LEARNING THROUGH SERVING
A Student Guidebook for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement across Academic Disciplines and Cultural Communities

SECOND EDITION

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INSTRUCTOR MANUAL

STERLING, VIRGINIA
Instructor Manual

Learning through Serving: A Student Guidebook for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement across Academic Disciplines and Cultural Communities

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Over 50 institutions across North America have adopted Learning through Serving: A Student Guidebook for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement across Academic Disciplines and Cultural Communities as a course text. Some are using the print version, while others use the electronic version. As you can see from the title and the text, the book was written specifically for and to students to help them make sense and meaning of their civic engagement experiences.

Indeed, while the content is based on theoretically sound educational concepts and contemporary research on the psychology and sociology of learning, the language is understandable for high school students, undergraduates, or graduate students. It is specifically intended to have a user-friendly voice while examining a wide host of issues and academic constructs.

In particular, with this second edition, we broadened the array of academic discipline examples, types of service-learning formats (including online and indirect service projects), and integrated more material on deconstructing differences in efforts to build students’ intercultural competence.

Each chapter was developed to be read and reviewed in order over the term of a service-learning course. Students in a semester course might read just one chapter each week, while those in a quarter-term course might need to read one to two chapters per week. However, the chapters are intentionally short, averaging 8 to 14 pages, so they do not interfere with other course content reading. Again, the book was designed to be an integrative learning aspect of the service-learning and civic engagement experience rather than competing for time with foundational academic material. In addition, we worked with the publisher to keep the book as low cost as possible compared to other textbooks on the market.

Connecting the Book to Your Course

As noted in chapter 1 of Learning through Serving, there are many forms of civic engagement and many different terms that represent the types of service and volunteerism that connect students to the community. This book emphasizes the hyphen in service-learning, which denotes an intentional educational relationship between the two. In fact, while administrators of many schools and colleges promote the notion of service-learning, most do not see their institutions as service organizations; rather they pride them on being educational institutions.

Therefore, the operating premise of the book is that service should be an integral, not additive, experience. Certainly, you can decide if you want to have students complete 10 hours of service as an extra credit feature of your course. But we would argue that the learning benefits will not be fully attained unless service is designed as an instructive experience to give insight into systemic community issues (such as homelessness or poverty) through the lens of students’ disciplinary area.
LEARNING THROUGH SERVING

Therefore, this instructor manual discusses the following six key areas for aligning with *Learning through Serving*, whether your course is a senior-level high school class, freshman studies course, or college capstone class.

1. Course and syllabus design
2. Community–partner collaboration
3. Creating class community
4. Strategic teaching techniques
5. Developing intercultural competence
6. Impact assessment

**Course and Syllabus Design**

*Course Description*

The official course description on your syllabus may be the version that matches your school or college catalog or bulletin. However, nothing should prevent you from expanding or adding to that description. Explain in a few sentences *how and why* service is an important aspect of the course content and learning.

If possible, connect this service-learning course to other civic engagement initiatives in your department, school, or college. How does it fit with the overall mission of learning, leadership, and preparation for the future? How does it fit within your academic discipline or profession?

*Definitions*

As noted previously and explained in chapter 1, there are many nuanced definitions of *community service, community-based learning, service-learning, and civic engagement*. So make sure to define and describe the term *service-learning* in the context of this particular course. Recognize that students may have performed volunteerism or other types of service before, either formally (as part of other courses) or informally (as part of religious traditions or service clubs), and explain how service and civic engagement in your course will add to students’ knowledge and skills (see chapter 1, “What are *Service-Learning* and *Civic Engagement*?” for more ideas and references).

*Learning Objectives*

In addition to overall academic course objectives, write one to three learning objectives specifically for the community-service experience. Be clear about the level of demonstration you want for each objective. For instance, is it an action like, “List, describe, or identify the antecedents that contribute to hunger.” Or, is the learning objective outcome more complex, such as “Analyze and synthesize the relationship between the readings and your service experience.”

