

Components of an Effective Service Learning Course Syllabus

- Include a definition of service learning and a clear learning objective for it.
- Clearly describe how the service experience will be measured and what will be measured.

Academic credit is for learning, not for service. Community service is integrated into the academic course content, and the grade is given for the quality of learning that derives from the service. State how you will measure this learning and what percentage of the grade will come from service learning.

- Describe the nature of the service placement or project

Explain the kind of work that they will do, the duration of the work, and the nature of the relationship in which they will be engaged. Service learning takes place over the course of the entire semester, not on a day, or even over four weeks. This helps foster a reciprocal learning relationship between service learners and those that their agency serves.

- Specify the roles and responsibilities of students in the placement and/or project
- Define the need(s) the service placement meets

We always want the community needs to drive our placements and our projects. You may wish to simply state this, if you have multiple placement locations. If you are working with a single agency or agencies with related missions, you can more easily state the specific community need that is being addressed.

- Specify how students will be expected to demonstrate what they have learned in the placement/project (journal, papers, presentation, discussion)
- Present course assignments that link service placement and course content

For example, reflection assignments are a required piece of the service learning course. Reflection is the primary way that students link their service experience to course content. The importance of reflection can be underscored by including reflection assignments in the syllabus.

- Include a description of the reflective process

Reflection is the active, persistent, and careful consideration of the service activity. This can happen through class discussion, journaling, essay writing, small group work, etc. Without reflection, students simply go through the motions of service remaining cognitively unaffected by the experience, and left with their personal ignorance or biases reinforced or unexamined. You can also use the reflection handout on the 4 C's of reflection found on our website.

Adapted from Heffernan, Kerrissa, ed. *Fundamentals of Service-Learning Course Construction*. Providence, RI: Campus Compact, 2001.