
USING CASE STUDIES IN YOUR CURRICULUM

Innovations in Teaching and Learning Conference – September 2020

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OVERVIEW

The case study project asks students to conduct a series of one-on-one interviews with a person of their choosing. Students are provided guiding questions to ask based on course topics and are encouraged to generate their own questions. After each interview, students write summary reports and discuss their findings in class.

Students gain a deeper understanding of course concepts by exploring them with important people in their lives, and often report that the experience is very meaningful to them and their interviewees.



Description of the project

Uses and benefits of the project

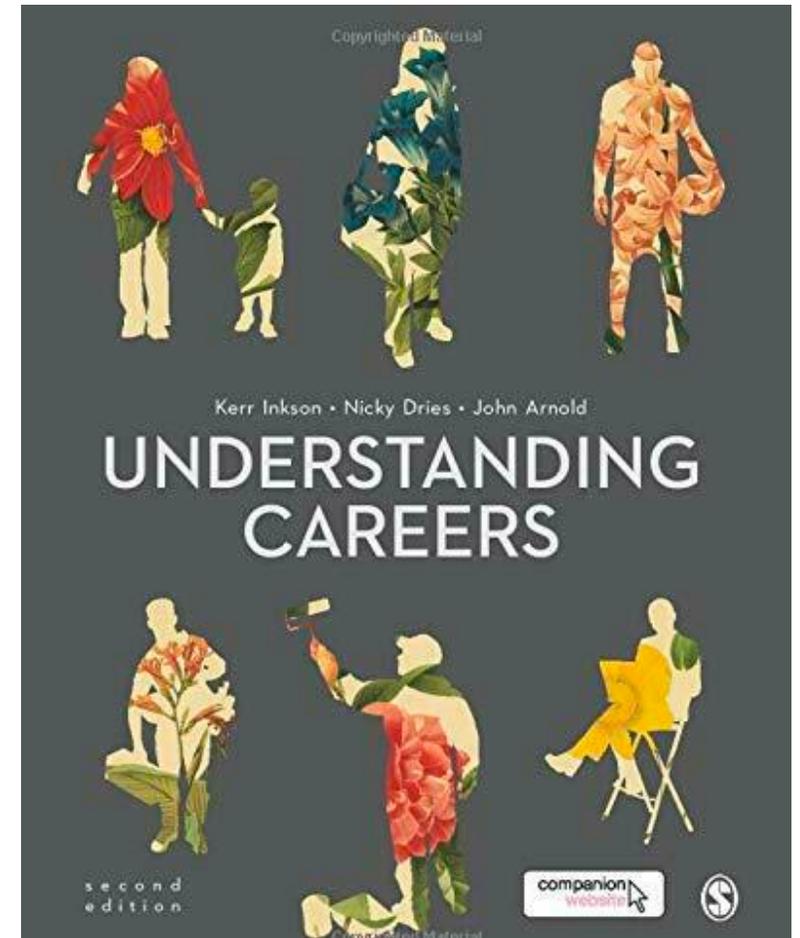
Students' responses

Using case studies in your class

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ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT

- From Inkson, Dries, & Arnold (2015), *Understanding Careers*
- First used in a graduate-level course on careers (not a career preparation course)
- Adapted for use in an undergraduate multidisciplinary course on work and careers



DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

- Students pick an interviewee with whom they will conduct 5 interviews (this can vary) over the semester
- Assigned guiding questions based on course topics to ask in interviews
 - “What are the origins of your case person in terms of social class, ethnic origin, gender, childhood experience, and education? How have these affected the case person’s career?”
 - “Ask your career case person about the fit of some of their jobs. Were there times what the fit seemed poor? How did the person resolve the issue? What can you learn from this?”
 - “Ask your case person to indicate other people whose careers they affect and describe how these careers were affected.”
 - “Ask your case person what “work-life balance” means to them. How has this meaning changed over time?”
- Conduct interviews and submit short reports (500-1000 words) summarizing each and connecting the responses to course topics

USES AND BENEFITS

Students gain deeper understanding of key concepts

Students develop skill and confidence as interviewers

Students come to class with examples to share in discussions

Students form personal and meaningful connections with interviewees

STUDENTS' RESPONSES

“These interviews have not only enabled my interviewee a chance to gain greater understanding of their own life choices and goals but have transformed my initial perception of my case study person from when I first began these interviews. I feel as if for the course of my entire life that I had a very shallow understanding of my case person and the struggles that they went through.”

“My perspective on my interviewee has most certainly shifted. Through this interview process I was able to see more aspects of her everyday life, story, and views which greatly increased my respect for her. In sharing pieces of her story, I was able to better understand why she held certain views and why she clung firmly to them. I never knew about her journey through a primarily male dominated field and hearing the stories of how she was discredited gave me a glimpse into the intense courage and fortitude she carries.”

“My respect for my mother after the interviews, while already very high, went up much more after the interviews. Getting a better understanding of how much she had to sacrifice, as well as the long and oftentimes arduous road she had taken really showed me the causal forces and events that led her to provide me the advice and pushes she has throughout my life. I'll be honest, for quite a while there had been a level of friction between my mother and I due to disagreements about my career choices and my indecision. After the interviews and the class, I felt like I could better appreciate where my mother was coming from.”

USING CASE STUDIES IN YOUR CLASS

- Best suited for classes focused on topics with which many people have personal experience (that they will be willing to talk about)
- Coach students in interview best practices
- Generate guiding questions focused on key ideas from the course—or generate questions collaboratively in class
- Give students opportunities to draw on their findings in class discussions
- Encourage students to reflect on the experience

REFERENCES

Inkson, K., Dries, N., & Arnold, J. (2015). *Understanding careers: The metaphors of working lives* (2nd edition). Sage.

SPEAKERS

Dr. Lauren Kuykendall is an assistant professor in the Psychology Department with a PhD in Industrial-Organizational Psychology. She regularly teaches the undergraduate I-O Psychology course and graduate seminars on Career Development and Social Psychology. She enjoys designing discussion-based graduate seminars and creating class assignments that help students apply psychological theories to improve work experiences.

Lydia Craig is a PhD candidate working under Dr. Kuykendall. She has taught several classes within the Psychology Department and Honors College and especially enjoys discussing foundational research methods and statistics. She has received two graduate teaching awards in the Psychology Department as TA for Research Methods in Psychology and lead instructor for Industrial-Organizational Psychology.