Are Students Learning? Evaluating the Academic and Experiential Components of Service-Learning

Eve Rapp Caudill
Salem College, eve.rapp@salem.edu

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Are Students Learning? Evaluating the Academic and Experiential Components of Service-Learning

Dr. Eve M. (Caudill) Rapp
Associate Professor
Department of Business and Economics
Salem College
Types of Learning

• Learning: Process of acquiring knowledge, attitudes, or skills from study, instruction, or experience

• Active/Action Learning: Learner is the primary driving force; instructor is the facilitator

• Experiential Learning: Learning by doing—it includes knowledge and skills acquired outside of book/lecture learning situations through work, play, and other life experiences. (Smith and Van Doren, 2004)
Service-Learning

• “Distinguished from other approaches to experiential learning by their intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring” (Furco, Andrew. “Service-Learning: A Balanced Approach to Experiential Education” 1996)
Service-Learning

• Service-learning classes must have an academic component integrated with a volunteer component so that:
  – The service enhances the learning
  – The learning enhances the service

• Some form of reflection on the outcomes (Petkus 2000; Furco 1996)
Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984)

Concrete Experience

Reflective Observation

Abstract Conceptualization

Active Experimentation

Knowledge Transformation

Knowledge Acquisition
Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984)

- **Concrete Experiences**: Acquires knowledge through sensory perceptions and direct practical experiences with the world

- **Reflective Observation**: Creates meaning through observation and inward reflection upon previously acquired knowledge; concentrates on what the experience means to the individual

- **Abstract Conceptualization**: Broadens learning by integrating theories and concepts into the process

- **Active Experimentation**: Allows to test concepts through “real world” activities
Reflection

• “Reflection is the glue that holds service and learning together to provide [optimal] educative experiences” (Eyler, Giles and Schmiede 1996)

• Helps students make stronger connections between theoretical perspectives and practice (Correia and Bleicher 2008)
Developing a Service Learning Course

• Academic Component
  – Articles
  – Papers
  – Project

• Volunteer Component: Hunger

• Reflective Component: Compassion and Empathy, linking activities with “larger picture”
Expectations for Students in Service Learning Course

• Work with an agency
• Learn about Service Learning
• Understand issues associated with volunteering and the larger factors and consequences involved.
• Become compassionate (ultimately, “Do Good, Become Good”)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings/Assignments (The instructor reserves the right to adjust the schedule as needed.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/25</td>
<td>Introduction to class, expectations for the semester; discussion of your first assignment</td>
<td>Bring the following to class: the syllabus, this detailed course schedule, and your first assignment (see Moodle). Log into Moodle before class. Due: Assignment: Helping (in Moodle) (turn in copy in class)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8/30</td>
<td>Exploring the issues of hunger in our community</td>
<td>Stimp Hawkins (co-founder of Samaritan Ministries), Nan Holbrook Griswold, (co-founder of Second Harvest Food Bank); Dr. Martha Taylor (Assoc. Professor Emerita, Dept. of Nutrition, UNC Greensboro) Read Textbook, Ch 1, complete the Exercise 1.3 (turn in typed assignment in class) Read article: “There are a lot of hurting people” (Moodle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9/1</td>
<td>Volunteering opportunities in the community</td>
<td>Agency Partners will join us in class Read Textbook/Ch 2: Due: Exercise 2.1 (pg 18: turn in typed assignment in class) Sign up for agency (Note: there will be limited slots at each agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9/6</td>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>Due: Ex 2.3 (p. 22: turn in typed copy in class)/discuss Discuss: Ex 2.1 (which you turned in on 9/1) Discuss where you’ll be volunteering Last day to sign up for agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>9/8</td>
<td>Hunger in our community</td>
<td>Read report (link in Moodle)/be prepared to discuss Due: Articles on hunger (assignment in Moodle)/be prepared to discuss (turn in article/typed copy of assignment)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>9/13</td>
<td>Hunger in our community: Second Harvest Food Bank</td>
<td>Daisy Rodriguez, Director of Childhood Hunger Programs, Second Harvest Food Bank, will join us in class. Due: Ex 2.4 (p. 23: turn in a typed copy in turnitin.com) Begin journal</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>9/15</td>
<td>Hunger in a global community: Issues of global hunger/why people give, don’t give</td>
<td>Dr. Jan Rivero, Stop Hunger Now, will join us in class Due: Read articles/complete assignment: “The Power of Kindness”; “Thank you. No, Thank you” (Moodle) Reading Assessment 1 due (turn in on turnitin.com)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>9/20</td>
<td>Reflections on hunger in our local and global communities</td>
<td>Due: Think about our discussions with Dr. Rivero and Ms. Rodriguez. Discuss the three points that Dr. Rivero made that resonated most with you. Explain why. Discuss the three points that Ms. Rodriguez made that resonated most with you. (turn in a typed copy in class) Note: we will discuss the Life profile project (due on 10/18)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>9/22</td>
<td>Serving in our Community Action Learning Plan for Serving (ALP)</td>
<td>Note: no class (please use time to contact agencies, etc.) Complete Exercise 2.6 (Action Learning Plan, pg 27). Bring a typed copy to class. We’ll discuss.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/23</td>
<td>Journal Due (turnitin.com by 5:00 p.m.)</td>
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<td>11/24</td>
<td>Thanksgiving: No class</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>11/29</td>
<td>Are we making a difference?</td>
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<td>Read textbook/Ch 9</td>
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<td>Due: Exercise 9.1, p 128 (Conquering the ALPS):</td>
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<td>(Note: See Moodle for assignment) (turn in typed copy in class)/be prepared to discuss</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thinking through the issues</td>
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<td>Group work</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>12/6</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
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<td>Wed</td>
<td>12/7</td>
<td>Final journal entry due</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Final Journal entry/summary of reflections due (turnitin.com by 5:00 p.m.) (See Moodle for directions)</td>
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This syllabus provides a general plan for this course. Based on the discretion of the professor, changes to this syllabus may be necessary. Students are responsible for articles/reading attached in Moodle.
Signature 210: Learning and Serving in the Community  
Assignment: Reflection on the Dalai Lama and Jean Vanier and L’Arche  
Due: October 27

