

IDS (Inter-Disciplinary Seminar) 228: SERVICE-LEARNING IN NICARAGUA 2010/2011

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Meetings in TBA 8:30am Mondays.

Sep 13: GENERAL ORIENTATION. Hand in your fantasy piece about your first few days in San Juan (see below under NOTES ON THE WRITING COMPONENT OF IDS 228).

General discussion of travel to Nicaragua, how Service-Learning works, community service opportunities in San Juan, home stays, journaling, final paper, etc. There are two books to buy: **The Best of What We Are**, by John Brentlinger, and **¡GASPAR! A Spanish Poet/Priest in the Nicaraguan Revolution**, by David Gullette. The rest of the reading is in hand-outs. Read my "Nica Lexicon" from **Gringo Pinolero** (www.newtonsanjuan.org/writers.html.) You should also read **El Nuevo Diario** <http://www.elnuevodiario.com.ni/> and **La Prensa** <http://www-usa.laprensa.com.ni/>

online, and subscribe to the Nicaragua Network Hotline (free: send a request to nicanet-hotline-on@afgi.org). Get Valerie Miller and Margaret Gullette handouts today.

First writing assignment, due next Monday Sept 20: Write a paragraph each about five or six things you learned about literacy in Nicaragua from reading Miller and M. Gullette. Anything on the web about literacy in Nicaragua today?

Sept 20 & 27: THE IMPORTANCE OF LITERACY: Excerpts from Valerie Miller: **Between Struggle and Hope: The Nicaraguan Literacy Crusade**; Margaret M. Gullette: "*Florcita la Suerte*" (about the women's literacy campaign in San Juan in the 1990s). Current articles about remembering the Crusade of 1980, and the state of literacy today. Get **¡GASPAR!** Study questions today.

Second writing assignment, due next Monday Oct 4: Write up answers to the first six Gaspar study questions.

Third writing assignment, due Monday Oct 18: Write up answers to the rest of the Gaspar study questions.

Oct 4 & 18: LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND REVOLUTION I: David Gullette: **¡GASPAR!** (have the entire book read and study questions prepared). Get handouts for next time.

Fourth writing assignment, due next Monday Nov 1: What major points of interest did you find in the story of the Solentiname community's journey toward consciousness-raising? What caught your eye when you did a web search for "Solentiname"?

Nov 1: LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND REVOLUTION II: David Gullette:

"Consciousness, Poetry and Rebellion: The Peasant Poets of Solentiname"; passages from **The Gospel in Solentiname**; **The Best of What We Are** pp. 69-97, 308-316; William Blum, excerpt from **Killing Hope**. Get handouts for next time.

Fifth writing assignment, due next Monday Nov 8: What is Paul Farmer so angry about? Read up on Paul Farmer and his work: how would you describe the kind of medicine he and Partners in Health practice? What is access to clean water such a crucial issue for the 21st century?

Nov 8: WATER & THE POLITICS OF HEALTHCARE: excerpts from Paul Farmer:

Infections and Inequalities; Ruth Herrera: "Luchemos todos contra la Privatización del Agua; various handouts about water issues around the world. Discuss Newton's Clean Water/ Anti-Parasite Campaign. Oct 29: Get Workbook for next time.

Sixth writing assignment, due next Monday Nov 15: Write up answers to the first three questions below. Then: what did you learn from the Workbook.

Nov 15 & Nov 22: ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF DEVELOPMENT: What is the "Washington Consensus" (neoliberal) model of economic development? What are the

alternatives? What is "Appropriate Technology"? Discuss workbook for *We Have Other Plans*. (We'll screen the video during class.) Discuss opportunities for working in Appropriate Technology in January (see DG article). Get handouts for next time.

Seventh writing assignment, due next Monday Nov 29: What did you learn about gender relations from reading Brentlinger's conversations with Norma, and from the Comision Report?

Eighth writing assignment due Monday Dec 6: Write several paragraphs of reflections about Connell's chapter about Nicaraguan women's organizations. Alternative: Read Ziola's testimony and write a few pages about your reaction to it.

Nov 29 & Dec 6: **FEMINISM, MACHISMO AND SEXUAL CRIMES**: Conversations with Norma in **The Best of What We Are** (13-152); Report of San Juan's Comision de la Niñez y Adolescencia about sexual abuse and exploitation, and the growing problem of sex tourism in San Juan del Sur; also read proposal for recently opened Battered Women's Shelter in SJ. Read www.sandino.org/zoila.htm about Daniel Ortega's step-daughter's accusation against him. Read Dan Connell's chapter on Nicaraguan women in **Rethinking Revolution: New Strategies for Democracy and Social Justice** (pp. 155-176). Also: Dec 6, discuss last minute logistics.

