

## Examples Of University Of MN Service-Learning Courses

Faculty interest in academic service-learning is growing across the disciplines at the University of Minnesota. This growth may be the result of a variety of factors including the University's public commitment to building meaningful partnerships with the community, word-of-mouth from one colleague to another, today's political climate, and perhaps an interest in challenging students to consider what it means to be civically engaged in one's community. The following list offers examples of how University of Minnesota faculty members and instructors are integrating service-learning into their disciplines:

### Philosophy

John Wallace, Professor of Philosophy and recipient of the 2000 National Campus Compact Thomas Ehrlich Award for Faculty in Service-Learning, developed the course "Social Justice and Community Service" in 1989. Students in this course explore classical philosophical questions such as "what is a good life?" and "what is a good society?" While students are engaged in the community doing some form of service for two or more hours a week, students are also exploring the concept of vocation and the question, "what can I do in my life to contribute to building a more decent society?" Students are encouraged to participate at the Jane Addams School for Democracy, housed in Neighborhood House in West St. Paul.

### Political Science

James Farr, Professor of Political Science, developed the course "Topics in Political Theory: Democracy and Education." Students in this course explore the theory and practice of democracy, citizenship and education through texts by Dewey, Horton, Freire, Kozel and others while serving as "coaches" to groups of younger students at St. Bernard's School as the youth work to identify and solve problems in and around their school and community in St. Paul. This program is an initiative of Public Achievement connected to the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at the Humphrey Institute.

### Spanish

Kathleen Ganley, Instructor in Spanish, developed the course, "Service-Learning in the Chicano/Latino Community," as a way to give students in the Spanish department a way to get involved with the growing local Chicano/Latino community in the Twin Cities area. Students study issues of intercultural communication, racism, white privilege, bilingual education and immigration in the classroom while gaining experience working in a variety of organizations doing work such as tutoring English, translating for immigration lawyers, assisting with children's activities or teaching citizenship courses at local community centers.

### African & African-American Studies

Rose Brewer, Professor of African & African-American Studies, developed the course, AAAS 1011, "Introduction to Afro-American Studies" with a community-based learning component through grant support from CLA Curricular Innovations, MN Campus Compact, and the MN Higher Education Services Office. A major goal of this course is to introduce students to the traditions of service and citizenship in African American life in local African American Institutions around the Twin Cities area. Students combine community work with substantive materials addressing the history, culture, economy and sociology of African decent.

### General College

Amy Lee, Associate Professor in General College, developed "Community Action Writing" to give students the opportunity to work with youth as tutors on reading and writing and reflect on their experiences through writing assignments. Students in the course also completed a newsletter on University of Minnesota service-learning and community involvement efforts by working with the Career and Community Learning Center to identify and interview faculty, students, alumni, community partner organizations and administrators about their experiences with service-learning.

continued...

## **General College**

Heidi Lasley Barajas, Assistant Professor and Sociologist in General College, has integrated service-learning as an option into People and Problems, a required course for General College students. Students participating in this option choose to do service in one of a wide range of community-based organizations were students tutor in public or alternative schools or after-school programs, help coordinate youth activities, work with people with developmental or physical disabilities or in programs that provide services to homeless individuals or families.

## **Biological Sciences**

Mark Arneson, Instructor, College of Biological Sciences, developed a service-learning option for students in his Intro. to Bio-Chemistry course. Students are offered the opportunity to teach youth in the community topics from their coursework in lieu of taking a comprehensive final examination. The students work with Mark to develop a lesson plan for teaching advanced theories at a level for youth to understand. As a result, Mark's students become more acquainted with the course material and the youth get the opportunity to have "guest" presenters teach educational science material in a fun and interactive way.

## **Architecture and Landscape Architecture**

Mary de Laittre, Instructor, College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, developed a course called, "Environmental Literacy" with the goal of introducing students to the vocabulary and concepts of responsible community design. The primary intent of the curriculum is to teach students how to see and think critically about the built environment. Mary's students spend the semester tutoring children three hours per week in the classroom at Bethune Elementary School in North Minneapolis. While providing children with tutorial support, the students are also observing and evaluating the environment in which children learn. At the end of the semester, they provide recommendations to improving the physical learning space of the classroom to school administrators.

## **Natural Resources**

Dorothy Anderson, Professor, and Kristen Nelson, Assistant Professor, College of Natural Resources, co-teach the senior capstone course, "Natural Resources Problem Solving and Planning," that contracts with the community to resolve a land-use problem. The outcomes of this methodology is that students are fully engaged in the course project since it is a real issue that needs resolution for a real community. At the end of the semester, the students present their recommendations to the community with graphs, data and research to support their recommendations.

## **Soil, Water, and Climate**

Terry Cooper, Professor, Soil, Water, and Climate, teaches, "Introduction to Environmental Sciences," and requires his students to work two hours per week in an environmental organization. Students have the opportunity to choose from a variety of organizations focusing on environmental policy and advocacy issues, restoration work, environmental education, and field research. Students are required to present to the classroom on their work with the organization.

## **Agronomy and Plant Genetics**

Nick Jordan, Associate Professor, Agronomy and Plant Genetics, College of Agriculture, teaches "Ecology of Agricultural Systems." The premise of this course is to allow students to view agriculture as a complex system of interacting human and non-human parts. The aim of the course is to help students become better able to work in the face of complex settings where both human social factors and ecological factors are intertwined. Students work closely throughout the semester with a non-profit organization who is working on some aspect of sustainable agriculture to better understand the issues in which they are learning in the classroom setting.

continued...

### **Sociology**

The Department of Sociology has offered a series of courses with service-learning options or requirements since 1994 by departmental faculty and instructors. Ron Aminzade, Jeff Broadbent, Barbara Laslett, Doug Hartmann, Joe Gerteis, Erin Kelly, Ann Hironaka, and a large number of graduate students have taught many courses using service-learning including: Introduction to Sociology; Sociological Perspectives on Gender, Race and Class; Introduction to Political Sociology—The Uses of Citizenship; Sociology of the Family; and the Major Projects Seminar.

### **Geography**

The Department of Geography has regularly offered courses utilizing a community-based learning component since 1999. “Cities, Citizens and Communities,” taught by Assistant Professor Karen Till and Associate Professor Roger Miller on a rotating basis, allows students to add an additional two credits using Directed Study x-registration if students want to participate in a community project under the supervision of a neighborhood organization connected through work of the University Neighborhood Network in the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs or to one of many community or governmental organizations through the Career and Community Learning Center. Professor Miller also uses service-learning with his Geographical Perspectives on Planning and the Changing Form of the City courses.

### **English Language and Literature**

The Department of English Language and Literature has offered service-learning courses since the early 1990s beginning with Literacy and American Cultural Diversity. Over the years, additional courses have been added, including English Composition, Writing Beyond the Academy, Literature of Public Life, and Community Learning Internships. The internship has developed out of the Literacy Lab Partnership instigated by Patricia Crain, Tom Augst and Eric Daigre, recipients of the 2003 Community Service Award.