An excellent resource for writing learning objectives is Bloom’s taxonomy—simply use your web browser to search the phrase for great terminology suggestions that can be turned into learning outcome statements. The following are examples from the taxonomy:

- **Knowledge** level (verbs and behaviors): list, identify, name, find, label, recall, record
- **Comprehension** level: summarize, describe, explain, show, restate
- **Application** level: apply, demonstrate, model, practice, solve
- **Analysis** level: examine, compare/contrast, infer, formulate
- **Synthesis** level: create, design, organize, build, produce
- **Evaluation** level: argue, critique, defend, validate, recommend

The mission statement of Whittier College includes equipping “students to be active citizens and effective communicators who embrace diversity and act with integrity.” Faculty there connect this institutional objective with their community-based learning courses by briefly stating (in one or two sentences) in their syllabi how the service component of the class facilitates development of active citizen leadership. Indeed, the college mascot is a poet (not a raven, rose, or raider), and to emphasize the connection between mind, heart, and hands, the students wear T-shirts during collegewide community service days with the motto, “Poets give back.”
Assignments
Link your assignments with your learning objectives. After all, why have an assignment if it does not facilitate a learning goal? Create a week-by-week timeline with thematic categories or topics that match your content, constructs, and learning objectives. List the readings (what is required and what may be optional), the service expectations, and the assignments with due dates and submission information (e.g., submit as a PDF file or place on Dropbox).

Note: There are far more exercises in each chapter of the book than any student or class could ever complete. To assist with your selection process, the exercises are ranked in varying levels of importance to the chapter content. The ones marked with three stars (★) are the most important, a light bulb (💡) means an optional exercise, and a question mark (❓) indicates an exercise that provides further resources and information.

Read each exercise in advance to determine which ones you want students to complete on their own and how you want them to submit it—should they e-mail it to you, write it in a personal journal, tweet it to another student, post it on a blog, or post it on the course website?

Some of the exercises are specifically intended to be used in a classroom or group setting, but others can easily be adapted for online group work (although, perhaps not Exercise 4.3: Marshmallows and Spaghetti).

Of course, the types of exercises and activities you select for students will depend greatly on the nature of the service experience. Are students performing direct individual service, such as tutoring a middle school student in math? Are students working in small groups or teams in project-based service such as working with a neighborhood association to create a community garden? Or, are students conducting indirect service (either alone or as a class) to create a new website for a nonprofit organization? What they are doing and with whom will dictate to some extent which assignments are most appropriate (see the following Basic Sample Assignment Timeline for an example of a timeline).

Service Tasks, Roles, and Grading
Create a separate section and state explicitly in the syllabus the amount of time and types of tasks that are expected for the community service. Will students complete the hours on their own, with a classmate, or with a group? Do they identify their own community partner, or has this been prearranged? How will you grade the service activities? And what about other student rights and responsibilities? (See chapter 2, “Building and Maintaining Community Partnerships.”)

In addition, instructor roles in service-learning are generally quite different from those in traditional classes. Clarify for the students your own role(s) in teaching, service, and learning. Will you be performing the service too or simply observing it? Will you

Examples of service-learning course objectives using Bloom’s taxonomy:

- Identify and describe the needs of the community population (knowledge level)
- Explain the role of the community organization in addressing needs (comprehension level)
- Analyze economic, political, and social factors contributing to the community issues and challenges (analysis/synthesis levels)
monitor students' service remotely by reading online postings, papers, and journals, or by receiving reports from the community partner? Will you keep a reflective journal yourself and share it with students?

If possible, let students know when you will provide feedback on various aspects of their performance. Will you respond in one to three days on blog posts? Will you return papers in one week? Will you visit the service site and observe their behavior according to some criteria or rubric? How and when will students know how they are doing in service tasks and course content?

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**Community–Partner Collaboration**

*Advance Arrangements*
While some service-learning courses require students to identify their own community partners and projects, this is probably best left for advanced capstone
courses with students who have previous service experience and community connections.

If you have community organization colleagues already, start identifying potential mutual goals and expectations with them. If you don’t know where or with whom to begin, contact your college support office, such as the center for service-learning and civic engagement or the center for volunteerism. If you don’t have such an office, try finding a campus colleague who may already be doing service-learning or civic engagement. Finally, check with friends and colleagues who may serve on local community advisory boards. They may have networks they can refer you to.

