

Community Service-Learning 300, Winter 2012

Theory and Practice in Community Service-Learning

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| Time: | Wednesdays, 1300-1550 |
| Location: | HC 2-17 |

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| Instructor: | Dr. John Simpson |
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| Office Hours: | M 1500-1700, W 1600-1700 |

Summary

Overall the trajectory of the term can be captured in three questions: What is CSL and how does it fit into higher education (if at all)? What is the nature of the gap between theory and practice and how does this relate to CSL? What is at stake in the current trend to “go digital” with respect to both service organizations and CSL?

Community service-learning (CSL) integrates community-based activities with classroom learning, but to what end? What does CSL accomplish? Why is it an increasingly popular and important pedagogical strategy in modern universities? Despite strong advocates in favour of CSL there are serious disputes about its value, place, and method of practice within universities. Some CSL practitioners would respond to these questions by asserting that community-engaged learning plays a key role in bringing about social change. Other advocates of service-learning suggest that community engagement will help shape responsible citizens and reinvigorate participatory democracy. Still others value service-learning more for its ability to provide students with practical work experience, including networking opportunities and transferable skills. But are these goals realizable, let alone consistent? Should they be?

The first part of the course will explore the debates concerning the goals of community-engaged learning and the purposes of both education and universities (both broadly construed). We will focus on being clear about what Community Service-Learning and Education are in the ideal and compare this to how they are in practice. This will set us up to explore the gap that exists between theory and practice and the ways in which service-learning, community engagement, and social change affect this gap and are affected by it. Towards the end of the term we will examine current trends in using technology to accomplish/assist social change and moves to make some service-learning electronic.

The class format will lean towards a seminar where students are expected to participate in discussion rather than a formal lecture.

Evaluation & Workload

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| Course Contract: | 20% | Notebook: | 30% |
| Discussion Development Exercise: | 10% | Final Project: | 40% |

Descriptions, explanations, and rubrics for each of the above items will be available from the website on the first day of class. What you need to know up-front is the following:

- **Course Contract.** This is a list of todos that will track your ability to effectively participate in your chosen CSL placement and engage with the class as a whole. You will be guaranteed 15/20 for simply completing all the items to a satisfactory degree. Missing deadlines or poor quality assessments will pull your mark here lower. Higher quality completions will pull it up.
- **Final Project.** You may choose between a formal research paper aimed at publication/presentation, or documenting your CSL project/hosting organization. Projects will include a proposal and in-class presentation in addition to the main project produced.
- **Discussion Development Exercise.** In consultation with the instructor, each student will select one topic/reading and take responsibility for introducing it to the class during the assigned week and acting as the content expert for that author/topic.
- **Notebook.** You will be responsible for keeping what amounts to a journal over the entire term that is devoted to this class and your placement experiences. Weekly reflective writing will be required both inside and outside class.

Every student in this class will participate in a CSL placement requiring 30 hours of effort dedicated to one of the projects associated with this class. In addition to this you will need to be generally familiar with roughly 40 pages of reading required each week such that you are able to participate actively in class discussions and activities. You will also be expected to spend time outside of class doing reflective writing both as a way to document your CSL experience and to participate in the online forums to supplement your class participation. In summary there is a fair bit to do, but you should find it all interesting and engaging.

Texts

Required: Service-Learning in Theory and Practice (2010) by Dan W. Butin

A collection of readings available via the course website or by other means*

*(These will often be provided via links to downloads via the library’s online catalogue and you will need you CCID)

Website

The course website is found at <https://eclass.srv.ualberta.ca>. The majority of course materials as well as the obligatory online forums will be available here throughout the term.

About the Instructor

I completed my PhD in Philosophy at the University of Alberta in 2010 with a thesis investigating the value of alternative forms of rationality via the use of a series of computer simulations. Beyond teaching courses in logic, game theory, science, and introductions to philosophy I am the Program Coordinator for Philosophy for Children Alberta and the Program Director for its summer camp series, EUREKAMP. Outside of academia I volunteer my time with Scouts Canada as both a leader and a trainer spend a lot of time planning to build things that I never seem to get around to. I have integrated CSL into courses for the past five years and am looking forward to this opportunity to further explore the theory with you.

Instructor Availability

Office hours are the times that I promise to be in available for drop-in discussion. I have other responsibilities within the university, including other classes, so it is best to book in advance whenever possible. Note that these are not the only times that I am available. Should office hours not fit your schedule then either email or speak to me immediately before or after class to arrange an alternate time.

Email is the best way to make contact. Please have your subject line begin with the class number (e.g. PHL 102, CSL 300) followed by a useful description of the message. If you do not include the course number then your email may not be given the attention it deserves. You can expect a response within 24 business hours (usually less). Do not use the messaging feature on the course moodle as a contact means since this makes certain replies problematic.

A face-to-face meeting is the best way to overcome misunderstandings. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the class—including everything from feeling lost or bored to not understanding course material or how you are being graded—come and see me ASAP. There are very few problems with logistics or understanding that cannot be solved easily with an early discussion. Hiding or avoiding an issue does not help you understand the material or get back on track. I will ALWAYS do what I can to help you within the guidelines of what is fair, reasonable, and within the academic policy of the university.

Class Materials

Any in-class presentations or other material will be made available on the course website, typically within 24 hours of being used.

In most cases all handouts not included in a coursepack will be available on the course website at least 24 hours before the class they will be used in. You are responsible for printing them out and *bringing them to class*. Copies will be provided in class on any occasion where handouts are required and were not posted 24 hours in advance. If you miss a class where handouts were provided then you are responsible for acquiring them from the course website or by other means.

Marking and Grading

Unless otherwise stated only hardcopy work will be marked. You can “stop the clock” by emailing your work to the instructor, but it will not be marked until you provide a hardcopy. The time that counts is the stamp in the instructor’s inbox, not in your sent mail folder. If there are any discrepancies (even a change in spacing or spelling or font) between the version in your email and the hardcopy you hand-in then your work will be assessed as if the clock stop had not happened.

Unless otherwise specified, late work loses 25% for every new 24-hour period that begins following the specified time that the work was due (e.g. work handed in one minute after it is due loses 25%). Justifications for late work are expected within 48 hours.

There will be no automatic translation of raw percentile scores (marks) to the 4 point scale (grades) since this would (unrealistically) presume consistency in the setting of exams and assignments across years and instructors. Rather, raw scores will be compared to the normal grade distribution for the appropriate course level within in the Faculty of Arts. The translation of raw scores (marks) into grades will primarily be made on the basis of this comparison.

A subjective element will always remain—e.g. if the instructor believes that the class has a larger number of outstanding students than usual then more A’s will be given out. Or, if the class is assessed by the instructor to be poorer than normal then more lower grades will be assigned.

The official drop date for a full refund is January 20, 50% refunds are available up to February 8. A final grade of W is available for withdrawals made before March 18.

Academic Integrity

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/governance/studentappealsregulations.cfm) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.

The code of student behaviour is lengthy, but it would be well worth your while to make sure that you fully understand what constitutes cheating, plagiarism and violations of safety or dignity. An appropriate summary may be found at www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/governance/StudentAppealsCheatsheet.cfm. The “Truth-In-Education” handbook or website (<http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/TIE/>) is also useful. Note that that *neither of these summary resources are a substitute for reading the full code.*

Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4(2) of the University Calendar.