

Beyond Walls and Screens: Service-Learning to Engage Online Students
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In Fall 2023, the English Department started a pilot to incorporate service learning into General Education Literature courses. In this session, panelists will speak broadly about best practices for service-learning, including experiences with service-learning in online courses.

Quick Tips for Successful Service-Learning in Online Courses

1. Find a community partner before planning your course.
2. Clearly tell students what it means to serve the community partner (how to prepare, when to arrive, how to engage, etc.)
3. Establish accountability (how will serving/not serving affect progress in the course).
4. Plan for flexibility (possibly incorporating multiple options for students, alternate assignments, etc.)
5. Connect the volunteering to the class materials and the class materials to the volunteering.

World Literature Online – Allison Davis – Heroism Multimodal Project Assignment

In Unit One, we are discussing how definitions of heroism change over time. We will think through questions like, “Who gets to be a hero?” and “What does a culture’s definition of heroism tell us about what people value?” As part of this investigation into heroism, you will serve a volunteer shift and create a multimodal project about it. Your goal is to serve and observe. Then, your project will describe the organization’s history, mission, and impact in the form of a slide presentation that you can design on Cava or PowerPoint. Along with this background on the organization, you will describe your on-site experiences and analyze definitions of ancient and modern heroism.

As you serve, consider the following: who are the heroes, if any, at your volunteer site? What are the heroic characteristics or values shown at your site? How does the type of heroism at your site compare to ancient definitions like those used with Gilgamesh or Shahrazad, or with definitions of “epic” vs. “everyday” heroism?

Create your own definition of heroism based on your service and our class study. Try to avoid cliché statements or broad generalizations. Think about things like: access to volunteerism (who can be a volunteer?); access to services (who can receive the organization’s services?); limitations based on wealth class, gender, race, sexuality, physical and mental abilities, etc. (who is included, and who is left out?). How do things like privilege and access affect the way heroism is constructed at your volunteer site and in your definition of heroism? Who gets to be a hero, and what does your service experience teach us about our current cultural values?

World Literature Online – Amelia Lewis – Full Semester Service-Learning Course

Class Description

This class will focus on the importance of literature, art, and culture in our lives as a form of storytelling. We discuss all forms of story-telling and cultural influence, including many genres of literature, but also music, sculptures, photographs, historical experiences, and spaces like memorials in order to examine how humans need stories and art for self-expression, for catharsis, and for generally capturing the pathos of a person and/or society. We will examine story-telling and community in all forms, from Protest Art to memoirs and poetry, in order to explore how art and stories are essential to both individual human beings and a society or culture as a whole.

Course Objectives

- Students will identify, analyze, interpret and describe the societal ideas, values, and themes that appear in literary and cultural texts and understand the way these ideas, values, and themes inform and impact culture, both now and in the past.
- Students will write about and discuss texts in a variety of classroom activities, collaboratively and otherwise, in order to develop knowledge and create unique interpretations of the material emerging from personal perspective and cultural and community awareness.
- Students will review the historical, cultural, and social context of various forms of storytelling.
- Students will collaborate and discuss the class material with classmates to perform a variety of analytical and interpretative work, including creating community together in the virtual classroom
- Students will integrate personal perspective and the historical, cultural, and social context of various genres of literature.
- Students will interpret the significance of art to specific communities and cultures, as well as connecting humanity as a whole, particularly through a service-learning activity.

Class Reflection Example with Connecting Language

End of Class Lecture Language

In this class, we have some broad themes that mostly revolve around communities, storytelling, and humanity. So, how do we connect to one another? How do we understand one another? What role does art play in this greater idea?

Art is often said to be a reflection of the pathos of a culture, whether it be teenage rebellion, revolt against a government or idea, capturing a difficult emotion or societal issue, or just exploring what it means to be a human being in a certain time and place. Humanity is at the core of every text we have read for this semester. What we fear, what we love, what makes us angry, what hurts us, what heals us, the ways in which humanity is amazing, precious, and terrible all at once.

