



PUSHING BACK

Gender-Based
Violence in Society: A
Service-Learning Model

Lacey J. Ritter, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Sociology & Public Health
CCG Project Development & Recruitment Coordinator



Learn about Turning Point and volunteer/ donate at:
<https://turningpointnc.org/>



Curious about the W'Engage program? Learn more about it at:
<https://www.wingate.edu/academics/special-programs>



Discover the Collaborative for the Common Good – and what we do – by checking out our website here:
<https://www.wingate.edu/around-campus/common-good>

THE BASICS:

- Dr. Ritter taught a **W'Engage** Fall 2020 course – **Gender-Based Violence in Society** for eligible sophomore students (n=12)
- The course combines **local service** with a **community partner** (*Turning Point, NC* – a domestic violence shelter based in Union County) and **domestic travel** (planned for NYC pre-pandemic)
- While travel was unable to occur, students were still able to work with **Turning Point** to provide service for their organization

BACKGROUND

W'Engage is a 2-credit-hour course offered for Wingate University sophomore students with a 2.3+ GPA. Students meet for a one-hour seminar each week throughout a given semester. In addition, the course offers students the opportunity for 5- to 7-day domestic travel focusing on the need for social change and service. In particular, W'Engage allows students to bolster their community awareness and civic engagement at both the local and domestic scales.

Wingate University professors are selected to teach seminars based on their areas of expertise and knowledge of a topic. W'Engage seminars vary by semester, topic, instructor, and location of travel. What does not change, however, is the unique and memorable experience and engagement students experience throughout their W'Engage seminar.



During the Fall 2020 semester, Dr. Lacey J. Ritter was selected to teach a W'Engage seminar titled *"You Hit Like a Girl: Gender-Based Violence in Society."* The course, while teaching students about an inclusive definition of violence related to gender – and presentations of gender and sexuality – also required students to complete service-learning projects with a local community partner, *Turning Point, NC*, a domestic violence shelter based in Union County, NC. Each week, student groups researched and presented on local or college-based statistics surrounding gender-based violence, which culminated in an informational Lyceum at the end of the semester. In addition, the course was originally scheduled to include a trip to New York City during the semester, though this portion was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Service-Learning requires the integration of **meaningful community service** with **instruction** and **reflection** to:

- ❖ Enrich learning experiences
- ❖ Teach civic responsibility
- ❖ Strengthen communities

In particular, a course integrating service-learning should focus on three main components:

Academic Integrity	Apprentice Citizenship	Student Ownership
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Service-learning is <i>part</i> of the course○ Requires learning - and applying - new skills/knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Learn <i>with</i> (and from) community partners○ Address <i>real</i> community needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Service-learning projects are <i>fully</i> created (from planning to practice) by students○ Direct contributions

Students worked *with* **Turning Point, NC** to *impact and help solve real-life problems* for the organization – and their clients. A little about Turning Point:

- ❖ The only Union County provider of emergency & lifesaving resources for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse, Turning Point’s mission is “**to end domestic abuse, sexual assault, and child abuse through safe shelter, advocacy, prevention, and social change**” (Turning Point, 2021).
 - Starting as a crisis hotline in 1985, Turning Point has grown to now incorporate a permanent shelter, Sexual Assault Resource Center (SARC), and Tree House Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC).
- ❖ Core values of the organization include empowerment, service excellence, integrity, dignity, and respect
- ❖ Turning Point offers a wide range of free services, providing aid for the following clients in 2020:
 - **1,056** individuals through domestic violence shelter and programs
 - **269** survivors of sexual assault
 - **362** children



STUDENT PROJECTS

In addition to completing lectures and readings on gender-based violence, 20% of the students' final course grade was calculated directly from service-learning assignments. These included:

- ❖ **Partnership Service Experience Reflections:** Throughout the semester, students were required to research and propose potential service-learning projects based on their findings; in particular, students were to learn about Turning Point—and their needs—to work with organization leaders to improve well-being of their clients. Students also kept progress journals and submitted final reflections analyzing their goals and successes.
- ❖ **Service-Learning Lyceum Presentation:** In addition to presenting on their group gender-based violence research during a university-wide Lyceum to educate others about gender-based violence risks, particularly in college settings, students presented on their service-learning projects, reflecting on their experiences – what went well, what they learned, and what to improve next time.

Given the small class size (n=12), students broke into three project groups:

Turning Point This Way Day

Four students, in collaboration with turning point directors, held a tabling event in the quad at Wingate University. While selling cookies and taking donations, students also learned about the organization – and ways to get involved!



Turning Point exists to end domestic abuse, sexual assault, and child abuse through safe shelter, advocacy, prevention, and social change.

Date and Location Nov. 23rd:

-All day:

Donation and Information points around campus:

@Neu Building Lobby

@Ethel K Library Outdoor Area

@Outside Starbucks

@Outside Chick-fil-a

-12:00 to 3:00:

@The Promenade

Turning Point Employees sharing their mission

What you can do:

-Donate household items:
Paper towels, toilet paper, plastic food gloves, cleaning supplies, laundry needs, individual snacks, bottled water, disposable eating utensils, Chapstick, tissue, pens, gum, mints, stress balls, disposable bags, monetary donations (Venmo, CashApp, or cash), and anything else you feel inclined to donate!

