IN MY SHOES:
Building Awareness and Understanding of Marginalized Groups

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Project Summary

Every year, the Center for Community Engaged Learning chooses an engaged learning theme upon which to focus its programming and events. For the 2019-2020 year, the theme, “In My Shoes” was chosen as the means to create a space for the WSU community to explore the stories and perspectives of historically marginalized, underrepresented, or silenced groups with which many people may be unfamiliar.

This theme was embedded into two courses in an effort to create awareness and understanding of marginalized groups.

Communication 4990
Senior Seminar

Currently, there are approximately 65,000 refugees from over 40 countries (with the largest groups coming from Iraq, Bosnia, Somalia, and Sudan) living in Utah.

This portion of the project provided students and refugees an opportunity to interact with one another and gain multiple perspectives about what it means to be a refugee in Utah.

The English Skills Learning Center (ESLC), an organization based in Salt Lake City that provides individualized English instruction to adult refugees and immigrants, served as our community partner to provide students an opportunity to enhance their awareness and create a richer understanding of refugee life in Utah.

Students worked with refugees on oral communication skills in preparation for a community panel presentation and created two videos for informational and recruitment purposes.

COMM 4990 Project Outcomes:
1. Students interviewed and interacted with refugees and immigrants from other cultures.
2. Students gained a broader understanding of refugee experiences.
3. Students demonstrated proficiency in using communication skills through interviewing, producing and editing video, and teaching public speaking skills to refugees & immigrants with limited English proficiency.

WSU 1450
Intersections of Art and Communication

This course focused on the art and communication of historically marginalized, underrepresented, and silenced groups so that students could more fully understand the experiences and challenges of those in positions of lesser privilege.

The signature assignment for this course required students to create an artifact that captured the theme, “In My Shoes.”

Students interviewed someone in a position of lesser privilege or a culture different from their own, created an artifact to represent that person, then participated in an art exhibit in the Union Gallery during the month of December.

WSU 1450 Project Outcomes:
1. Students interviewed people of lesser privilege or different cultures from their own.
2. Students created artifacts to demonstrate the intersectionality of art and communication in the context of the theme, “In My Shoes.”
3. Students exhibited their work in an Art Exhibit in the Union Art Gallery during the month of December

Student Comments

“[I was] now more aware of the difficulties immigrants and refugees have when coming to the US. I learned just as much from them as they learned from me. In the future, I will look for opportunities to share my English skills with refugees and immigrants.”

–Ashlee

“I loved working with the people at the ESLC. It was a great opportunity to get out of my comfort zone and use my communication skills in real life. Together, as students from WSU and refugees from the ESLC, we developed our interpersonal communication skills.”

–Hannah

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