

# Service-Learning Class: Service, Citizenship and Community

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## Purpose

- Demonstrates theoretical and practical approaches to service, democratic citizenship, and community building with a focus on Appalachia.
- Teaches effective skills in community service and citizenship, including oral and written communication, critical reflection, teamwork, leadership, and diversity awareness.
- Formulates and examines students' commitment to service and citizenship.
- Combines service-learning and community-based research with classroom-based education.

## How It Works

### Course Description

This service-learning course, taught by Meta Mendel-Reyes, director of CELTS (Center for Excellence in Learning Through Service), is designed to introduce students to the interdisciplinary study of community. The class addresses topics such as economic and racial inequality and sustainable community development. There are opportunities for students to develop leadership skills for effective service and citizenship, learn about possible careers in the nonprofit sector, and prepare for field experience within their major. The course also integrates issues of Appalachia and gender throughout the semester.

The class meetings are conducted primarily in a seminar format. Sessions include analysis and reflection on service and research experiences, presentations and discussions led by members of the class, interactive activities that promote learning through discovery, and dialogues with community leaders.

### Service-learning

Each student participates in service-learning through a class service project and a team community-based research project (CBR). The class project will be part of the annual Hunger Hurts Food Drive. In addition to spending one Saturday morning participating in service, there is a weekend service trip to a soup kitchen. The assignment includes an essay reflecting on the book *Sweet Charity? Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement* and how it relates to the students' experiences.

### Course Requirements

In the CBR project, each team works with a local group or organization on a project that is designed, carried out, and evaluated cooperatively. This assignment culminates in a presentation to the community and a written product appropriate to the project. During the 2002 fall semester, the community partners include organizations focused on improving the lives of Appalachian children, increasing educational opportunity for poor women, and protecting the environment.

### Course Credit

The class is offered once a year through the general studies program. The course qualifies as credit toward the Appalachian cultural requirement and the women's studies major.

## What Makes The Project Unique

Most other service-learning courses, such as introduction to sociology, nursing, or education, focus on methodology. However, this course integrates service-learning as both subject and method. Its intent is

to train students to become more active members of the community through increased involvement as citizens and servants. Students spend many hours during the semester working with community partners. This course also uses the Bonner Foundation's Learn and Serve grant to implement community-based research.

### **Benefits**

The course is an effective model for educating students about service and citizenship. Students rate it very highly, and some have said the course was transformative and helped them decide to pursue careers in service.

### **Resources And Partners**

#### Berea College

- The director of CELTS teaches this course, and the service-learning coordinator organizes the CBR projects. The College provides classroom space and salaries for the course instructors. Community presenters and partners are compensated through CELTS.

#### The Bonner Foundation

- Provides financial support for the community-based research section of the course.

#### Community-Based Research Partners

- Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, the New Opportunity School for Women, Save the Children, Mount Maternal Health League, and the Madison County Mentoring Project.

### **How to Make it Grow**

The college hopes to add an advanced, community-based research course in service and citizenship.