HONORS PS 1010 AND URBAN BLIGHT REFLECTION

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My group problem was Urban Blight. Throughout the course of the semester, not only did I learn more urban blight as a problem in Detroit, but I also learned how to better interact with, influence, and strive with a group of peers. This course has taught me how to better solve problems, and how to think out of the box. But, the one thing that this course really drove home was the fact that no matter how influential we are, no matter how big the scope of our problems or circumstances are, we can still make our voices heard, and this course taught me effective ways on how to do so. I understand how to think about and approach huge social and political problems—like urban blight—that normally would seem to be out of my hands, to a better extent.

As we began to explore our problem, I was surprised on how little I actually knew about the issue. I had never known that Urban Blight was so prevalent in my community. To be frank, I couldn’t even define the word “Blight” at the beginning of my journey. However, Honors PS 1010 used social aspects that were more familiar to me than the actual problem of Urban Blight to help me better understand and define my problem. We were first asked to explore how other people, or “stakeholders”, may cause or be affected by the problem, and how. It became easier to understand what we were dealing with when we began to relate this issue to living, breathing souls like ourselves. After exploring Blight in this way, I began to realize WHY it is such a problem, and why I also wasn’t aware of it. In addition, we then explored the policies enacted by every level of our social and economic sphere—government at local and national levels, market, civic organizations—and attempted to figure out how they are trying to solve our problem, and on a more cynical end, how they are causing it. This process allowed us to understand the relevancy of Urban Blight, and why it is so prevalent in our community. We also saw some causes of our problem this way, which allowed us to form potential solutions, to see what was already tried, and to understand efforts worked and what efforts didn’t. Finally, we were familiarized with the reasons that the problem was not solved, or the barriers to the solution. This whole process allowed me to understand how we as a people and a country may be a cause to the problem, and how we can be a solution.

This course had a social aspect to it as well. Before I took this class, I had never been required to strive with so many for a common goal. We had to rely on each other for the whole ride to get this research project finished, and to also understand and convey our issue. I realized that working with people about something as serious as Urban Blight requires a huge amount of teamwork, and if you don’t have it, the problems can never be solved. Not only would we as students be in trouble, but we would also be in trouble as a country if we did not learn how to collaborate. Without each member of my group, we would have never made this kind of progress, and that, along with strengthening social relationships, made working with this group of individuals extremely worthwhile.

Overall, I loved this course. Coming in, I did not think that I would enjoy it as much as I did. It really opened my eyes to what is going on in the world around me, specifically in terms of my community, and its struggle with Blight. I felt like I was doing something for my community, and that gives me a sense of pride in myself and in my group. Getting out into the community was definitely a satisfying experience. I hope that I can one day continue to work on this issue, and use the skills and the research I obtained to help. I realize that while I may be a privileged individual, that may not be the case for others, and social, political, and economic problems will continue to persist. However, my experience in Honors PS 1010 made me feel that, with enough help, and the right resources, I can actually be influential enough to tackle these problems.