VCU

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

CMST 310
Orientation to Service-Learning

If we did all that we are capable of doing, we would literally astonish ourselves.
Thomas Edison

Instructor Information:
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Course Description:
CMST 310 is an interactive on-line orientation training. The entire course content is available through the CMST 310 Blackboard course site, and the class will not meet face-to-face. This on-line training has been designed for VCU students who have been invited to serve as service-learning teaching assistants. The on-line option has been requested by past years' cohorts of service-learning teaching assistants to make the training more convenient and accessible. While the online format allows students to complete assignments at their own convenience, students are expected to complete assignments and activities for each specific module by certain due dates as specified (see Table on page 3). Students who complete the online CMST 310 orientation are placed with a VCU service-learning instructor to assist this instructor in teaching a VCU service-learning course. All students are expected to earn a grade of 'B' or better to continue serving as a teaching assistant for the duration of the semester.

Students who serve as VCU Service-Learning Teaching Assistants build a wide variety of leadership skills including cultural sensitivity, creative problem-solving, and communication. CMST 310 introduces students to the historical, theoretical, and empirical components of service-learning pedagogy. The course also provides students with information about and practice with important service-learning concepts such as working successfully within diverse communities, applying ethical principles, leading student teams, and facilitating reflection.

What is Service-Learning?:
Service-learning courses at Virginia Commonwealth University combine a minimum of twenty hours of meaningful community service with academic instruction, focusing on critical, reflective thinking, and personal and civic responsibility. Service-learning courses involve students in activities that address community-identified needs, while developing their academic skills and commitment to their community.

Course Objectives:
Learning objectives for CMST 310 encompass three broad areas—objectives related to understanding service-learning, objectives related to building skills for leadership and civic engagement, and objectives related to improving written and oral communication skills.

Objectives related to understanding service-learning:
1. Describe the historical and theoretical underpinnings of service-learning.
2. Understand the components of the definition of service-learning used at VCU.
3. Appreciate the multiple roles & responsibilities of a service-learning teaching assistant at VCU.
4. Demonstrate the ability to evaluate and facilitate service-learning reflection.
5. Understand strategies for building and fostering mutually beneficial community partnerships.

Objectives related to building skills for leadership and civic engagement:
1. Build self-awareness by exploring your multiple social identities, values, and beliefs.
2. Demonstrate flexibility in problem-solving.
3. Collaborate effectively within groups.
4. Appreciate and embrace diversity in your interactions with others.

Objectives related to improving written and oral communication skills:
1. Write clearly with accurate grammar, punctuation, and structure.
2. Articulate your opinions clearly and concisely.

Expectations:
All students enrolled in the course must have computer access and are expected to check the Blackboard discussion board a minimum of three times per week. Students that do not have a personal computer are encouraged to utilize the library and computer labs available on campus or in public libraries. While this is not a face-to-face course, students are expected to be engaged and active in the online discussion and post comments and assignments that demonstrate understanding of course content. Students using public computers may want to invest in headphones to listen to video/audio excerpts required for the course.

Structure of Online Course:
Registered students will find the online training modules located within their Blackboard Courses. If you do not see CMST 310 listed in your Blackboard Courses list, please contact the instructor as you may not be officially registered for the course. If you are not familiar with Blackboard, go to
http://www.ts.vcu.edu/kb/blackboard/3813.html to learn how to use this online course system.

HONR 399 involves seven modules. Each module takes approximately two to three hours to complete and involves short readings, videos, short written assignments, and/or online quizzes. Each week of class will have one module to be completed. Modules must be completed in order on the specified listed in the course schedule. The course end date was strategically planned to coincide with student teaching assistant responsibilities and provide students the majority of the semester to assist their instructors and students in the course.

An overview of the content of each of the training modules is shown below. Additional details about the modules are provided on the Blackboard site:

Module 1: Orientation to Online Learning
Module 2: Socio-economic Class in America
Module 3: What is Service-Learning?
Module 4: Working in Groups
Module 5: Working in the Community
Module 6: Reflection in Service-Learning
Module 7: Roles and Responsibilities of TAs

Grading Policy:
Students are graded for completion of assignments and accuracy. <u>All</u> portions of an assignment must be completed <u>by the assigned due date</u> to receive full credit. Students must post by the designated due date. From that time, they have three days to read and respond to the posts of their classmates.