Reciprocal Benefits
 Ideally, the community site is not just a location to “do service.” Rather, the community partner will become a co-educator in the service-learning endeavor. Engage your community organization representative in discussions about learning objectives, assignments, and evaluation processes (in addition, of course, to clarifying service times, roles, and tasks).

Integrate your community partners’ ideas and suggestions into your syllabus and provide them with a copy of it (see chapter 3, “Becoming Community: Moving from I to We”). Also, make sure to stay in touch with them throughout the term to get their feedback, and schedule an end-of-term chat to discuss possible improvements for the future.

Creating Class Community

Class Intentions
 Creating any learning community is a challenge and an art, and more so when the pedagogical strategies (like the experience of service-learning) are unfamiliar to students. In addition, interacting with people from

Best-Laid Plans
 At a college in the Southwest, a faculty member new to community-based learning decided to allow her primarily adult-learner students the opportunity to identify their own community partners. By the fourth week of the term, she had 24 different community partners for her class of 29 and was overwhelmed with phone calls and e-mails from the staff of the organizations who were excited to become partners but were full of questions. After that experience, when she taught the course the following semester she gave the students a choice of three community partners and projects. Five years later, she now has long-term relationships with these organizations, which has led to over $25,000 in support grants, which students took the lead in writing.

new communities and experiencing the sights, sounds, and smells of novel locations can either attract or distract students’ attention to learning (see chapter 5, “Creating Cultural Connections: Navigating Difference, Investigating Power, Unpacking Privilege,” and chapter 12, “Global and Immersive Service-Learning: What You Need to Know as You Go”).

Furthermore, the intensity of associated community challenges and issues (e.g., power, privilege, inequity) may cause internal as well as external conflict. One technique for establishing interaction rules is to have the students discuss (in person or online) at the beginning of the course common courtesy strategies (such as raising their hand to ask a question or not using ALL CAPS IN E-MAILS TO INDICATE THEIR ANGER).

It is also important to know how to handle unintentional insults if a student makes a comment or statement out of ignorance that is received or perceived as rude or inflammatory. Prepare your students for the importance of hard discussions. Start with a class-brainstormed list of intentions (rather than rules) for how to discuss controversial, value-laden, and emotional topics. Review and discuss the class intentions list and come to a general agreement about its contents. Then post the class intentions in an accessible electronic site for easy retrieval and review. Certainly, there is no guarantee that all will be copasetic, but it may help to remind students that difficult discussions can be uncomfortable as well as considerate.

**Teamwork**

While many students have participated before in group work, it is often not a favored activity (especially if bullies or slackers were present in the group). The information and exercises in chapter 4, “Groups Are Fun, Groups Are Not Fun,” help students think through group norms, roles, and responsibilities.

If your service-learning is project based, you may want to engage students in some of the activities early in the academic term. Alternatively, if your students are responsible for facilitating groups (such as in high schools or middle schools), they may want to use the information or exercises in their own service setting.

Similarly, chapters 7 and 8 deal with issues of mentoring and leadership. Students may mentor and lead their own classmates, or they may be responsible for mentoring and leading students younger than themselves in lower educational levels. Gaining content about mentoring and leadership may be critical to the success of the service endeavor (such as in after-school tutoring or coordinating games for at-risk youth). Don’t assume that your students know how to coach, advise, or talk to others. When in doubt, assign the readings and exercises as part of knowledge and skill development.

**Democratic Dilemmas of Service-Learning**

As we discuss in chapter 1, under the section “The Role of Education in a Democracy,” democracy is the attempt to balance differences in individual values, beliefs, and experiences with collective ideals of justice, equity, and security. In many ways, service-learning is a form of living democracy as a group of diverse individuals strive toward common goals of community improvement. But democracy can be messy and volatile, as described by faculty who teach service-learning in their firsthand classroom and community accounts in Cress and Donahue (2011). For example, in one of the case studies, students refuse to assist the League of Women Voters with a voter registration drive because they erroneously believe that the organization is targeting people of certain political persuasions. In an-
other case study, a group of students refuse to serve at a local HIV/AIDS hospice because they erroneously believe that all the patients are gay and lesbian. Certainly, political and religious values are the most difficult for any faculty to navigate. But as Donahue in Cress and Donahue (2011) notes, “Disagreement and disequilibrium and contention and conflict in the classroom are valuable because they are inherent elements in democratic life. . . . [and] conflict is not only inevitable, it can be a prime opportunity for learning” (pp. 101, 103).

