



Sustaining a Green Collar Workforce:
An Interdisciplinary Approach



Green Application Projects (GreenApps)

Title: "An Hour Without Power"

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Interdisciplinary Classification (Subject, Level?): English/Spanish (but could be applied to any discipline developing research and/or language skills)

Prerequisite Skills: Transfer level college reading and writing skills.

Materials Required: notebook (journal), battery operated clock/watch/timer

Estimated Time:

In Class: 5 hours

Outside of Class: 6 hours

Description of Project

Many countries around the world experience frequent, involuntary power outages. As part of the current Green Movement, some propose curtailing one's personal electricity use *voluntarily*

(see “Earth Hour” <http://www.earthhour.org/> for one example). This project involves students testing what it would mean to be without power.

Through reflection on an “hour without power,” students consider the role electricity plays in their daily lives—and the potential consequences of living without it. Students go without electricity for three separate hours throughout the week: one hour of choice during a morning, one hour of choice during an afternoon, one hour of choice during an evening. With the exception of heat, this “hour without power” would mean imagining the power “off” in the home as well as the community: students cannot use lights, nor can they go to a public place where lights are on. They cannot use anything that needs to be plugged in or requires batteries, nor can they use public facilities that offer outlets. After each “hour without power” students would reflect on the following questions in a diary entry:

- What do you normally do during this hour? What changes did you make in your normal schedule to accommodate the “hour without power”?
- What did you end up doing for your “hour without power”? Did you go anywhere? What (if anything) were you able to accomplish?
- How did you feel during that hour? What surprised, intrigued, and/or disturbed you about your experience?

After each “Hour Without Power,” students bring their diary entries to class and discuss their experiences with peers. Possible discussion topics include:

- What did it mean to you personally to go an hour without power?
- How did other people in your house react to your “hour”?
- Would you be willing to give up an hour without power to save energy/be “green”?
- Imagine air conditioner and heat were also off. Would that change your willingness to volunteer?
- Is this a viable solution to save energy in the United States?
- What if this became mandatory? How would your life have to change?
- To what extent is personal sacrifice a viable solution to sustainability issues in general? (An important question in my particular composition class, in which students produce a 10+ page research paper on solutions to a sustainability problem of choice).
- What are you learning about yourself as a researcher? Did this experience reveal any interests, tendencies, or biases that might affect the way you approach your own research topic?

After their three “hours without power” and subsequent class sessions, students write a short reflection paper based on their diary entries and notes.

Outcomes: By the end of this project, students will have

- Assessed the viability of personal energy conservation as a “green” solution
- Assessed the viability of personal sacrifices as solutions to sustainability issues in general
- Assessed themselves as researchers
- Practiced their writing skills in a reflection paper

Assessment: formal assessment with Class Climate

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