

## **Assessment of Stone Soup Course Experience**

This questionnaire is for faculty to describe and assess your experiences with “Stone Soup” Project assignments or activities. Your responses will be posted on the Indisputably blog and may be disseminated in other ways as well. Please describe specifics of your experience, but do not include information that could identify any student (except as noted below) or subject of a Stone Soup assignment or activity.

1. Faculty name: **Jim Levin**
2. School: **University of Missouri School of Law**
3. Course: **Mediation**
4. Semester: **Fall 2017**
5. Number of students in the course: **20**
6. Briefly describe the Stone Soup assignment or activity (e.g., interview or focus group class). If you assigned students to conduct an interview, summarize the type of subjects and focus of the interview. If you conducted a focus group class, describe the speakers and issues discussed.

**Toward the end of the semester, I assigned my students to interview an attorney who had served as an advocate in at least one mediation during the past year. The interviews were to last for approximately one hour and the stated goals for the assignment were to give the students an opportunity to:**

**(1) learn about the mediation process from the advocate’s experience;**

**(2) practice interviewing skills including developing rapport and protecting confidentiality; and**

**(3) reflect on how concepts we discuss in class may apply in actual mediation.**

**Upon completion of the interview, I asked the students to write a 6-8 page paper that included descriptions and reflections of the interviews. We also spent a class period debriefing the assignment so that the students could explore their respective insights with the other members of the class.**

7. Was the assignment required, one of several options, or for extra credit?

**Required.**

8. If students were to write a paper, how long was the paper supposed to be (in double-spaced pages)?

**6-8 pages**

9. When was the assignment due (or when did you conduct a Stone Soup activity)?

**I handed out the assignment in early October and the due date was November 9. I did this because I wanted the students to have a basic understanding of the mediation process prior to conducting the interview but I did not want to interfere with the end of the semester rush.**

10. What percentage of the grade was allocated to the assignment?

**10%**

11. Did you discuss in class the results of students' work? If so, what did you and the students learn from this discussion? Was this a good use of class time?

**We debriefed the exercise in class. I combined the debriefing exercise with a debriefing of another exercise in which my students mediated a case in which 1L students (in the required Lawyering class) served as advocates based on a problem being used in the Research and Writing course. Throughout the semester, I stressed that the mediation process was a flexible process that changes depending on the needs and expectations of the parties (and their attorneys). Although I teach mediation with my own biases and points of view, I know some advocates may look at the process very differently. This assignment and the accompanying debriefing session made these points in ways I would not have been able to do in a classroom setting. I thought the classroom debriefing was essential for the complete learning process.**

12. What did students learn that they wouldn't have learned without the Stone Soup assignment or activity?

**See my answer to #11.**

13. What worked well with the assignment or activity?

**The assignment worked better than I expected. The students seemed to enjoy it and their papers and comments in class showed that the different perspectives they heard about the mediation processes made the entire class more meaningful. I was happy to see that, collectively, my students chose advocates in various areas of practice and advocates who practiced in various states (including Missouri, Illinois, Kansas, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina). I told the students that I giving this assignment for the first time and they were almost unanimous in saying I should continue this practice in future classes.**

14. What would you do differently if you do it again?

**I am not sure.**

15. What would you advise other faculty considering using a Stone Soup assignment or activity?

**As I try to do in all my classes, I try to stress the ethical aspects of being an advocate. With this assignment, I focused on confidentiality by advising my students to remind the advocates not to use real (or identifying) names and generic descriptions. I also instructed the students not to include real names (even of the attorney) in the papers they were writing.**

**I also made it clear to my students that they needed to write thank you notes to the attorneys that participated in the interviews.**