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### SW 220.01: Community Volunteer Service

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## SW 220 - Community Volunteer Service – Spring, 2002

Instructor: Dr. Andrea Vernon  
Social Science Room 126  
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### Course Purpose

To provide students with a structured volunteer experience in social service/community organizations. This opportunity will engage students in active citizenship through community service. Emphasis is on student participation and the development of citizenship skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, writing and public speaking. Topics to be addressed are citizenship in democratic society, community action, organizational goals, client groups served, and services provided.

### Requirements

Students are expected to attend weekly class sessions and spend on average three to four hours each week in a volunteer activity of your choice. No less than 55 hours are to be spent in volunteer activities during the semester. Many students of course volunteer considerably more time. You and your volunteer supervisor may arrange a schedule for completion of the minimum number of hours that is agreeable to both of you. Each student will also maintain a learning log or journal of their volunteer work and a portfolio of their volunteer experience (see below for a description of the content of the portfolio).

What goes into the **journal**? Include critical learning experiences, observations that you have questions about along with the questions themselves, and an analysis of the role of the volunteer in the setting and the support system for maintaining volunteers in the organization. Avoid simple descriptions, which do not show how you react to and analyze the experience. In other words, you should concentrate on what *you* are learning. Your writing should reflect the knowledge you are gaining through your service experience, class sessions, and working with others. The journal will be turned in mid-semester, and again at the end of the semester.

How often should you be making entries? Every day you are participating in your volunteer setting. It may vary, but in general no less than 2 times per week, and 30 minutes per time, minimum. Use 20 percent of your time for posing questions and issues and 80 percent of your time for responding to the questions and issues you raised. Here are some questions that students have found useful in structuring their journal:

1. What did you do in your volunteer service today?
2. What were your reactions to what you did?
3. What kind of feedback are you receiving from the people you work with?
4. What kinds of feelings and attitudes are you sensing within yourself as you participate in the volunteer activity?
5. What did you learn in your setting today?
6. What connections are you seeing between your studies at the university and your

volunteer activity, and the connections you see between your professional/academic goals and what you see yourself doing in the future.

7. What connections are you noticing between what you read, see and hear in the media and the issue(s) you are addressing in your volunteer activities?

8. What would you have changed about the activity today?

9. What are the things that are bothering you or the important things that you are thinking about?

10. What are the larger issues that are presenting themselves to you from the specific day-to-day activities in your volunteer setting?

11. How are your readings related to the experiences you are having in your volunteer setting?

12. What are the impacts of the service you are providing on the people you serve, other staff members, the larger organization and yourself?

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**Weekly class seminar topics** below will reflect your volunteer experiences, your learning journal entries and include other assignments designed to deepen your service learning experience.

### Schedule

Jan 28      Introduction to the course: Data gathering about service learning - How to select a volunteer setting - Service site placements.

Feb 4        Discussion: Getting ready to volunteer - Issues related to working as a volunteer (commitment, confidentiality, etc.)

What is service learning and civic engagement? An introduction.

In-Class Activity: Student Interviews - Who are you and what are your interests in community volunteering? Why did you choose SW 220? How do your interests fit in with your major, your future? Each student provides the class with a five-minute introduction of “their” student. Class asks follow-up questions of relevancy.

Feb 11      Class preparation: Provide 5-10 minute presentation on the agency in which you will be volunteering, e.g. what is the mission of the organization, how will your volunteer service be integrated, what will you be doing. Include your service and learning objectives as part of the presentation.

Class assignments for future readings: Groups within the class will be established and each group will be responsible for reading a particular piece and summarizing it for the rest of the class. In addition, the group assigned the reading will prepare and use a series of discussion questions designed to

stimulate class discussion of further consideration of the material and its relevance to student's volunteer activities.

Turn in Contracts: Students are expected to provide signed contracts and service learning agreements and place them in Andrea's mailbox in R 126 in the Social Science building. The contract contains a description of the volunteer activity and hours committed to these activities.

(I will meet outside of class with those students who have not finalized their placement at this point. All contracts must be completed by the end of this week and placed in Andrea's mailbox. **If you need help, make an appointment and see Andrea.**)

Feb 18 Holiday – Lincoln & Washington's Birthday

Feb 25 Discussion: The role of civic education in American society.

Questionnaire and discussion: What do you think about citizenship, social change and other democratic principles?

