How to Incorporate Service Learning into a Course

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Benefits of Using SL

For Students

- Develops skills and builds confidence
- Increases civic responsibility and citizenship skills
- Allows students to see how course material is relevant in a broader context
- Engages diverse types of learners

Make the most of this by:

- … letting organizations know what student skills
- … providing choice so that students can follow interests
- … providing opportunities for students to link their experiences to course curriculum
- … encouraging different service opportunities

https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-resources/teaching-tips/alternatives-lecturing/other/incorporating-service-learning-university-courses
Preparation

- Identify a community need
  - Start small to show success
  - Wicked problems?

- Establish a goal
  - Relevant to course material
  - Doable during the semester
  - Clear for both students and community
  - What applied skills or secondary development?
  - What resources are available?

Select a service site or partner

http://jces.ua.edu/a-checklist-for-implementing-service-learning-in-higher-education/
Guidelines for Site Selection

- Willingness/time to collaborate
- Has adequate resources to work with students
- Congruence of learning and service goals
- Sensitivity to students diversity
- Accessibility
- Liability and risk management

http://jces.ua.edu/a-checklist-for-implementing-service-learning-in-higher-education/
Preparation

- Carefully plan and work to develop relationships with partners
- Determine expected hours, outcomes and forms of assessment
- Do I eliminate components of the course or front load?
- Best if students have a choice and control of project, spend 15-20 hours of service per semester and are in frequent contact with communities

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Preparation

- Add SL in syllabus, provide roles and schedule to students and community partners
  - Introduce early in course, provide course resources and training to students
- Engage in site visits and orientations
- Maintain regular contact with partners, and regular progress reports from students
- Host final student presentations or dialogues
- Evaluation afterwards

Guidelines for Assignments

- **Connect service and classroom learning**
  - Use assignments to draw on the SL experiences and prompt students to use course concepts to interpret service experiences.
  - Don’t separate out the SL assignments from “regular” assignments. Draw on service to complete assignments. Not an additional component to course.

- **Use reflection**
  - Create assignments or imbed in assignments

https://www.northeastern.edu/oralhealth/toolkit/7-service-learning/integration-of-service-learning-into-course-assignments//
Reflections

- Allows students to think critically, understand the complexity and put into a larger context
- Challenges their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, privileges, prejudices, and stereotypes
- Must determine how work will be graded

Reflections

- **Forms**
  - Journal, group discussions, analytical papers, reports, portfolios, presentations, role playing

- **Models**
  - The ORID: Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, Decisional
  - Zlowkowski’s Levels of Reflection

Assessment

- Should begin with educational values
- Linked to outcomes but also experiences
- Best if ongoing
- Should foster improvement
- Meet responsibilities to the students and public

www.belmont.edu/.../How%20to%20develop%20a%20Service-Learning%20course.
Ethical Issues and IRB

- Potential ethical issues should be considered prior to the project
  - What are the responsibilities of the University, instructors, students and partners
  - Clear communication and stakeholder involvement reduces issues
- IRB approval is required for community-based research with human subjects
- Off campus travel would need to be addressed for liability purposes
Challenges

For Instructors:

- Time-consuming to coordinate service activities with community organizations
- Service opportunities may not progress as planned or provide the anticipated experience

Address by:

- … building relationships with organizations so that workload decreases with more terms
- … checking in with students and organizations often; Use reflective activities
Challenges

For Instructors:

- Have to relinquish some control over how the service portion of the course will progress
- Difficult to quantify / evaluate students’ service contributions

Address by:

- … being flexible early in the semester in case students need to be reassigned to a different project or organization
- … evaluating students on the “learning” portion of their service-learning experience, not the “service” portion

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Examples

- **Senior Design**
  - Most common in engineering, local and global

- **First year courses**
  - Environmental engineering at Michigan Tech: developing communities
  - All disciplines at University of Colorado, Boulder: assistive technologies for handicapped
  - Freshman design for Materials engineers at Cal Poly: Partner with local NGOs (solar water heater)

C. Swan, K. Paterson, A. Bielefeldt, Measuring the impacts of project-based service learning, ASEE Conference, 2009