

Service Learning

Serving the common good is at the heart of Catholic social teaching and part of Mount Mercy's mission and goals. Service learning courses have been developed to give students the opportunity to practice service while travelling. Service learning courses are normally offered in the Winter term.

Courses

SL 100 Topics Social Justice: Mexico: 3 semester hours

In this travel course, students will study Mexican culture in order to enhance their understanding of social justice. The course culminates in a seven-day trip to Guadalajara, where we will visit factories, schools, museums, and churches. On-campus preparation for such travel will include a brief overview of Mexican history, a study of Christian perspectives on social justice, and a discussion of novels and stories that depict a range of topics relevant to contemporary Mexico (work conditions, education and literacy, the role of the Catholic Church and the family, relations with the U.S.). Students will keep a journal of their reading and travel experiences, and they will complete a research paper or project after returning from Mexico. Prerequisites: Permission of the instructor in consultation with the director of Campus Ministry.

SL 110 Topics Social Justice: Appalachia: 3 semester hours

In this travel course, students will study Appalachian culture in order to enhance their understanding of social justice. The course culminates in a seven-day trip to West Virginia, where we will tutor people of all ages in a learning center. We will live with families and visit an old coal mine. There may also be opportunities to visit schools and medical facilities. On-campus preparation for such travel will include a brief overview of Appalachian history, a study of Christian perspectives on social justice, and a discussion of novels and stories that depict a range of topics relevant to Appalachian culture. Students will keep a journal of their reading and travel experiences, and they will complete a research paper or project after returning from West Virginia. Prerequisite: Permission of the instructor in consultation with the Director of Volunteerism and Service Learning.

SL 120 Across Borders: 3 semester hours

In this travel course, students will examine the experience of Mexican immigrants in South Texas and northern Mexico as well as here in the Midwest. Students will examine issues of immigration in light of Catholic understandings of equality and social justice. The course will include a significant local service component and, over fall break, a consciousness-raising "border witness experience" in Texas with the ARISE program, sponsored by Sister of mercy and other religious communities. Prerequisite: sophomore standing.

SL 164 Service Learning-An Immersion Approach: 3 semester hours

In this travel course, students will immerse themselves in a service learning experience. During the winter term, students will spend the first few days of class learning about the importance of service through life and preparing for departure to San Juan, Texas. The class will then spend two weeks doing various service projects in Texas and Mexico. The service experiences will range from building houses for those in need, to working at a free health clinic. Students will have some discretion regarding the type of service experiences they wish to perform. In addition, students will read, discuss and reflect on, through group sessions and writing, Robert Cole's book *The Call of Service*. Students will also be required to maintain a daily journal of reflections, participate in group discussions regarding daily activities, and prepare a group presentation of their experiences. This course will have additional expenses.

SL 165 Service Learning Abroad: 3 semester hours

This course will combine solid preparatory readings, discussions, and presentations on the host country and culture with an immersion experience in a different country and culture. Students will increase their multi-cultural sensitivity as they work together on a service project which will require them to interact appropriately with members of their host community. As students live and work in an unfamiliar country and society, they will have the opportunity to experience the interconnectedness of global issues such as international trade and immigration. Students will gain a better understanding of ecological and resource issues not only through their academic assignments, but also through experiencing daily life in a country where resources may be more limited.

SL 220 Sociology of Katrina: Service Learning in New Orleans: 3 semester hours

This is an intensive four-week, hands-on service-learning class that combines critical sociological analysis, photographic documentation, and on-site service learning to make sense of the city of New Orleans in pre- and post-Katrina periods. Using "urban political economy" and "city as text" approaches students in the first two weeks will study the history of the city of New Orleans prior to its destruction by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, as well as challenges faced by the city residents and local politicians to rebuild New Orleans in the aftermath of Katrina. They will then deconstruct New Orleans' urban structure in preparation for service-learning components and other on-site assignments. In the following two weeks students will travel to New Orleans and will engage in a variety of service-learning activities such as rebuilding homes as part of the Habitat for Humanity program, working in local clinics providing much needed health care, and participating in field studies using photography to document the social reality of city residents. Prerequisites: SO 122, Introduction to Sociology.