Faculty Guide Series

ASU Service-Learning & Community-Based Research
University College | Appalachian State University

Perspective: Aesthetics
What is Service-Learning (SL) & Community-Based Research (CBR)?

Service-Learning and Community-Based Research are progressive ways of teaching that have been adopted by university faculty worldwide. Distinguished from traditional community service, service-learning is a “teaching method which combines community service with academic instruction as it focuses on critical, reflective thinking, and civic responsibility” (Introduction to Service-Learning Toolkit, 2003). Community-based research, a more specialized form of service-learning, is a collaborative effort between academic researchers (faculty and students) and community partners that has the goal of the achievement of social justice through research.

Why Use SL & CBR in General Education Courses?

With all the expectations and requirements of the general education curriculum, why include service-learning or community-based research? Simply put, because these pedagogies will allow you to meet many of the course objectives, goals, and expectations of the general education curriculum.

Goal 1: Thinking Critically and Creatively- SL/CBR students are given the opportunity to think critically about the problems in our communities and environments, as well as come up with creative solutions for improving the quality of life for those in need and our environment.

Goal 2: Communicating Effectively- SL/CBR students are expected to be able to make meaning of issues facing our community and environment, as well as be able to advocate for the solutions to those problems. By being an advocate, students must speak clearly, present the issues, and serve as a representative for change.

Goal 3: Making Local to Global Connections- SL/CBR students are able to relate the needs of their local community and environment to the global community and environment. Additionally, SL/CBR students are more likely to become involved in international social justice work.

Goal 4: Understanding Responsibilities of Community Membership- SL/CBR students are able to become socially and environmentally responsible local and global citizens because they come to understand their own personal responsibilities to their community and environment.

Additionally, ACT’s assessment services can help you confirm and demonstrate that your course is doing what you want it to do. The ACT program has assessed all of its courses for the past decade, using an online survey to track student learning outcomes -- many of which are closely related to the general education learning outcomes. For example, students have reported an increase in their ability to:

➢ Identify problems in the community (87%), understand their causes (82%), and come up with possible solutions (84%).
➢ Understand how their personal (historical, cultural, etc.) viewpoints affect the way they perceive new knowledge (84%).
➢ Effectively communicate verbally (90%), in writing (69%), work in groups with others (87%), and be more comfortable working with people different than themselves (89%).
➢ Have a better understanding of their role as a community member (90%) and are more concerned about community issues (86%).

SL & CBR Project Ideas for Aesthetic Themes

Traditions and Innovations

This theme introduces students to traditions and innovations in different forms of creative expression since approximately 1500. Students learn how these forms change over time, reflecting and shaping their social, religious, political, and intellectual contexts.

At the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Carol A. Muller’s Field Methods in Ethnomusicology class explores the connection between music and the spirituality of Islam in West Philadelphia. The course, which has both undergraduate and graduate students, serves as a condensed version of a field research experience and it enables students to build partnerships with youth in the Quba Institute, a local school in the area dedicated to Arabic and Islamic studies.
Analyzing Style and Form

In this theme, students develop their ability to analyze forms of creative expression through a focus on structural studies of form and comparative analyses of various styles including art, music, dance, and theatre.

At Southwest Missouri State University, professor Pearl Yeadon-Emy teaches an Opera Workshop that allows students to work on the fundamentals of stage technique, movement, directing, and acting for singers. Students not only present performances around campus, but they also participate in a school outreach program that allows them to tour public schools in the area. This program allows students to share their love of music and creation with the community to inspire a new generation of youth.

Cultivating Creative Expression

Courses in this theme allow students to explore the creative process and the connection it has with cognitive, psychological, emotional, bodily/kinesthetic, aesthetic, and social development.

At the University of Montana, professor Karen Kaufmann’s Teaching Movement in Schools students work with the public school system to develop an understanding of the educational, artistic, physical, and emotional benefits of kinesthetic learning for children. Students are responsible for teaching creative movement classes that incorporate past and current theories of kinesthetic education and encourage children to use creative movement as an expressive art form.

