Program: Summer Service in Rural Vietnam  
Course Title: Community-Based Learning (8 weeks)  
Course Code: HC/CMBL 316  
Total Hours: 240 service hours, 30 faculty contact hours  
Recommended Credits: 6  
Suggested Cross Listings: Service Learning, Asian Studies, Vietnamese Language  
Language of Instruction: English  
Prerequisites/Requirements: Required

Description

This is a multi-faceted course required of all students who participate in the CET Vietnam: Summer Service program. The course is meant to enhance and support the service-learning projects in which CET students participate in rural Vietnam. The course contextualizes the community-based projects by introducing students to several key historical, cultural, and social issues faced by the host community. The course also problematizes the idea of “service learning” through critical guided reflection on ethical interventions and grassroots development projects. The objective of the course is to orient students to their hosts and provide a framework through which students endeavor to define “success” in conducting community-based learning projects.

The course is divided into 2 components:

1. Introduction to Vietnamese language and culture: Students begin their summer based in Ho Chi Minh City and take a week-long intensive course in elementary Vietnamese language. Oral Vietnamese is emphasized in the language classroom, and instruction centers on practical application and daily use of the language during the upcoming fieldwork. In addition, students receive several lectures on (1) post-1975 Vietnamese history, (2) contemporary social issues in Ho Chi Minh City, and (3) pressing economic development issues facing 21st-century Vietnam. These lectures are supplemented by required readings to introduce students to the diversity of Vietnamese society.

2. Reflection on community-based learning (CBL): Students begin their CBL projects in rural Vietnam during the program’s second week. Projects are developed collaboratively between the host community and CET, and are based on community needs. Students contribute to both an infrastructure project and an English language instruction placement at a local grade school. Students meet weekly to discuss readings and reflect on the progress of their service-learning experiences. Students are also required to write and submit weekly reflection pieces based on a weekly prompt.

Component 1 is “front-loaded”—language classes meet intensively during the first week. Component 2 is ongoing—class meetings occur weekly over the course of the term. In total, this course meets for a cumulative 15 classroom hours and 240 service hours throughout the 8-week program.

Objectives

During this course, students:
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- Improve their understanding of Vietnamese history and culture by reading and discussing diverse perspectives and representations of modern Vietnamese society.
- Strengthen their ability to reflect critically, clearly and concisely communicate opinions orally and in writing, and produce an informed analytical paper.
- Gain experience planning, contributing to, and assessing the effectiveness of a community-based learning project.

Course Requirements

For the language component, students are expected to come to each class fully prepared for active participation. This means completing daily homework assignments, memorizing all new vocabulary, reading texts, and reviewing all information from the previous day. Students take daily quizzes and must pass a comprehensive test at the end of the Ho Chi Minh City portion of the program.

Throughout the duration of the program, students are expected to contribute meaningfully to weekly group discussions. In addition, students are required to submit a two-page (double-spaced) reflection piece each week on a topic introduced in the weekly class reading (approximately 20-30 pages per week), which links the student’s experience in Quang Tri to the reading themes. Students are encouraged to keep a journal to document reading takeaways, observations from the field that are relevant to subjects discussed in class, and questions or issues that arise in the context of the community-based learning project. Students are also encouraged to document their experiences through photography or other visual media, and may work directly with the course instructor to determine how to best incorporate these materials into the weekly assignments.

Students may elect to keep submit weekly blog posts in lieu of reflection pieces, so long as they are consistent with the topics of the weekly readings and informed by the weekly group reflections. The blog may not be substituted for the final paper.

Finally, students are expected to write a well-structured, concise final reflection piece (10 pages, double-spaced) on the service-learning experience. This final reflection should respond to the following prompt:

What are the various roles the student inhabited throughout the community-based learning placements? Did these CBL experiences align with student expectations? If not, how did they differ? How has this experience altered the student’s perspective on what it means to “serve” or “give back to” a community? How has the experience changed the student’s definition of “development”?

The final reflection piece will be submitted electronically to the program instructor for assessment no later than one week after the program’s last day. Students who submit late reflection pieces will be docked 10%, or one letter grade, each day of late submission.

Workload

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>War Remnants Museum Visit</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecture on Vietnamese Culture and History</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly reflections:</td>
<td>2 hours each session</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6 sessions (8-week student)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final reflection:</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic orientation:</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese:</td>
<td>10 hours</td>
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**Methods of Evaluation**

- Class Attendance (Week 1) 15%
- Participation in Weekly Group Reflections 30%
- Weekly Written Reflections 30%
- Final Reflection Paper 25%

**Primary Texts**

*Survival Vietnamese (VLS), 2011.*


*Ultimate Journeys Vietnam*
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMzsNhTRM-0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMzsNhTRM-0)

Vietnam country profile, BBC News

“What is Service Learning or Community Engagement?”, Center for Teaching, Vanderbilt University.

“What is Service Learning?”, Center for Teaching and Learning, University of Washington.

“About Ethical Service”, Center for Service Learning, The University of Kansas
[https://csl.ku.edu/ethical-service](https://csl.ku.edu/ethical-service)

“How to Communicate the World: A Social Media Guide for Volunteers and Travelers,” Radi-Aid


[https://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/03/education/edlife/03service-t.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/03/education/edlife/03service-t.html)
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Supplementary Texts


Mekong, the river of nine dragons (documentary) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Yu8nst95ug


Outline of Course Content

Vietnamese Language

Beginning Vietnamese: Students cover at least 5 of the following topics in depth: self-introductions, personal information, time and dates, daily activities, ordering at a restaurant, shopping.

Intermediate Vietnamese: Students learn basic vocabulary and grammar structures relevant to their service-learning projects and cover at least 4 of the following topics: health, shopping, hobbies, describing people, phone conversations, travel.

Advanced Vietnamese: Students learn advanced vocabulary and grammar structures relevant to their service-learning project and cover the following topics: future plans, careers, culture, holidays.

Reflection on Service-Learning

Using students’ experiences in the field as a basis for discussion, students explore the questions inherent in the notion of service:

1. What does it mean to serve? How do you define service? Discuss previous service experiences, and how they compare to one another. Who is actually being served? To what extent can you truly serve another? What are some of the underlying assumptions common in performing service?

2. What ethical considerations are there? In the context of service, how do you determine which groups of people to service and which activities and projects to undertake? What is the impact of the service experience on those who are served and those performing the service? To what extent is this service sustainable?

3. What are the pitfalls of cross-cultural communication, linguistic and otherwise? To what extent do we understand the culture of those we’re serving? How do various levels of intercultural
competence affect how we performing international service-learning? How does it define and structure interactions with the local community?

4. What is privilege and how does it affect service work? What is the power dynamic between those performing the service and those being served? What does the image of an American university student mean to the local community? What do you represent, and how may that affect your service? To what extent are you displacing the values of the local culture with your own?

5. What are the challenges that face community development in rural Vietnam? Discuss the urban and rural divide that you’ve seen so far in Vietnam and how the community culture is different in each area. What is the bigger picture impact of our service in the local community and its development? Are there unanticipated consequences of our presence, and how may it define and shape the community’s development?