

**SOC 279 SPECIAL TOPICS
SERVICE LEARNING IN SOCIOLOGY**

Syllabus

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CREDIT HOURS:

Three Semester Hours

PREREQUISITES:

Sociology 201 and a non-major in Sociology

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

Students volunteer to provide community service in a human services or criminal justice agency setting. Students volunteer time and effort in exchange for practical experience.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

The student will:

- Gain practical experience and skills in real life settings.
- Apply the knowledge gained from academic coursework to real life situations.
- Assist community agencies to better serve their clients and benefit from the assistance of enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

The course requirements are as follows:

- The Student will locate a suitable agency and will enter into a **Volunteer Service Agreement** with the agency. On Exhibit A of the **Volunteer Service Agreement**, Student and agency shall describe the volunteer activities of the Student, shall state the dates for the commencement and completion of volunteer activities, and shall state the number of hours per week that the student will engage in volunteer activities.

- The Student will complete at least 120 hours of volunteer experience in an agency setting. The Student will record the number of hours spent in volunteer activities on a **Time Log**. The agency supervisor should sign a **Time Log** weekly. The Student shall submit the **Time Logs** to the course instructor at the intervals specified in the **Assignment Deadlines** section of the study guide.
- The Student will keep a **Journal** of activities, impressions, and reactions to the volunteer experience. The **Journal** shall be well written, edited, and typed (using 12-point Times New Roman font). A minimum of two typed pages per eight hours of agency contact is required; this yields a minimum of thirty pages of **Journal** entries for the entire volunteer experience. The Student shall submit the **Journal** entries to the course instructor at the intervals specified in **Assignment Deadlines** section of the study guide.
- The Student shall prepare a **Student Evaluation of the Volunteer Service Experience**, which shall consist of at least four pages, typed and double-spaced. The Student will deliver this evaluation to the course instructor upon completion of the volunteer experience.
- The agency supervisor shall complete the **Volunteer Service Final Review**, seal it in an envelope, sign across the seal, and return it to the Student. It is the Student's responsibility to send the sealed envelope containing the **Volunteer Service Final Review** to the course instructor.
- The Student must agree to comply with the any agency requirements for volunteers including background checks, fingerprinting, attendance, punctuality, appearance, behavior, and confidentiality.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION AND SCALE:

The service learning course is graded on a **PASS/FAIL** basis. A grade of **PASS** requires that all of the course requirements are satisfactorily met.

COURSE INSTRUCTIONS

The Community Agency

The Student's first task is to locate an appropriate community agency. The Student's interests and career goals should guide the selection of an agency. A wide variety of agency settings are appropriate for service learning in Sociology including the following:

Human Services Agencies:

- State or county departments of social services (child and adult protective services, foster care, family services)
- Social services for the elderly in nursing facilities
- Emergency food banks, homeless shelters, or transitional housing services to prevent homelessness
- Discharge planning in local hospitals
- Hospice services
- Domestic violence treatment and prevention services
- Community mental health services including case management for the mentally disabled and residential treatment
- Adult daycare
- Victim's advocate services in local police departments or District Attorney's offices
- Immigrant services
- Services for pregnant teenagers and single mothers
- Services for the developmentally disabled
- Services for troubled youth including juvenile diversion services
- Family services including family preservation

Criminal Justice Agencies:

- City police or the office of the county sheriff
- District Attorney's office
- Juvenile diversion programs or residential facilities for juvenile offenders
- State highway patrol
- Fraud division of local or county social services
- Domestic violence treatment and prevention services
- Community mental health services involving programs for troubled youth or domestic violence perpetrators
- Parole or probation
- Victim's advocate services in local police departments or District Attorney's offices
- Community corrections for adult offenders

The Student should do some research and select the agency setting that best meets his/her interests and needs. Most community agencies welcome volunteers that are reliable and can specify a set schedule for volunteer activities. Questions or problems in identifying an appropriate agency can be directed to the course instructor; however, the primary responsibility for locating an agency and setting up the community service lies with the Student.