How We Tell Stories

This theme helps students explore the meaning of stories. From why we tell stories to how different medias present stories, this theme explores the connection between the narrative and the artist.

At New York University in New York, professor Lynne McVeigh teaches a Children’s Television Production Workshop which enables students to work with youth groups to produce public service announcements for children. This experience allows students to gain an understanding of young people’s lives, the issues they face, and create media with them. Students create scripts, use production and acting techniques, edit their pieces, and critique each other’s pieces.

Expressions of Belief

Courses in this theme examine the aesthetic properties of various works and forms that examine religious, social, political, and/or personal convictions.

At the Maryland Institute College of Art, professor Ken Krafcheck better defines the concept and reality of community by investigating the unseen social, cultural, political, economic, and religious factors that define a city’s existence through visual journalism. Through exploring the Baltimore area and working with local school children, students are expected to demonstrate advanced narrative skills by formulating opinions based on a declared set of judgements and personal beliefs, as well as being able to document those opinions in a manner clearly understandable to a specific audience.

Social Change Through the Arts

In this theme, students explore how they might use the performing and visual arts as a response to current social problems and their related cultural, interpersonal, and personal concerns.

Here at Appalachian State University, Associate Professor Dr. James Peacock uses service-learning methods to advocate for selected social problems in his Social Problems in American Society course. In this course students explore how they might use the performing or visual arts to effect change related to major social problems in America today and the related cultural, interpersonal, and personal concerns.

The Body: Expression, Presentation, and Representation

Courses in this theme allow students to explore how the body can be used to explore expression, presentation, and the representation of the concepts of gender and the articulate self.

At West Chester University in Pennsylvania, professor Dr. Monica Lepore’s Dance for Special Groups students explore the needs and characteristics of working with individuals with disabilities. Students then provide dance and movement lessons to groups and individuals with disabilities. At the end of the course, students have a portfolio of experiences and reflections, as well as the experience of organizing a dance production number with their group.

Shaping the Human Environment

This theme explores how humans produce meaning through interaction with designed artifacts, as well as the ways that design can be used for understanding and improving the human condition.

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For more ideas and full course descriptions, please visit:

www.compact.org/category/syllabi
Getting Started with Service-Learning & Community-Based Research

ACT has many resources and services available to make starting your service-learning journey easy. Not only is having your class recognized as an ACT sponsored service-learning course going to provide you with resources, assessment tools, research, and support, it will also allow your students with the opportunity to attend an ACT Service-Learning Orientation Session.

Additionally, students registered for ACT sponsored service-learning courses are now able to count those classes towards the Civic Engagement Certificate (formally Citizen Scholar Certificate) Program which honors students who have participated in a significant number of service-learning courses throughout their collegiate career and have distinguished themselves by demonstrating an outstanding level of commitment to civic leadership and social responsibility.

For more information on registering your course as an ACT sponsored service-learning course, please visit the Engagement website and click on “Course Forms”. This link will provide you with more information about teaching a service-learning class and will provide you with instructions on how to submit your syllabus for review. This process will help you to enhance your course(s) by getting feedback from ASU faculty from various disciplines who have had years of experience with service-learning pedagogy.

Resources and Further Readings on this Topic


High Country Community Partners

Below is a list of non-profit agencies in the area that could be utilized in Aesthetic themed courses. For a complete list of community partners, please visit act.appstate.edu/communitypartners.

➢ Appalachian Brian Estates
➢ Appalachian Family Storytelling Project
➢ Ashe County Partnership for Children
➢ Elkland Art Center
➢ Green Valley Elementary School
➢ Headstart
➢ Hickory Ridge Homestead
➢ High Country Health Care System– Hospice
➢ Horn in the West
➢ Mountain Home Music
➢ Project on Aging
➢ Sugar Grove Developmental Day School
➢ The Children’s Council
➢ The Children’s Playhouse
➢ Watauga County Arts Council
➢ Western Youth Network

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