

## ***Curriculum & Instruction***

### **Topics Course – International Service-Learning: A Glimpse of Culture & Issues**

International Spring Break course/trip to strengthen communities in other countries.

Program Director: Kate Johnson, Assistant Director for Community Service

Faculty/Instructor: ***Laurie A. Ramirez***

#### **Studio course – 1 credit hour**

- **30 hours on service site during Spring Break**
- **15 hours of pre-trip classes, preparation meetings, and post-trip reflection/discussion sessions**
- **Graded on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis**

#### **Course Description:**

Through the International Alternative Spring Break program, students will examine another culture and the various social issues that affect that culture and country through shared readings, discussions, and small group presentations in 4 pre-trip classes and 1 post-trip class. Students will then be immersed in a week-long service experience in international communities, facilitated by trained student Peer Leaders accompanied by faculty Learning Partners. Purposeful nightly reflections allow students to create the connection between service work and construction of knowledge in the classroom.

#### **Description of On-Site Service Activity:**

Students will participate in various service projects to assist communities in other countries. These activities will be useful and meaningful to the communities in which the students are visiting, and will be determined by the host organization. While there, students will experience a new culture and be exposed to the challenges of social/environmental issues in other areas. Depending on the program, students will sleep on-site in a building for volunteers, will work side-by-side with the local workers, and eat in company with local people.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

The goals of this service-learning course are to begin to understand the complex social or environmental issues facing people around the world and – equally important – to explore a personal commitment to service. After completing this course, students will have:

- Explored their values, cultural identities, and sense of self-purpose through social awareness activities, reflection journals, and class discussions. Via these learning tools, students will be able to provide specific examples of how their values and cultural identities play into the assumptions/stereotypes that they hold, and how their values/cultural identities/social privilege will affect their role as a server (and/or future advocate) for the issues/populations discussed in this course. In their final assessment, students will provide personal stories that illuminate how and why their sense of self-purpose has been altered (or not) by the issues and challenges that they faced during this course.
- Participated in an intensive, hands-on, service-learning “immersion” experience, and related this experience to the issues studied in class. Students will work side-by-side with the instructor during each service-learning experience, thus the instructor will be able to assess each student’s level of participation. Also, through reflection discussions following each day of service, students will articulate the connections between the coursework and their service experience by sharing personal “encounter” stories.
- Learned about the basic social issues that affect that particular country through speakers, service experiences, writing, and group discussions. In their reaction papers, students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of each issue studied in class by using examples from at least three perspectives (disciplinary, political, or ethnic/cultural) that provide context for the root cause of each issue.

#### **Global Learning Outcomes:**

- Knowledge of one's own culture biases and identity
- Knowledge of one's own culture and history: through focused discussion and reflection, students will be able to reflect on their own culture and learn about the culture of the country they are in by working shoulder to shoulder with the people in that community.

- Awareness of the complexity of global poverty and the interconnection of the United States and other countries
- Knowledge of world geography, conditions, issues, and events: Through class readings and discussions during the trip, students will have a chance to gain a general understanding of the issues facing the country and region to which they are traveling. During the trip, students will be able to apply that knowledge to create a more focused understanding of the situation in that specific country.
- Understanding of how diverse the world is in terms of beliefs, values, perspectives, and cultural identity
- Knowledge of geography in the Central American region, economic and social conditions, and political climate and history
- Knowledge of effective communication, including knowledge of a specific language and other forms of communication if this language is not known

**Assessment of Students:** *This course will be offered on a **Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory** option.*

- Reaction Papers – 2 reaction papers/journals will be assigned throughout the course.
- Article sharing-- students will research and share a relevant article on the country they are traveling to or a relevant social issue they might encounter there.
- Presentation – 1 ten-minute presentation, assigned in teams of two, to help educate peers on various facets of the respective country
- Reflection Discussions – Required, daily reflection opportunities will allow students to learn from each other.
- Final Reflection Paper – A guided reflection paper will serve as the final assessment for the course, covering interdisciplinary topics such as culture, historical influences, socioeconomic stratification, along with the individual's personal experience in the context of the group and the service work.

**Course Materials:**

- Guest lecturers: Relevant guest lecturers from around campus with particular expertise in the political, economic, or cultural lens of the country being visited.
- Guided Reflection Thoughts/Questions: Chisholm, L. (2000) Charting a hero's journey. New York, NY: International Partnership for Service-Learning.
- Social Awareness Activity: Cultural Cards, an exploration of one's own assumptions/biases.

**Course Timeline:**

January 23, 2011 (Sunday) 4:00 - 6:00 pm  
(Rhododendron Room - Union)

- Icebreakers & team building activities
- Overview of syllabus
- Overview of country & organization
- Presentations assigned
- Information gathering
- Q&A, Reminders

February 6, 2011 (Sunday) 5:30 - 7:30 pm  
(Rhododendron Room - Union)

- Guest lecturer
- 2 presentations from peers
- Assign first reaction paper
- Review materials from host site

February 13, 2011 (Sunday) 4:00 - 6:00 pm  
Blueridge Ballroom - Plemmons Student Union

- Alternative Spring Break kick-off meeting
- Large group ASB context

- 2 presentations from peers
- Team builders/Group commitments
- Packing lists given out

February 27, 2011 (Sunday) 4:00 - 6:00 pm  
(Rhododendron Room - Union)

- 2 presentations from peer leaders
- First reaction paper due
- Assign second reaction paper
- Discuss plans for airport & departure
- Discuss packing lists

March 4-11, 2011 (Friday - Friday)

- Service on site – see itinerary below
- Second reaction paper due mid-week

March 20, 2011 (Sunday) 6:00-8:00 pm  
Blueridge Ballroom – Plemmons Student Union

- Final ASB meeting; large group context
- Final group reflection and evaluation
- Final Reflection paper due

April 3, 2011 - 6:00 pm  
(Casa de Ramirez)

- Final Meeting Day! 😊

**10 hours total + 5 one-hour reflections on site = 15 class hours**

**Basic Itinerary:**

March 3<sup>rd</sup> – Depart for Charlotte in the evening  
 March 4<sup>th</sup> – Fly to destination; travel to work site  
 March 5-9<sup>th</sup> – Service-learning work with host site  
 March 10<sup>th</sup> – Cultural Outing  
 March 11<sup>th</sup> – Return back to USA

**7 hours average per work day x 4 days = 32 studio hours**