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NOTES ON THE WRITING COMPONENT OF IDS 228

This course involves several different parallel activities: reading, reflection, living with a Nicaraguan family, community service of some sort in San Juan del Sur, and interviewing people.

But it also involves some serious writing. These notes describe the kinds of writing we expect you to do, starting in September and culminating in for your Big Final Paper, which will be due in mid-February.

1. *The first few days in San Juan: before and after.* This assignment has two parts. I would like you to bring to the SEPT 13 meeting an account of your first few days in San Juan, as you imagine they will be. Paint a verbal picture of what you think your first impressions of Nicaragua will be—the people (especially the family you'll be living with), the landscape, the housing, the poverty, the food, the smell and sounds and FEEL of San Juan del Sur, the dynamics of this farming/fishing/tourism town. The idea is to get down on paper all your fantasies and presuppositions about what your experience will be like, before it happens. Then, by the end of your first week there, I'd like you to re-read your in-advance-fantasy piece and measure it against what really happened, how things really were. We'll discuss this in one of our regular meetings in San Juan, and I will want you to write *a second piece* (due after we get back) in which you not only describe the differences between anticipatory imaginings and the way things really were, but in which you *reflect* on *why* you got some things completely wrong and some things more or less right. When I say *why* I mean reflect honestly about what it was in your own background and personality that might have led you to imagine your first week in San Juan the way you did—both what you were blind to or not ready for, and what your common sense told you would have to be the case. This may sound a little fuzzy; we'll talk more about it in our group meetings.

2. *Short papers about reading assignments.* You'll be asked to write eight 3-page papers that focus on some aspect of the reading we'll be doing for each of the units of the course. These can be commentary on the reading itself and/or something you've discovered in printed or online material that's relevant to the topic. These short papers are turned in every week. See above for specific topics.

3. *Keep a Journal.* I want you to get in the habit of carrying your journal with you and taking time during the course of the day to record memories, insights, surprises, descriptions of people and encounters, your own emotional ups and downs, things that went well, things that were problematic in your community service site, etc...

It's essential that this Journal be completely honest. I will check to make sure you're keeping a Journal, but I won't snoop into the contents (unless you invite me to). Your Journal will be immensely important, not only for allowing you to revisit the details and textures of your Nica trip in future years, but also as a storehouse of ideas, facts, and events that will necessarily fit into your big final paper. Again: writing regularly in your Journal is a habit you have to cultivate. Just keep your eyes, ears and mind open, and write down both the facts and your reflections on what has happened to you, especially when you realize things are turning out differently from what you expected.

4. *The Big Final Paper.* This will be due either on DG's desk or his e-mail by February 15.

This paper is mainly a report on a topic of your choosing which you will research by keeping your eyes and ears open, and interviewing people in San Juan. One thing we'd like to see in this paper is some interplay between what you've read about Nicaragua and what you found by living and working there. In this sense, the paper is an exercise in *theory vs. practice*, or *the abstract vs. the concrete*: "In my reading and research I've learned such and such about Nicaragua, but my actual experience on the ground and interviews with sanjuanefios have sharpened my focus (or changed my mind completely) in the following ways...." In recent years papers have focused on such topics as teacher training, dental health in the campo, the impact of the recession on tourism in San Juan, understanding the barriers to good health practices among poor Nicaraguans, purifying contaminated well water in one's own home, girls' sports in SJ, how people (and their families) in SJ cope with disabilities, homosexuality in SJ, teenage pregnancy and the quality of sex-ed in SJ, challenges facing healthcare professionals in SJ, strong women in SJ, religious differences in families.... The key to success in this paper is (a) to choose a good topic, (b) work up interesting interview questions [MJT and I will help you with your questions], (c) plunge fearlessly into your interviews, (d) go back for follow-up interviews when you realize you didn't get the whole picture, and finally (e) write up what you've learned in a rich and interesting narrative.

Finally, we'll ask each of you to sign a copy of the following and give it to us:

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING: MY BEHAVIOR IN NICARAGUA

By signing this memorandum, I make clear my understanding of the following points: that the Nicaragua trip is an academic and cultural experience, and not a vacation; that I am a representative of Simmons and not an independent tourist; that I will behave myself in such away that I will neither put myself nor my fellow students at risk, nor bring dishonor to the reputation of Simmons College, of Professors Gullette and Treacy, who will be working in the community long after I have left, nor of the Host Family who has welcomed me into their home. I further understand that any egregious violation of this accord and/or of specific warnings from the instructors, may result in my being immediately sent back to Boston and that I may be subject to forced withdrawal from the course and loss of course credit.

Signed _____ Date _____