A Living Laboratory: Activity Template

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We are creating a cross-disciplinary collection of teaching activities that use the best practice approaches fostered in the "Living Lab": adoption of City Tech's General Education Student Learning Outcomes, George Kuh's High Impact Educational Practices, place-based learning, open digital pedagogy (the OpenLab), and formal assessment methods.

Share your best practices with your colleagues! Use this form to record a favorite activity; an activity can be as small as an in-class exercise or as large as a semester-long project. Your description can be short or extensive – take as much space as you need.

Activity Title:	Final Project: Evaluation of an alteration/intervention/adaptive reuse
Your Name:	Inna Guzenfeld, Adjunct Instructor
Department:	Architectural Technology
Course:	ARCH 3640: Preservation Theory and Practice (Fall 2013)
Email:	IGuzenfeld@citytech.cuny.edu

Activity Description:

Provide a brief description of the activity.

For this project, I provide a list of New York City buildings that represent alteration, intervention or adaptive reuse of a historic structure or site. The buildings are generally well-known examples of this type that students are likely to have come across in their studies and professional practice. Students are asked to evaluate the building or site and make an argument as to whether they believe it is a successful example of historic preservation. In addition to historical research, students are required to visit the site and take photographs. Students are also encouraged to review plans and other visual materials that show how the site has evolved over time, and demonstrate interior and exterior design decisions.

The final deliverable is a 20-minute in-class presentation and a final paper of 5-6 pages.

The final project is intended as a culmination of class discussions, presentations, and written work exploring the theoretical and practical dimensions of preservation. Students are expected to develop an analytical framework based on course readings, lectures and assignment and apply it to the selected building or site. While I emphasize that there is no right answer, I ask that students make a case for their argument that demonstrates an understanding of the treatment of historic buildings.

Learning Goals:

What do you aim to achieve with this activity?

This is an assignment I completed as part of my graduate studies in historic preservation. I felt that it was particularly effective not only as a final project, but an advanced assignment for a master's program. I chose to adapt it for my class because I thought it would work well as a "capstone". While my students were mostly 4th and 5th years, they'd had little exposure to historic preservation in their work and studies up to this point. The final project gave them an opportunity to demonstrate mastery of preservation theory and practice. In many ways, this is an ideal assignment for architecture students, because it synthesizes design concepts taught across the curriculum.

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My primary goal for the course was to cultivate critical thinking about issues of historic preservation. My assignments throughout the course were designed to help students achieve this objective. Whether they took the form of discussions, presentations, or written reflections, these assignments all built up to the final project. At the beginning of the semester, I met with the chair of the Architectural Technology department and my course coordinator who emphasized that students often lacked strong communication skills. Knowing that many of my students would be graduating in the spring, I wanted to offer them my class as an opportunity to work on their presentation and writing abilities, which would give them a leg up in the professional world. For this reason, I structured the final project as both a presentation and a final paper.

Timing:

At what point in the lesson or semester to you use this activity? How much classroom time do you devote to it? How much out-of-class time is expected?

The final assignment was distributed in the 10th week of class. I spent half an hour discussing the project and assigning sites, and 10-20 minutes soliciting questions in subsequent classes. Otherwise, students were expected to devote 25-30 hours of out-of-class time to the final project. I did not specify how much time would be need to complete the assignment, because I understood this would vary with student schedules, obligations, and commitment to the course. In the initial selection of projects, I encouraged students to take up those that interested them and were easily accessible from work or home.

Logistics:

What preparation is needed for this activity? What instructions do you give students?

I avoided giving students too much instruction, because I wanted to encourage original thinking in their approach to the assignment. For guidance, I provided five questions to structure their analysis, and separately, a list of items to be covered in their presentation. I made time during and after class for questions and worked with each student to ensure they understood the assignment and had access to relevant resources. For example, since I was already familiar with most of the buildings I assigned, I directed students to useful sources of information so they would not get stymied researching their sites. I also asked students to submit drafts of their final paper two weeks before the due date so I could give feedback and assistance if they were struggling with the assignment. This also gave students time to incorporate changes into their final draft.

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General Education SLOs:
Which of City Tech's General Education Student Learning Outcomes does this activity address?

Skills – Inquiry/Analysis, some components of Integration

High Impact Educational Practices:
Which of George Kuh's High Impact Educational Practices does this activity incorporate? Does it use the OpenLab for open digital pedagogy? Does it include place-based learning? Choose all that apply and/or add your own.

George Kuh's High Impact Educational Practices:

☐ *First-year seminars and experiences*

☐ *Common intellectual experiences (core curriculum)*

☐ *Learning communities*

☐ *Writing-intensive courses*

X *Collaborative assignments and projects*

☐ *Undergraduate research*

☐ *Diversity and global learning ("difficult differences")*

☐ *Service- or community-based learning*

☐ *Internships*

X *Capstone courses and projects*

☐ ***Open Digital Pedagogy (the OpenLab)***

X Place-Based Learning

☐ **Other (please describe):**

Assessment:
How do you assess this activity? What assessment measures do you use? Do you include your evaluation in grade calculations?

I did not have the opportunity to assess this assignment because it was a final project. It was also my first time teaching this class. However, I would like to develop a rubric based on student submissions, for my second class this fall.

Reflection:
How has this assignment impacted your teaching? What challenges did you encounter and how did you address them? What feedback did students provide? How would you imagine this activity being used in different disciplines?

I feel that the final project helped structure my lectures and assignments for the course. In general, students responded positively to the assignment, and really took the opportunity to explore their sites. I was very pleased with the quality of the submissions, and the depth of analysis evidenced in both the papers and the presentations. Overall, I think the students understood the purpose of the assignment and benefited from the exercise. I noted marked progress in their presentation, analytical, and writing skills.

However, I feel the assignment could be improved. Students were unsure how to approach the final paper and many expressed their confusion in the initial draft. The five questions I provided to guide their reasoning were not as helpful as I thought. I received little instruction for this assignment in graduate school, which likely

influenced my own approach. I think that I could rewrite my instructions to be clearer and more direct without necessarily telling the students how to do the assignment. I think students will feel more comfortable taking ownership of a place-based project like this one, if they are given useful direction and criteria for assessment.

Additional Information:

Please share any additional comments and further documentation of the activity - e.g. assignment instructions, rubrics, examples of student work, etc. These could be in the form of PDF or Word files, links to posts or files on the OpenLab, etc.