



The Faith-Justice Institute

Service-Learning: Course Core Criteria

The Service-Learning Program, housed in the Faith-Justice Institute, is an interdisciplinary curriculum based on a pedagogy emphasizing the integration of traditional coursework, reflection and mutually beneficial community partnership. Rooted in Ignatian Pedagogy and Catholic Theology, service-learning seeks to foster a commitment to developing the whole person (conscience, competence and compassion) through a lived experience of the Jesuit mission, especially solidarity with those most in need. Service-Learning courses rigorously challenge students intellectually, interpersonally and intrapersonally. These courses - examine systemic issues of social justice through two different learning environments – the traditional classroom and the local community.

Syllabi are reviewed and approved by the Faculty Service-Learning Sub-Committee.

Five core criteria essential to academically rigorous and valuable educational service-learning courses are:

1. **Academic Rigor:** “In a Jesuit school, the focus is on education for justice. Adequate knowledge joined to rigorous and critical thinking will make the commitment to work for justice in adult life more effective” (*Characteristics of Jesuit Education, 77.*) Actualizing the Jesuit mission, service-learning courses seek academic excellence while educating for justice.
 - Students are challenged to examine systemic issues of social justice.
 - Students learn and test theories through their classroom experience and from work at their service sites. Students are always active learners.
 - Syllabi include service as a component of learning objectives, and grade composition reflects input from the service-learning site.
 - Course materials include traditional text and experiential learning--both integral to a successful service-learning course.
 - In addition to full, in-class contact hours, regular attendance at service is required.

2. **Critical Reflection:** Critical Reflection is a core aspect of Ignatian Pedagogy as reflection “forms the conscience of learners (their beliefs, values, attitudes, and their entire way of thinking) in such a manner they are led to move beyond knowing to undertake action” (*Ignatian Pedagogy, 16.*) Faculty design assignments and assignment sequences that incorporate critical reflection on systemic social issues. Assignments are intended to deepen learning by explicitly linking service site experience with course content and social justice. Reflection clarifies the link between classroom learning and the students’ growth as persons and citizens and their appreciation of issues of social justice. Assignments are both written *and* oral opportunities that:
 - Occur in-class or as part of course requirements;
 - Occur frequently throughout the semester;
 - Process academic theory in relation to service site experience;
 - Process and explore personal values;
 - Explore social injustices affecting the engaged community population;
 - Allow instructor feedback;
 - Offer reflection assignments with clear means of assessment.



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3. **Reciprocity:** Rooted in the Jesuit Way of Proceeding, mutually beneficial relationships between the University and community partners reflect right relationships. “To the extent that we develop a wide-ranging web of respectful and productive relationships, we fulfill Christ’s priestly prayer that they may all be one” (General Congregation 34: 551, 17.) All service-learning courses thus engage in mutually beneficial relationships. As a result:
 - Service fulfills a real need for the site;
 - Service fulfills a real need in a course syllabus and is integral to the learning in the course;
 - Service is meaningful for the service-learning students and the clients at the service-learning sites;
 - Service is relationship-based rather than task-oriented;
 - The university partners determine ways to enhance their relationships with their service sites including:
 - inviting service-sites to participate in on-campus activities,
 - collaborating with service sites on grants or mutual projects,
 - providing access to the university through partnerships, scholarships, and workshops about attending college.

4. **Learning Objectives:** Ignatian Pedagogy “calls for the infusion of approaches to value learning and growth within existing curricula rather than adding courses...What is needed is a framework of inquiry for the process of wrestling with significant issues and complex values of life and teachers willing to guide that inquiry” (4, 14). As a framework for inquiry and derived from the above criteria, each service-learning course must use at least **three** of the below objectives on its syllabus:
 - Students will integrate their service-learning experiences and academic course work through class discussions, writing assignments, or both.
 - Students will reflect on their service experiences through classroom discussions, reflection activities, writing assignments, or some combination of the above.
 - Students will explore concepts of systemic injustice through analysis of their service experiences.
 - Students will engage in relationship-based service-learning on a weekly basis.
 - Students will engage in discernment activities and reflect on their personal values in connection with systemic injustice.
 - Students will produce final papers or projects that integrate service-learning with course content.
 - Students will explore concepts of reciprocity, diversity and solidarity through reflections on the service experience and course material when appropriate.
 - Students are challenged to consider existing social values and priorities in light of Gospel values and faith-based traditions of social justice.

5. **Learning Outcomes:** “Students, in the course of their formation, must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering and engage it constructively” (Kolvenbach, *The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education*, III, i). Learning outcomes ensure that students’ service site experiences are employed as an instructional method which informs theoretical course content.
 - Goals must be clear, specific, and linked to the service experience and to the pedagogical methods.
 - Service is an additional text. When creating learning goals it is essential to reflect community-based work as integral part of educational experience.
 - Service is an integral component of student learning. Faculty may give a Failure to Attend (FA) if the service requirement is not met. A service attendance policy must be stated.
 - When appropriate, e.g. Project Oriented Courses, service-learning course products should be shared with associated community partners.
 - Example: Patient Access to Healthcare, Dr. George P. Sillup

“Service-Learning Project: Projects from this course have been developed to meet a need of the service – learning partner, Mercy Wellness Center, and implemented after the semester. Examples are the Physician Referral and Patient Assistance Programs.”