Once an agency has been identified for the community service, the Student must locate an individual willing to act as the agency supervisor. The agency supervisor will assign tasks and monitor activities, sign off on the **Time Logs** verifying volunteer hours, and make a final assessment of the Student's performance.

The Student and the agency supervisor will negotiate the conditions of the volunteer service and complete and sign the **Volunteer Service Agreement**. The completed and signed **Volunteer Service Agreement** with Exhibit A should be returned to the course instructor for final approval prior to the start of the volunteer service.

Volunteer Service Hours and Time Logs

Students will have thirty-six weeks (approximately nine months) to set-up and complete the required 120 hours of volunteer experience and be assigned a grade in Sociology 279. A minimum of **four hours per week** performing volunteer activities would be a reasonable standard for Students. The Student and the agency supervisor should jointly develop a schedule that best suits the needs of all the concerned parties. Students should record the hours spent each week in volunteer activities and have the agency supervisor verify the hours by signing the **Time Log** weekly. A sample **Time Log** is attached to the study guide.

Journal

The **Journal** is a record of a Student's volunteer activities, reactions to those activities, and ongoing assessments of the volunteer experience. The **Journal** will include the following:

- A detailed description of volunteer activities.
- Discussions of events or activities that were particularly memorable from an emotional or educational perspective (e.g., a home visit to family being investigated for neglect; being present when a child is removed from the home for physical abuse or returned to the home after a favorable report from social services; a first interview with a homeless client seeking emergency shelter; an encounter with an angry client who has been denied public assistance due to possible fraud and so forth).
- Discussion of any academic theories or concepts that were particularly insightful or helpful in performing the volunteer activities.

- An honest assessment of how the volunteer experience is working out (i.e., what a student likes or doesn't like about the agency or its clients and any problems or concerns that a student might have).
- Examples of placement-related documents (e.g., intake forms and summaries, case histories, agency brochures explaining services and eligibility, etc.).

Excluding placement-related documents, **Journal** entries should be a **minimum of two typed pages per *eight* hours of volunteer experience**. In total, for the entire 120-hour volunteer experience the **Journal** should be a minimum of *thirty* typed pages plus any placement-related documents. Journal entries should be well written, edited, and typed using a 12-point Times New Roman font with normal margins.

Student Evaluation of the Volunteer Service Experience and the Volunteer Service Final Review

The **Student Evaluation of the Volunteer Service Experience** is a final summary and assessment of the volunteer experience. The **Student Evaluation** should be a minimum of *four* double-spaced, typed pages in length and is due at the end of the 120-hour volunteer experience. The following should be addressed in the **Student Evaluation of the Volunteer Service Experience**:

- A brief summary of the volunteer experience and its activities.
- A summary of the most important things that the Student has learned from the volunteer experience.
- A discussion of Student's most memorable learning experiences during the volunteer experience.
- An analysis of how the volunteer experience will further the Student's career, employment, personal, or life goals.
- A discussion of what the Student liked the most and the least about the volunteer experience.
- A discussion of any ethical issues or conflicts that the Student confronted during the volunteer experience.

The final course requirement is the **Volunteer Service Final Review** to be completed by the agency supervisor. The agency supervisor should complete and sign the **Volunteer Service Final Review**, seal it in an envelope, sign across the seal, and return it to the Student. It is the Student's responsibility to return the sealed envelope containing the **Volunteer Service Final Review** to the course instructor. A grade for the course cannot be assigned until the **Volunteer Service Final Review** is received.

Assignment Deadlines

The following assignments are due at the following times and should be sent promptly to the course instructor:

- After the completion of 40 hours of volunteer experience—a minimum of ten pages of **Journal** entries and the signed **Time Log** are due.
- After the completion of 80 hours of volunteer experience—a minimum of ten more pages of **Journal** entries and the signed **Time Log** are due.
- After the completion of the 120 hours of volunteer experience—a minimum of ten more pages of **Journal** entries, the signed **Time Log**, the **Student Evaluation of the Volunteer Service Experience**, and the completed **Volunteer Service Final Review** are due.

ADA Statement:

Students who need special accommodation to complete this class should contact the instructor and the Office of Student Affairs, 719.587.7221 as soon as possible.