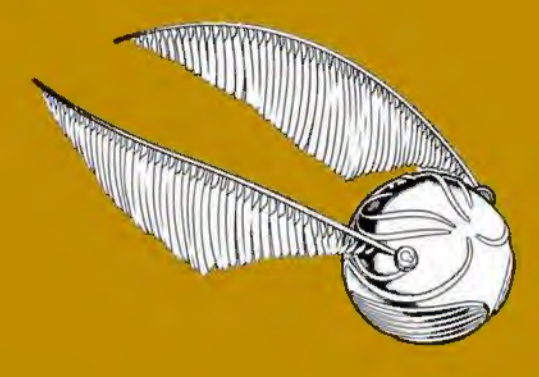


M 'Wingardium Leviosa': Elevating the Minds of a Younger Generation through Pop Culture

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Service-Learning Project: A History

The purpose of PLS 360: Harry Potter and the Law was to improve students' understanding of the legal system and to create an interest in community engagement and civic education through a service-learning project. The service learning project included presenting Harry Potter-themed mock trials to primary and secondary aged school students. The audience was able to participate in the trial by serving as jury members and deliberating in multiple jury groups to return verdicts. They were given the opportunity to debrief with the entire group to compare differences in verdicts. Students learned the significance of jury service and the adversarial court system.

Sorting Hat: Students to Active Citizens

Civic education can often be a boring subject. This service-learning project actively engaged students in learning. The younger students sat through the hour long trial and remained completely interested in the legal topic. After the trial, the students actively participated in a follow-up activity concerning *voir dire*. The setting of the trial in the Wizarding World of Harry Potter acted as a vessel to more easily educate younger students of important civic duties and legal principles.

By using Harry Potter as a focal point, students from various majors and disciplines were drawn into a legal class. The majority of one of Prof. Collinsworth's classes consisted primarily of non-law students, who would never have taken a law class if Harry Potter had not been involved.



Muggle Struggles with Service-Learning

Broaching serious topics can be difficult, especially with younger groups of children. Death, violence, and war are all discussed in the Harry Potter books. These issues can be frightening and overwhelming for young children. Incorporating Harry Potter into the Service-Learning Project ran the risk of raising issues too deep for young children to handle easily. Generational gaps can also pose an issue for this service-learning project. College students have vastly different perspectives from younger children and connecting can be difficult. On the other hand, the children can be nervous to express their opinions.

Accio Knowledge!

Learning Through Interaction

Pre-Test Results:	All students scored below 60%
Post-Test Results:	All students scored 80% or higher.

*"The Wizarding World of Harry Potter was such an integral part of my own childhood. It was awesome to be able to incorporate the novels into my studies and to use them to help the next generation of readers to learn about difficult topics."
- Anonymous Harry Potter and the Law Student*



Expecto Patronum: Overcoming Issues

The potential issues facing the service-learning project were easily accounted for through the use of Harry Potter. The serious topics discussed in the Harry Potter novels can be more easily discussed because of the otherwise whimsical setting of the novels. The books open up these more serious topics to children of a younger age by creating an imaginary world.

"The fact that Harry Potter is widely read and loved by children, teens, college students, and adults all over the world makes it a ready tool for teaching law and civics in a way that engages students at all levels" (Collinsworth). The character perspectives presented in the novels help the younger students be confident in their opinion, and the books keep older students in touch with their childhood memories of first reading the books.



The chart above shows test results when high school seniors participated in the mock trial. The students were given pre and post tests in order to gauge the teaching potential of service learning.



The Sorcerer's Stone of Sources

- Collinsworth, Kelly E. "POPULAR CULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM AND BEYOND: USING HARRY POTTER AS A PORTKEY FOR CIVICS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVMENT." *Law and Popular Culture: International Perspectives*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014. Print.
- Rowling, J.K. *The Harry Potter Series*. New York: Scholastic, 1997-2007. Print.