Donahue further asserts that unexamined uniformity of opinion in classrooms is more dangerous to democracy than controversy itself. However, to minimize actual conflict in service-learning classes, Donahue suggests that faculty

- identify larger tensions and multiple framings of an issue before students engage in discussion;
- limit whole-group discussions where only a few voices can be heard, and instead use smaller pairings of dyads and triads for in-depth discussion; and
- model “democratic humility” in how to think, talk, and respond to conflict so students see and hear how to appropriately address stereotypes and ill-informed assumptions. (Cress & Donahue, 2011)

Indeed, being secure in one’s own beliefs and values while allowing others to hold views counter to our own is a cognitively complex indicator of psychosocial development. Some students may have limited life experiences or the maturation needed for negotiating intensive value-laden encounters. Faculty may need to provide them with the skills and strategies for agreeing to disagree with civility.

Chapter 3, “ Becoming Community: Moving from I to We,” contains a number of activities that may be useful in helping students become more consciously aware of self as they move toward a common purpose. However, we can remove this case study and have the students respond to the case study in chapter 3 using the Seven Cs model. Or have them create a new case study (individually or as a group) and apply the Social Change Model of Leadership. Alternatively, use a case study chapter from Cress and Donahue (2011) in discussing how to apply controversy with civility.

Strategic Teaching Techniques

Epistemology

Epistemology means how we come to know and understand, in other words, how we process information. At the most basic level, some of us would rather hear information (auditory) while others would rather see it (visual). Still others would rather just try it (kinesthetic).

Students often enjoy service because they get to do something rather than just sit, watch, and read about it. However, traditional students may be afraid of service for precisely that reason. And experiential-type students may enjoy the service so much that they don’t want to complete the course papers and assignments that go with it.

Chapter 6, “Reflection in Action: The Learning-Doing Relationship,” introduces students to different learning styles (epistemologies) and how optimal learning occurs when all the realms are engaged. For ideas about connecting your teaching to students’ various epistemological styles, see especially figure 6.3, “Modes of Reflection (chapter 6, p. 106),” for multiple teaching techniques you can vary for each week, day, or class meeting.

For instance, try pairing short explanatory lectures (15–25 minutes) on crucial course content with PowerPoint presentations. This may be followed by a small-group discussion, role playing, or five-minute silent in-class writing period. Additionally, consider how you might alter assignments (such as a presentation rather than a paper) to better connect with student learning differences and innovative ways for them to demonstrate their new knowledge and skills.

Reflection

Although Bloom’s taxonomy is a resource for writing learning objectives, it is also a useful tool for develop-
ing reflection activities and assignments. Adapted from Ash and Clayton (2009), the DEAL model described in chapter 6 asks students to describe, examine, and articulate learning. The DEAL model is structured to progress from relatively simple observations to more cognitively complex ways of reflecting on events and situations. As noted in exercise 6.3, this may be an especially useful reflection strategy if there is conflict or controversy at the service site.

Moreover, as John Dewey noted (cited in chapter 1), reflection is crucial to learning; doing (or reading, for that matter) is not enough. Make sure to build into your syllabus ample reflection opportunities that you review and provide feedback on in a timely manner. Don’t make the mistake of one instructor who didn’t collect reflection journals until the end of the term only to learn too late of community partner frustration, lack of student follow through, and the overall failure of the service-learning experience.

Developing Intercultural Competence

Preparation

Some students may be entering communities to perform service or assist individuals whose history and traditions are quite different from their own. Other students may return to their original communities to provide service but are now in new roles of privilege and authority. Indeed, intentions and values concerning the concepts of service, volunteerism, and charity differ greatly across religious, political, and ethnic groups (see chapters 1, 2, and 5).