Read the chapters from the Dalai Lama book (in Moodle) and listen to the following radio interview with Jean Vanier, the Canadian philosopher and social activist, who founded The L’Arche, a community centered around people with mental disabilities, titled “The Wisdom of Tenderness” and complete the following assignment:


- Explain what the Dalai Lama means by compassion. What additional important points did the Dalai Lama make? Explain why you chose these points, making sure to include examples from the book to strengthen your discussion.
- What were the main points that Jean Vanier made in his interview? Explain your choices, making sure to include examples from the interview to strengthen your discussion.
- Do you see any connection between the article and the interview? Explain.

Per the instructions on the syllabus, your write-up needs to be typed, double-spaced and free of typos and grammatical errors. Turn in this assignment through turnitin.com.

Note: You will need to save this assignment, when it is returned, to include in your final paper/presentation.
SIGNATURE 210A

Weekly Journal Prompts

Journal should be written each week about the week’s experience of volunteering. Respond to each of these questions in a thorough and complete manner.

*How did you spend your time this week at the site?
*Who were the primary individuals you met?
*What particular needs arose and how did you address them?
*What connections did you make with the larger needs explored in class this semester?
*How did you personally feel about this week’s volunteer work. What insights were gained? What ongoing questions do you have about hunger in our society?
Assessing Learning: Student Approaches to Learning Theory

• Surface Approach: Concentration on surface features of the learning task (Marton & Saljo, 1976; Kember et al, 1994; Peltier et al, 2005)
  – Memorization and reproducing elements
  – Provide details from examples, often not grasp principles from articles

• Deep Approach: Concentration on underlying purpose and meaning
  – Increased ability to understand and apply the material
Assessing Learning: Student Approaches to Learning Theory

- Deep and Surface differ on degrees of motivation and strategy (Biggs 1999, Leung & Kember 2003, Kember et al 2004)
  - Surface learners: focus on demands of assessment, try to provide what the task requires
  - Deep learners: focus on understanding and incorporating critical thinking, reflection and elaboration.

- Continuum of learning, from nonreflective/surface learning to reflective/deep learning (Peltier et al. 2005)
The Non-Reflection Continuum

**Surface Learning**

**Habitual Action**

Minimal thought and engagement, correlated with a surface approach to learning—specific tasks are treated as unrelated activities, memorization is emphasized, and which embodies an attitudinal state of unreflectiveness.

**Understanding**

Focuses on comprehension w/o relation to one’s personal experience/other learning situations. Book learning—the learner need only comprehend the read materials. Most of what is learned stays w/n the boundaries of pre-existing perspectives.

**Reflection**

Learning is related to personal experience/other knowledge. Also involves challenging assumptions, seeking alternatives, identifying areas for improvement. Shows active and conscious engagement, characteristics commonly associated with a deep approach to learning.

**Deep Learning**

**Intensive Reflection**

The highest level of reflective learning; learners become aware of why they think, perceive or act as they do. Learner might alter or even completely change firmly held beliefs and ways of thinking. Intensive reflection is thus seen as involving a change in personal beliefs.
Examples of Students’ Reflections:

Student 1 (Reflection): “Today I completed my thirty hours of community service. I realized today that I was serving for all the wrong reasons. I was thinking of my service as a requirement for class, to put on my resume, possible networking. I could go on and on, but some unknown reason while I was volunteering today I was like I have got to change the reasons why I’m volunteering especially since I’m going to continue. My goal is to volunteer without self-centered motives…”

Student 2 (Reflection): “I have to be honest, when I came into this class I was not very excited about having to volunteer for thirty hours of the semester... However, after having the experience I am so glad that I was “forced” to take time and help others... I also experienced a lot of different things that helped me grow as a person. ... Not only did I get the amazing opportunity to volunteer, I also got the amazing opportunity to help change people's life. I am so glad I had to take this class ...!”
Examples of Students’ Reflections: Student 5

Student 3 (Intensive Reflection): “…Today I also reflected on the fact that I started this class with somewhat low expectations because I had to take extra time from my day to volunteer… I was upset. My exact thoughts were “Empathy can’t be taught to people,” it has to be molded and obtained over time with the help of parents and other figures around you to teach of the responsibility you have to others. I learned that empathy can’t necessarily be taught but one of the points of the class was to help us obtain empathy through service learning. In class it wasn’t said, “Be compassionate,” rather it was explained to us why people are going hungry in the world, what is being done to cause hunger, what is being done to end hunger, and what we as individuals can contribute to the cause and take away from helping others...

I still believe I made a difference somehow in their lives. Most of all, I was impacted most of all in this experience.”