflection portion of the assignment. Your reflection paper does not need to be organized into these categories. 3-4 pages; double spaced; 12 pt font; Standard margins; Attach the four perception profiles (self and three others). Form on next page.

STUDENT NAME: _____

Perception Profile Form

(Please print 4 copies; 1 for you and 3 for others to complete)

I am very interested in learning more about myself—my strengths and weaknesses. If we agree that the only way I can improve my interpersonal relations is to minimize my weaknesses and maximize my strengths, then it's important that my perceptions of myself be congruent with the perceptions that others have of me. With this in mind I ask you to candidly and honestly appraise me. Scoring me high to make me feel good will only be to my benefit if that's exactly the way you perceive me. I am also interested in reading about how you see me interact with others.

Please write comments after each trait pointing out examples of my behavior, making recommendations, etc.

1. Untrustworthy/Trustworthy

2. Dependability

3. Approachability

4. Flexibility

5. Building Relationships with Others

6. More Optimistic or Pessimistic Person

7. First Impression (if other than someone who met me at a young age)

8. Openness to Feedback

9. Role Model to Others

10. Unlikeable/Likeable

11. Other Characteristics

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. This assignment is worth 10 points. **DUE DATE: WEEK OF APRIL 11TH.**

Further Instructions for Community Assessment Assignment

- Students will be asked to observe a community (community being a part of another floor/house/hallway of a residence hall).
- Observation would take place for a minimum of three days (can be consecutive or within a week's span).
- Each day, the observation must be for a minimum of one hour (total of a minimum of three hours from the course of three observation days). Observations should be taking place during the dinner timeframe, during quiet hours, and in the morning.
- During observations, students will be asked to study how the community members display patterns of interaction and physical signs of connection to one another, their guests, and the staff of the area. If applicable, students can be observing how the community is in regards to race/ethnicity/diversity among the community, as well as any evident student development theories.
- While taking notes of the community, students should draw out a map of the community space, using a key and colors to define the community space (such as the positioning of the furniture, decorations in the lounge, etc.)
- Students will log their entries with notes from the observations, which is to be included in the submitted assignment.
- Students will then collect their observation notes and write a one paragraph summary of the community, a three page analysis of the community, and a final drawing of the community. The analysis will be examining the findings among the community, as well reflecting on what they have learned from examining this community.
- Community Assessment assignment will be graded based upon the relevant content to the course and well as a thorough assessment of the community.

Programming Process Project:

Each student will be required to complete a program from start to finish in conjunction with the goals and expectations of the department model. The project will consist of 3 parts- an official department Proposal, a detailed description of how the program should be carried out (1 page minimum) and a reflection of things learned, questions and concerns that resulted from the project, and intentions for programming in the halls as a functioning staff member (1 page minimum) 1 inch margins; 12 pt. font; Double spaced. This assignment is worth 10 points. **DUE DATE: WEEK OF APRIL 18TH.**

My Story Paper:

Throughout this class you have explored many different student development theories. Choose one of these theories and discuss your development and experiences as a student at Rutgers through the lens of that chosen theory. Provide examples of your development in the areas of communication, relationship building, diversity and multicultural understanding, community development, and conflict resolution as they relate to your development. Who were you when you began at Rutgers? Who are you now? Please indicate where you feel you can improve, develop, and grow in the coming years. Make sure to relate everything within the scope of your chosen student development theory. This paper should demonstrate that you understand the theory and can apply it to your own development.

3-5 pages; 1 inch margins; 12 pt. font; Double spaced. This assignment is worth 12 points. **DUE DATE: WEEK OF APRIL 25TH.**

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. This assignment is worth 10 points. 1-2 pages; double spaced; 12 pt font; Standard margins

DUE DATE: WEEK OF APRIL 25th.

The term *authentic community* describes one model of a healthy, or true, community. According to this model numerous elements are involved in fostering a sense of authentic community. The most fundamental components include similar interests, common purpose, peer influence, social interaction, stability, and self-determination. Also, community is nurtured when members collaborate to create their own standards and commit themselves to maintaining satisfactory interactions among members through personal contact, not through rules and regulations (Schroeder, 1998).

Authentic communities are present when the group exhibits the six I's: Introduction, Interaction, Involvement, Influence, Investment, and Identity:

- **Introduction:** "When students enter a new community, they are unfamiliar with the physical setting, policies, and practices. Older members of the community, or those in a position of authority, are responsible for welcoming, orienting, and teaching the norms, values and rules of the community, to the new members" (Minor, 1993).
- **Interaction:** "Interaction provides residents the opportunity to bond together by sharing common experiences. As students interact, they are exposed to differing levels of development, knowledge, and experiences that allow them to both teach and learn" (Minor, 1998).
- **Involvement:** "A true community encourages, expects, and rewards member involvement characterized by a high degree of interaction, with students, not staff, assuming a multitude of roles...Everyone is important and everyone is needed" (Schroeder, 1998).
- **Influence:** "Control is vested in members. [Members expect] to develop a social contract whereby group standards are affirmed, both individually and collectively... Students feel important, their perspective is valued, their contributions are essential to the welfare of the group" (Schroeder, 1998).
- **Investment:** "Students care about one another and their group" (Schroeder, 1998). Interactions between members are characterized by gentle confrontation. The members appreciate the need for open, honest communication, and rewards are provided
- **Identity:** "[Communities] characterized by a high degree of identity are ones that focus on transcendent values. Students in such [groups] have shared symbols. Members describe themselves in collective terms such as we and us, not I and they, thereby reflecting their emphasis on common purposes and unity" (Schroeder, 1998)

Shadowing Reflection Paper (additional information):

Each RA is responsible for serving on a duty rotation to provide immediate assistance for students in crisis. Each student will work with their Hall Director/RLC to identify a staff member in their current building who they will shadow on duty, this must be reported to their Teaching Assistant once completed. Each student should follow the RA on Duty as they complete a nightly round, attend to any duty response, and go about their general duties as a staff member.

To successfully complete this assignment, students must:

- Observe an RA on Duty.
- These observations are to last no more than 2 hours.
- You may work with one other class member on your observation. Only up to two new RAs can observe one current staff member at a time.
- Observation must take place during duty hours.
- Think about how the 6 I's is visibly working or not working in the community. (Use the list below)

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. Please include the following:

- 1) A description of your night. What is a typical night on duty like?
- 2) How does perception affect the RA on Duty? How is the RA on Duty perceived by residents?
- 3) What tools does an RA need to be successful on duty?
- 4) When RAs need help, who do they call?
- 5) Aside from crisis response, what else can be accomplished while on duty? How can we use our duty time as a time to create community?
- 6) In what ways do you feel the community is a positive developing community?

Please email your TA with the name of the staff member you are scheduled to shadow, as well as the date and time, by **Week 5 of class**.

6 I's of Community Sheet

Questions to consider when observing the community:	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Which of the 6 Is?</u>
Do you feel that the staff member knew the names of their residents?			
Do you feel the residents had an understanding of ways to be involved both on the floor and in the building?			
Do you feel that the residents on floor/building knew each other?			
Did you feel that the bulletin boards/ door tags, etc identified the interests of the community?			
Do you feel that residents had a mutual respect for one another?			
Do you feel that residents knew and respected the policies set forth?			
Do you feel that residents had a desire and interest for programs in the building?			
Would you say that this was a positive community developing?			
Do you feel that residents felt a sense of ownership in/and identify with the floor?			
Do you feel that residents feel comfortable to stand up for their rights and responsibilities?			

Academic Integrity Policy:

The Office of Student Conduct supervises issues related to violations of academic integrity (see <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu>). Please familiarize yourself with the university policy on academic integrity at http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_2013.pdf

Office of Disability Services:

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Course Schedule

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	Topic and Activity	Homework Due Following Week:
Week 1 (Week of March 7 th)	Overview of Student Affairs and the roles of the Resident Assistant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet & interact • Review Syllabus & assignments • Overview of Student Affairs • The roles of an AA/RA 	Due Week of 3/21/2016 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Team Building Group 1 Presents ➤ Read Blimling: Chapters 8 & 9
Week 2 (Week of March 21 st)	Understanding our Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Building Group 1 • Student Development Theory 	Due Week of 3/28/2016 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Team Building Group 2 Presents ➤ Read Blimling: Chapter 11 ➤ Perceptions Paper Due
Week 3 (Week of March 28 th)	Communication and Relationship Building <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Perception Paper • Team Building Group 2 • Communication skills overview • Skills clinic 	Due Week of 4/4/2016 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Team Building Group 3 Presents ➤ Read Blimling: Chapter 10
Week 4 (Week of April 4 th)	Understanding our Diversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Building Group 3 • Introduction to Diversity 	Due Week of 4/11/2016 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Team Building Group 4 Presents ➤ Read Blimling: Chapters 14 & 15 ➤ Community Assessment Paper
Week 5 (Week of April 11 th)	Community Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Community Assessment 	Due Week of 4/18/2016 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Team Building Group 5 Presents

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Building Group 4 • Community Development theories/skills • Programming model and planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Read Blimling: Chapters 12 & 13 ➤ Program Process Project Due
Week 6 (Week of April 18 th)	Conflict Resolution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Program Process Project • Team Building Group 5 • Conflict Resolution Theory 	Due Week of 4/25/2016 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Team Building Group 6 Presents ➤ My Story Paper Due ➤ Shadowing Reflection Paper Due
Week 7 (Week of April 25 th)	Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit My Story Paper • Submit Shadowing Reflection Paper • Team Building Group 6 • Students as leaders 	THANK YOU FOR A GREAT CLASS AND ENJOY THE REST OF THE SEMESTER ☺