Part of what enriches our lives is our connections to other people, with our communities, and with both our own culture and other cultures, and the stories we share freely among each other. Your volunteering experience should, in some way, speak to this larger theme.

Reflection Prompt

In this class, you are expected to have one volunteering experience during the semester as part of the KSU Service-Learning initiative. As an online class, your options for volunteering are very open and fluid and I have curated a list of community partners, most of which allow for fully virtual activities that can be done on your own time. Remember you can read all Service-Learning Information at the following link:

Updated Service-Learning Information

Then, you will finish this reflection where you consider your experiences volunteering, as well as other questions about the greater themes and goals of the course. Turning in this reflection serves as your proof of your completing a volunteering experience to fulfill this component of your grade in this class.

As a reflection, you are allowed and even encouraged to use first person and give your own perspectives and thoughts on these questions. Participation/Effort will be a major component of your grade here.

Questions

1. As part of this class, you volunteered at an organization or nonprofit of your choice from a list of our community partners. Describe your service experience. Where did you volunteer and how? Attach any documents/emails/images that are relevant to your service-learning experience. Share your experiences while volunteering. What need in the community did your organization/nonprofit/community partner fulfill? Did you learn anything about the community served or yourself in this process? (6-8 sentences as a minimum)
2. How can you relate this volunteering experience to the broad themes or texts from our class as a whole? Did volunteering help you connect to some of our class texts or vice versa? (5-6 sentences as a minimum)
3. What does art (in its various forms, from poems to songs to books to TV shows to webcomics) provide for us as people living in 2024? What place does art have in our lives, in our communities, in our connections to others, and in our cultures? (3-4 sentences minimum)

Excerpted Student Example Reflections

As part of my service experience for this course, I chose to volunteer with the Books for Africa organization. Overall, I had a great experience volunteering for them and learned a lot. From the moment I walked into the warehouse, the workers were very friendly and were delighted to have us. Signing in was quick, given that they already had my name on the sign-up sheet. After signing in, the other new volunteers and I received a tour from the lead worker of the workplace. He showed us the different sections of where to place books based on certain age groups (K-5, 6-8, 9-12, and University). He also showed us how to distinguish books between age groups. Youth textbooks have barcodes or symbols on the back of the book that tell the intended age group for the material. It was something that I did not know of in the past, so learning about this cheat code was very interesting. After the tour concluded, the lead worker let us take a cart to the huge containers filled with books to start sorting them by age group.

The question arises, however, why books? In my experience of sorting books, I have learned the importance of reading and education. Most children in Africa do not have easy access to books or have never even been inside a classroom. Therefore, this organization fills this gap for these kids by supplying sea containers of books to rural locations in Africa. They believe that education provides stability and helps people grow. It is books that provide the foundation for a strong educational system. Therefore, from this experience, I learned of the deeper importance that reading plays in a kid's future and that reading skills must be developed from an early age, for it to stick better. I also learned how many people in the United States take books for granted. I can easily walk into a library to check out various types of books to read. However, most kids in Africa do not have this option, and getting access to even just one book can be very difficult.

To summarize my experience volunteering at Books for Africa, I can relate it to some of the themes learned in the class like knowing one's identity, and values, building one's imagination, or finding one's voice. What relates them all together is that all these texts can then be read by others to inspire them or build one's knowledge. Therefore, this is what Books for Africa is doing. They are helping kids in Africa be able to build their knowledge and be better contributors to their communities.

Furthermore, to answer the next question, what does art provide for us now? Art continues to serve several essential roles in our lives. Art can be used as a form of expression and reflection of our creativity. It also plays a crucial role in preserving and evolving cultures. An example would be Peruvian ponchos. These ponchos are worn traditionally by both men and women and are made from the wool of alpacas, llamas, or vicunas. They are worn to protect oneself from the harsh climates in the Andes and are decorated in colorful patterns. Lastly, art can serve as a source of inspiration for people to think differently and imagine new possibilities.