

P-FACS Final Project Report

ActivateT.O. Speaker Series

Joint Graduate Program in Communication & Culture

Main objectives:

The goal of our series was to have a variety of speakers from the community surrounding Ryerson University, who are engaged in activism and community outreach, to share their work with the Ryerson graduate student community. Our series was designed to forge links between graduate students and social actors in the Toronto community, and to draw lines between critical, academic thought and community-based social action.

Key achievements:

We organized six, diverse speaker events at Ryerson campus venues, including Kerr Hall, Oakham House and Ted Rogers School of Management, and at Toronto community venues such as the Centre for Social Innovation (Annex). Our speakers ranged from women's health advocates and community organizers to public educators and political activists. In partnership with Ryerson's MBA in Corporate Social Responsibility Committee we co-hosted CSR's Night at the Movies, featuring a director-hosted screening of *The Carbon Rush*, a Canadian documentary about the global effects of carbon credit trading. *ActivateT.O.* events were covered by a number of diverse media outlets including *The True Filipino Channel (TFC)*, a Filipino Canadian-oriented cable television station, and in a feature interview on York University's CHRY 101.5FM.

In addition to intellectually engaging ourselves and our colleagues with a variety of activist and community-based projects we are enabling academic and professional networking throughout and beyond the Ryerson community. The whole team has learned invaluable administrative skills. We have engaged Ryerson services such as Oakham House catering, and community sponsors such as Starbucks coffee, and facilitated spaces for independent learning at Ryerson, and in the surrounding community. Not least of all, we have designed a series that represents Ryerson University as an active and learning-focused member of the Toronto community. We filmed each of our events to help promote the series with a sustained web presence next season.

Difficulties and challenges:

We faced challenges surrounding the use of free student space to utilize. Free venues at York and Ryerson university were often booked well in advance by other student groups. Community venues were willing to give a discounted rate of rental. We also struggled to find viable advertising space at the university surrounding event promotion. Venues such as Kerr Hall, due to a lack of signage, pose challenges to community members who are not familiar with Ryerson University. Also, our experience this year will lead us to promote next year's events with more flyers rather than posters and via student newspapers and radio stations rather than discipline-oriented email campaigns. Activate T.O. prides itself on always providing an honorarium for our speakers. It would be beneficial to provide a larger honorarium to each of our speakers, encouraging higher profile community members to speak out at our series.

Communication strategies:

We promoted this year's events with poster campaigns on campus and in the surrounding community, with flyers, on graduate student-oriented Facebook pages, in email campaigns, in Graduate Student Association meetings and departmental "Professionalization Seminars", and via announcements at various student and community events at Ryerson University, York University, and in the surrounding communities. Social media accounts including Twitter and Facebook are

free avenues of advertizing the series and engaging with community members, outreach to potential speakers and strengthening ties to other not-for-profit organizations.