Early in the course expose students to readings, research, YouTube videos, music, and other information to give them insight into the populations they will work with. And prepare them for culture shock if this is their first time visiting a prison, seeing urban blight, or traveling to another region of the country (or a new country; if so, be sure they read chapter 12, “Global and Immersive Service-Learning: What You Need to Know as You Go”).

A particularly engaging and insightful activity is Exercise 5.3: Deconstructing Stereotypes in which students create a visual collage of words and images that characterize the groups they are serving. Then they discuss how these images contribute to misunderstanding, stereotypes, and perpetuation of systemic inequities and challenges.

Learning through Serving also contains such features as illustrative student quotes and text boxes titled Spotlight on Service that can serve as case studies for discussion or in-class role plays. In addition, concept diagrams, such as figure 5.1, “Development of Intercultural Sensitivity,” could be used as a catalyst for students in creating their own case studies or role plays.

Praxis

Praxis is the application of concepts in action, which is the essence of service-learning: applying, examining, and evaluating academic conceptual notions in real-life encounters to identify potential solutions to persistent problems. While it could be asserted that all types of experiential and problem-based learning is a form of praxis, service-learning uniquely places priority on the cultural constraints, facilitators, and considerations that affect the lives of those being served.

As discussed in chapter 10, “Expanding Horizons: New Views of Course Concepts,” and chapter 13, “Start Anywhere, Follow It Everywhere: Agents of Change,” critical inquiry examines the economic, societal, and political sources of community problems to identify leverage points for change. Since this text does not delve deeply into critical theory, you may need to add a short lecture on it or facilitate a well-guided discussion by asking questions such as, How do issues of privilege, oppression, and discrimination contribute to issues at the service site? Is there a relationship between public policy, monetary spending, and these issues? and How are the academic discipline models or tools we’ve read about sensitive or insensitive to addressing the needs of the individuals affected?

Review each of the exercises and Spotlights on Service in chapters 10 and 13 (perhaps also chapter 8).

12), to determine the optimal course timing for such discussions. Students’ cognitive development, previous intercultural experiences, and maturation levels should guide you in selecting the most appropriate activities as assignments. Not all students will be ready to have their worldviews challenged or be open to shifting their perspectives. Students must be taught how to think critically with their heart as well as with their mind.

**Impact Assessment**

**Student Learning**

Rather than an end product, assessment should be an ongoing process. This perspective is the basis for requiring students to engage in frequent reflection activities to assess what is working, what is not working, and what needs to change.

In addition to the course objectives, you might have students determine their own learning objectives for the class and for their service. Then develop reflection queries at different points in the term for students to self-assess their own progress. You might even have teams or project groups develop learning goals and objectives that they assess at the middle and end points of the course.

**Community Impact**

In addition to the usual tracking of student service hours or number of clients served, students might also work with your community partners to develop outcome goals that are evaluated at different times in the service experience. Certainly, if the engagement experience is being partially supported by a grant or another source of fiscal support, external stakeholder objectives may need to be assessed.

Review the various evaluation techniques described in chapter 11, “Beyond a Grade: Are We Making a Difference?: The Benefits and Challenges of Evaluating Learning and Serving.” You may also want to assign this chapter earlier in the term if your students will be involved in designing assessment processes and determining outcomes.

Conclusion

Service-learning and civic engagement increase student learning and graduation rates because the experience encompasses intellectually challenging academic aspects and meaningfully crafted community involvement. While instructors cannot control every interaction or eventual outcome, thoughtfully designed courses and engagement provide the structure for success.

Hopefully, the strategies, tips, and ideas offered here will help your course, syllabus, and service-development process become an enjoyable and effective community engagement learning experience.

Additional Resources


Campus Compact, http://www.compact.org
Community College National Center for Community Engagement, http://www.mesacc.edu/other/engagement

Intercultural Communication Institute, http://www.intercultural.org
International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement, http://www.researchslce.org


Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, http://ginsberg.umich.edu/mjcl