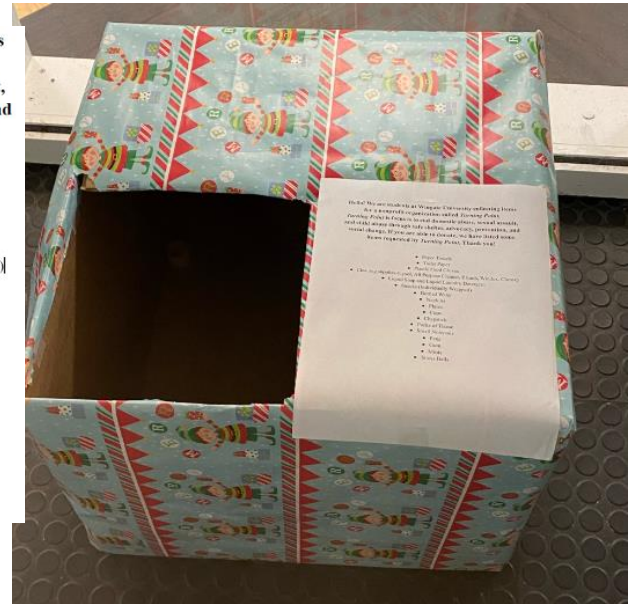
Turning Point Goods Drive

Another group of students focused on donations, creating a 'goods drive' and monitoring donations throughout the semester across Wingate University and various locations in Union County and Mecklenburg County.



Hello! We are students at Wingate University collecting items for a nonprofit organization called *Turning Point*. *Turning Point's* focus is to end domestic abuse, sexual assault, and child abuse through safe shelter, advocacy, prevention, and social change. If you are able to donate, we have listed some items requested by *Turning Point*. Thank you!

- Paper Towels
- Toilet Paper
- Plastic Food Gloves
- Cleaning supplies (Lysol, All Purpose Cleaner, Bleach, Windex, Clorox)
 - Liquid Soap and Liquid Laundry Detergent
 - Snacks (Individually Wrapped)
 - Bottled Water
 - Napkins
 - Plates
 - Cups
 - Chapstick
- Packs of Tissue
- Small Notepads
 - Pens
 - Gum
 - Mints
 - Stress Balls



Turning Point Soft Interview Room/Safe Space

The final group worked with Turning Point to create a soft interview room and safe space for adults (individuals 18+) to complete their forensic interviews after instances of violence and assault. Usually, individuals would do so in a police station. By creating a 'safe space' that is welcoming and located with Turning Point's other services, the group hopes to improve survivors' experiences.

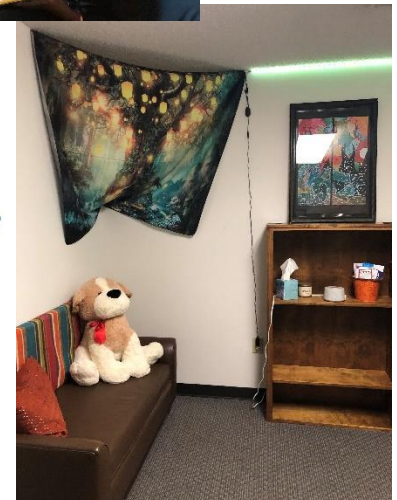
The group also plans to continue this project by making a similar space available to Wingate University students on campus in the upcoming months!



MAKE A DONATION TO THE WINGATE UNIVERSITY SAFE SPACE

DONATION ITEMS MAY INCLUDE

- ART SUPPLIES
- FURNITURE
- DECORATIONS
- BLANKETS
- MONEY
- GAMES
- FOOD



RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS

Even with the pandemic altering their strategies, the ladies in *Gender-Based Violence in Society* were able to do some fantastic work with Turning Point – and really enjoyed their experiences!

“This service-learning project has taught me a lot about the process after suffering sexual assault or violence. It is providing me with the resources to further my career in this field. I hope that we can create more safe rooms in places where people will need them. It takes one person to commit to making a difference that will go a long way and make it easier to deal with in the future. – *final student reflection*”

“With all the information that we learned this semester, I believe that in order to help our community, we can start by volunteering with organizations like Turning Point. We have so much knowledge from this class that it would be a waste if we do not continue to use it to spread awareness.” – *final student reflection*

In addition, the students were able to raise both financial and material donations for Turning Point, including:

- ❖ \$600 in cookie sales and financial donations
- ❖ 650+ household item donations
- ❖ 45 clothing donations
- ❖ 25 volunteer sign-ups

Overall, students in *Gender-Based Violence in Society* confronted topics difficult in nature while providing meaningful support and service for their neighbors. By engaging in civic engagement and community service through their service-learning projects, students were able to take course materials and apply them to real-life situations. The students were extremely proud of their work – and I (Dr. Ritter) am so proud of them!

Future iterations of the course will track differences in in-person delivery and service-learning project options, as well as note the influence of domestic travel on service-learning objectives for the course.



Want to learn more about the course? Contact Dr. Ritter at l.ritter@wingate.edu