

**Urban Studies 370: Fieldwork in Urban Studies/
Service Learning in Urban Studies**

Wednesday 2-4 p.m.

Professor: Melissa Checker

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Office Hours: Wed. 10:30-11:30 a.m.; 4-5:30 p.m. or by appointment

Service Learning Coordinator: Scott Larson

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Office Hours: Thursday 12-5 p.m.

Course Description

In this course, students simultaneously engage in a “Service Internship” and attend a weekly seminar. This combination of academic learning and practice culminates the Urban Studies major by helping students connect Urban Studies concepts with real-life experiences and by preparing them for active civic participation and careers in urban affairs.

Service Internships depart from traditional internships in the following ways:

- In a Service Internship, you do "real" work that contributes meaningfully to the activities of your work site and make you part of their "team".
- A Service Internship includes academic reading material that is directly relevant to, and which enhances your experiences at your job placement.
- A Service Internship is limited to one of our existing Community Partners. The advantage of this is that we have already established ongoing relationships with these organizations and ensured that students will be well mentored and academically engaged during their internship.
- Students’ job descriptions are designed to benefit students and organizations equally.
- Internships include a semester-long project which allows students to pursue a specific area of interest and provides a concrete, tangible outcome to our Community Partners. Projects also ensure that students are not faced with “downtime” or overly administrative responsibilities.
- The course instructor plays an active role in ensuring that Service Internships are mutually beneficial. This role includes regular site visits and conversations with community partners as well as students.

Pre-Semester Preparation

By the time the course begins, you should be well on your way to setting up your internship. That means you should have reviewed the “Student Guide to Urban Studies 370”, met with Professor Checker and/or the Service Learning Coordinator to match your interests with one of our Community Partners, and submitted your resume to the Office of Career Services. Please review the “Guide” for more information on this pre-semester process.

Learning Objectives

- Learn how to integrate Urban Studies theory and experience
- Learn how to apply knowledge gained in Urban Studies courses in the real world.
- Learn how to extract meaning from experience
- Learn to be an independent and active learner

- Learn about the provision of social services in New York City
- Learn how to work collaboratively with others
- Strengthen personal and professional skills
- Strengthen career building skills (resumes, cover letters, job interviews, etc.)
- Strengthen critical thinking and problem-solving skills

Course Format

Students must complete at least 70 Service Internship hours over the course of the semester (usually that means 7-10 hours/week, for 7-10 weeks) **as well as attend class regularly!**

Service Internship Placement

- Your placement experience is structured by the roles and responsibilities that the host organization agrees to, your own interests and learning objectives, and this course design. It is essential that the relationship between the student and the host be as reciprocal as possible.
- *All students must complete and sign a **Service Learning Agreement** with their host organization in order to receive course credit!!*

Seminar Meetings

- Our seminars will directly connect classroom learning to your experiences in the field. They will include analyses of assigned readings, service highlights, professional development and presentations by members of the class.
- We will also collectively discuss, reflect upon and problem-solve issues that arise in your job placements. In our discussions, we will integrate scholarly and community “voices” which are not always included in academic or public debates. During our meetings, we will work hard to express our views and to listen to the views of others.
- We will meet in person approximately 9-10 Wednesdays during the semester. On Wednesdays that the seminar does not meet, students will engage in online activities instead.
- *Regular attendance in class and at your Service Internship is essential to your success in this class.*

Readings

Readings include will be posted to the Blackboard site in the folder marked “Course Materials,” approximately one week in advance of their due date. This course is co-generated by students and instructor. In other words, each week we will focus on a topic that corresponds to one or two of your internships. On your week, you will work with me to come up with reading materials that answer questions which arise from your internship and which are relevant to the assigned topic. (More details below).

Assignments and Assessment

Assignments are designed to encourage structured academic reflection upon our service experiences outside the classroom and to create an active learning community in class. Because this class is experiential as well as academic, your full participation in all assignments is essential.

1. Weekly Responses (30%)

- At the beginning of each class, you will turn in a two-part response paper. Each response should be *1-2 pages, typed in double-space with one-inch margins. Responses are due in **hard copy at the beginning of each class!! No emailed assignments will be accepted! No exceptions!***
- You will skip **2** responses during the semester. You may choose any two, depending on your own schedule.

- There are no right or wrong answers in these responses. You will be graded on how well you engage in critical thinking about the Service Internships and how well you relate the major concepts from this course and your Urban Studies courses more generally, to your Service Internship work.
- Each response MUST include the following parts to get full credit:

A. Internship Reflection

- After each day at your Service Internship, you will record the date and times you worked, and a very brief report of your activity. Then, you will write a brief reflection, thinking about how your activities: **1)** contribute to the mission of the organization; **2)** contribute to your own personal growth and learning in urban studies. In other words, what Urban Studies coursework came up for you this week? How does your reading and learning in urban studies help you think about what you're doing?
- The key to effective reflections is to write immediately and frequently – don't leave it until the day of class!

B. Reading Responses:

- For each assigned reading, you will also write in a response with your service internship in mind. The goal here is to interact with the authors' arguments using your own relevant personal observations or experiences. Ask yourself such questions as: How do the readings help me to understand my internship experiences? In what ways does my internship experience tend to confirm or refute the readings?
- PLEASE try to think broadly here. Even if the reading does not directly relate to your internship, try to apply some aspect of it (theory, method, questions raised, solutions offered) relates to the underlying issues addressed by your organization.