Mar 4 Reading presentation and discussion: Group 1 & 2, (1 hour each)

Mar 11 Reading presentation and discussion: Group 3 & 4, (1 hour each)

Mar 18 Holiday – Spring Break

Mar 25 In-Class Journal Assignment: Bring your learning journal. We will be journaling and sharing our journals with a partner. The objective is to help you see the many possibilities for using your journal as a learning tool. In this way, we will also be learning about ourselves as we learn from others.

Mid-term evaluation: Up-date contracts and service learning objectives

TURN IN YOUR LEARNING JOURNALS TODAY

Apr 1 Class preparation: Internet - Look up the Community Toolbox site at <http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/> and examine: (1) the model for change in community building, (2) the involvement of citizens in problem solving in their communities, and (3) the community building tools themselves. Then, examine your own volunteer setting with the above in mind. What suggestions and recommendations might you make for involving citizen-volunteers in your community setting based on these materials. We will discuss your findings and recommendations in class.

In-Class Activity: Point – Counterpoint: Developing a perspective for

community dialogue. In class, you will develop three perspectives related to one issue (pro, con, neutral) and present them. We will discuss class efforts in the context of promoting community dialogue.

Apr 8 Guest speaker: Community Volunteer Systems

Apr 15 Class preparation: Presentation of an issue related to your setting (10 minutes). Identify a larger issue of relevance to the people you serve through your volunteer activities. This may be an issue that is explicitly seen to be significant by most of the people; it may be an issue which greatly affects them but which they might not yet perceive as significant to their lives. It may be very personal, and/or it may be a broad issue with macro-social, societal or global implications.

You are to select the issue, research the issue using the library the internet and other sources, articulate and explain the issue while making reference to the larger body of knowledge you identified. What are the dimensions of the issue? How do people define and react to the issue? How do you react to the issue? What might be done to address it?

Apr 22 Issue presentations continued.

Apr 29 Class preparation: Each class member will create an "action letter." This is a letter in which you identify something which needs to be addressed in relation to your volunteer setting. Identify the issue. Present the evidence that supports your view. State the action that needs to be taken. Tell the reader of the letter how to contact the relevant person or persons in order to take the action requested (note - the person might turn out to be yourself). Letters may be sent to the newspaper, your legislator, a formally constituted group such as a school board, a hunger coalition group, an advocacy group, a church group, etc.

Prepare carefully and bring your letter and a self-addressed envelope.

May 6 Portfolio Presentations: Presentation of your completed community service portfolio. Class preparation: Create and bring a community volunteer service portfolio to class. The portfolio should be a creative representation of what you did and should contain the following items:

1. A description of your setting,
2. Your objectives as a service learning student,
3. The roles you held in the setting and the activities you have engaged in,
4. Your accomplishments to date (in learning and in volunteer activities),
5. Any letter(s) of recommendation or other documentation referring to your contributions and/or accomplishments, and
6. A final report, not more than two to three pages, which critiques the

volunteer experience – highlight the positives and negatives of your experience and include the service site's strengths, limitations, and suggestions for improvement where applicable.

1. TURN IN YOUR LEARNING JOURNALS TODAY
2. TURN IN YOUR VOLUNTEER SERVICE PORTFOLIO TODAY
3. TURN IN YOUR SUPERVISOR STATEMENT REGARDING THE COMPLETION OF VOLUNTEER HOURS TODAY

May 13 Finals week -- Class will meet during our scheduled final time from 10:10 to 12:10 on Monday, May 13.

Class preparation: Presentation of portfolios continued.

### **Grading**

In order to receive a grade, students must:

1. **Complete the contract and service learning agreement** by the date specified above.
2. **Complete journal entries following each episode of volunteering and turn in the journal twice** on the dates specified in the outline.
3. **Complete and turn in a portfolio** of your community volunteer experiences.
4. **Prepare appropriately for group seminars, complete all assignments and participate actively in discussions** as described above. ATTENDANCE AT CLASS MEETINGS IS REQUIRED TO RECEIVE A GRADE FOR THE CLASS. No more than two absences are allowed.
5. **Complete no less than 55 hours of volunteer service.** This must be indicated with a **written and signed statement** from your on-site volunteer supervisor as follows:

**The statement should say, "I certify that (YOUR NAME) has completed no less than 55 hours of volunteer service at YOUR VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION. Dated and Signed, (ON-SITE SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE). Include this statement on one page along with your timesheet to be turned in as part of your portfolio.**