2. Links (10%)

- During the semester, you will use our course wiki site to create at least **3** links to online news articles, videos, podcasts, interactive maps, data sets and/or research reports that are relevant to your work at your service internship. When I say relevant I mean VERY relevant, and reputable!! That means you cannot link to a random website or blog, but link to some source that disseminates verifiable, factual information from at least one recognized expert.
- With the link, you will include ONE sentence explaining how it is relevant to your work and why you thought it was important enough to share with the public.
- I will provide more details on how to post these and what kinds of things are acceptable in separate documents.

3. Presentations (10%)

A. Topic Presentations

I have structured the course so that each topic we cover is relevant to one of our Community Partner organizations. Ahead of each topic week, students working at the corresponding Community Partner organization will work with me to find reading material that addresses a question or area of interest that has come up during your Service Internship. On the appropriate day, you will lead class discussion by presenting the reading to the class, explaining how your experiences inform the reading, and how the reading informs your experiences. You may also assign relevant videos, news articles, etc. in addition to the reading.

B. Final Presentation

On the final day of class, you will **also** make a brief presentation on your final project.

4. General Participation & Course Administration (10%)

- Full participation in all class assignments and discussions is encouraged and expected.
- Resume – preferably before the semester begins, you must meet twice with someone from the Office of Career Services to critique and revise your resume.
- Service Learning Agreement – must be completed and signed by the due date (TBA)
- Timesheets – each week you will record the day and hours worked, and the number of hours remaining in your internship. You **MUST** have your supervisor initial the timesheet!

5. Final Reflection Project (30%).

- This assignment synthesizes your academic and service learning and answers questions such as, “What were the most important things I learned?” “What kinds of new insights did I gain?” “How did I contribute to the mission of the Community Partner organization I worked with, and what are the implications of that organization’s work?”
- The assignment will be linked to your **semester internship project** and include an e-copy of your outcome!
- Further details will be distributed early in the semester in a separate document.
- **DUE ON THE LAST DAY OF CLASS**

6. Community Partner Supervisor Evaluation (10%)

- Your supervisor must return the completed form to me at the end of your internship.
- Forms will be uploaded to Blackboard and the Service Learning website.
- **DUE ON THE LAST DAY OF CLASS.**

Course Schedule

Feb. 8: Topic 1: Reflexivity & Service Internships

Read:

- Erving Goffman, “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life” pp. 1-30.
- Sarah Mosle, “The Vanity of Volunteerism” (2000)

SPECIAL FOCUS: PROFESSIONALIZATION

Feb. 15: Topic 2: Setting the Stage -- Political Economy, Internships & Global Capitalism

Read: Choose 3 out of 4 readings:

- “Bloomberg Poverty Policies...” (Glenn Pasanan)
<http://www.gothamgazette.com/article/finance/20110719/8/3568>
- “As Income Gap Widens...” (Parrott)
<http://www.gothamgazette.com/article/economy/20110118/21/3452>
- “Intern Nation” (Allie Grasgreen)
http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/04/15/unpaid_internships_stir_ethical_and_legal_debate_at_colleges_and_businesses
- “Capitalism vs. Climate” (Naomi Wolfe)
<http://www.thenation.com/print/article/164497/capitalism-vs-climate>

Feb. 22: Topic 3: Local Government & Non Profit Organizations

Featured Community Partner: City Council Member Peter Vallone

SPECIAL FOCUS: FUNDING

EDITED RESUMES ARE DUE!!!!!

February 29 NO CLASS

March 7: Topic 4: Labor Rights & Responsibilities in NYC
 Read: TBA
 Featured Community Partner: Min Kwon Center & Uri L'Tzedek
 Presenters: Dasi, Po
TIMELINE (for presenters only): Questions/ideas for discussion due 2/26; Article assignments due 2/29
 SPECIAL FOCUS: HOURS, OVERTIME, ETC.

March 14 NO CLASS

March 21: Topic 5: Youth Empowerment & Early Childhood Development
 Read: TBA
 Featured Community Partner: Queens Community House
 Presenters: Jose; Raquel; Nedinma; Kimberly
TIMELINE (for presenters only): Questions/ideas for discussion due 3/11; Article assignments due 3/14
 SPECIAL FOCUS: EDUCATION, OUTREACH, MISSION

*****ALL SERVICE LEARNING AGREEMENTS/PROJECT PROPOSALS DUE!!!*****

March 28 NO CLASS

April 4: Topic 6: Sustainable Economic Development & Democratic Action
 Read: TBA
 Featured Community Partner: Sustainable Long Island & VOCAL
 Presenters: Carolyn; Connie
TIMELINE (for presenters only): Questions/ideas for discussion due 3/25; Article assignments due 3/28
 SPECIAL FOCUS: ADVOCACY VS. DIRECT SERVICE VS. DIRECT ACTION

April 11 NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK!!)

April 18: Topic 7: Greening the City
 Read: TBA
 Featured Community Partner: Queens Botanical Garden
 Presenters: Wei; Zahra; Evan; Fahima
TIMELINE (for presenters only): Questions/ideas for discussion due 4/8; Article assignments due 4/11
 SPECIAL FOCUS: PROGRAMMING & FUNDRAISING

April 25 NO CLASS

May 2: **FINAL PRESENTATIONS DURING FREE HOUR!**

May 9: Course Wrap Up & Discussion of Projects
 Read:

- “Capitalism vs. Climate” (Naomi Wolfe)
<http://www.thenation.com/print/article/164497/capitalism-vs-climate>