Participation
Participation is based on both the quantity and quality of posts. It is not expected that students will respond to every post, but it should be evident that they are reading the work of their peers consistently and providing valuable input other than, 'I agree.' or 'Nice point.' This is a college-level online course and the expectation is for college-level work.

Participation Points
Numbers in parentheses in the point breakdown indicates *participation points* included in total points for an assignment.

Late assignments:
An assignment is considered late after 5pm on the due date. One letter grade will be taken off for every day that an assignment is late.

Points Breakdown:

Icebreaker Activity	5 points (3)
Online Readiness Assessment Reaction	5 points (2)
Reflection Paper	15 points (5)
How Am I in Groups	5 points
Group Paper	25 points
'Pre'flection Exercise	15 points (5)
Quiz 1	10 points
Quiz 2	10 points
Orientation Reflection	10 points (5)

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Total	100 points (20 participation points)

Final grades will be calculated as follows and **students must earn at least a "B" (i.e., 80% or above) to be placed with an instructor as a Service-Learning Teaching Assistant**:

A (≥90%)   =   90-100 points
B (80% to 89.5%) =   80-89 points
C (70% to 79.5%) =   70-79 points
D (60% to 69.5%) =   60-69 points
F (≤59.5%)   =   59 points and below

Please read the university policies on the following items below.

1. VCU Email Policy
2. VCU Honor System: Plagiarism and Academic Integrity
3. Student Conduct in the Classroom
4. Students with Disabilities
5. Statement on Military Short-Term Training or Deployment

6. Excused Absences for Students Representing the University
7. Campus Emergency Information
8. Important Dates
9. VCU Mobile
10. Class registration required for attendance

Email Policy

Electronic mail or "email" is considered an official method for communication at VCU because it delivers information in a convenient, timely, cost effective, and environmentally aware manner. This policy ensures that all students have access to this important form of communication. It ensures students can be reached through a standardized channel by faculty and other staff of the University as needed. Mail sent to the VCU email address may include notification of University-related actions, including disciplinary action. Please read the policy in its entirety: http://www.ts.vcu.edu/kb/3407.html

VCU Honor System: Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

The VCU honor system policy describes the responsibilities of students, faculty, and administration in upholding academic integrity, while at the same time respecting the rights of individuals to the due process offered by administrative hearings and appeals. According to his policy, "members of the academic community are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity." In addition, "All members of the VCU community are presumed to have an understanding of the VCU Honor System and are required to:

- Agree to be bound by the Honor System policy and its procedures;
- Report suspicion or knowledge of possible violations of the Honor System;
- Support an environment that reflects a commitment to academic integrity;
- Answer truthfully when called upon to do so regarding Honor System cases, and,
- Maintain confidentiality regarding specific information in Honor System cases.

Most importantly, "All VCU students are presumed upon enrollment to have acquainted themselves with and have an understanding of the Honor System." (The VCU INSIDER, VCU Honor System 131-132).

The Honor System in its entirety can be reviewed on the Web at http://www.provost.vcu.edu/pdfs/Honor_system_policy.pdf or it can be found in the 2011-12 VCU Insider at http://www.students.vcu.edu/insider.html

In this class, because coursework will be collaborative at times, particular issues of integrity arise. You should not copy or print another student's work without permission. Any material (this includes IDEAS and LANGUAGE) from another source must be credited, whether that material is quoted directly, summarized, or paraphrased. In other words, you should respect the work of others and in no way present it as their own.

Student Conduct in the Classroom

According to the *VCU Resource Guide*, "The instructional program at VCU is based upon the premise that students enrolled in a class are entitled to receive instruction free from interference by other students. Accordingly, in classrooms, laboratories, studies, and other learning areas, students are expected to conduct themselves in an orderly and cooperative manner so that the faculty member can proceed with their [sic] customary instruction. Faculty members (including graduate teaching assistants) may set reasonable standards for classroom behavior in order to serve these objectives. If a student believes that the behavior of another student is disruptive, the instructor should be informed." Among other things, cell phones and beepers should be

turned off while in the classroom. Also, the University Rules and Procedures prohibit anyone from having "…in his possession any firearm, other weapon, or explosive, regardless of whether a license to possess the same has been issued, without the written authorization of the President of the university..." See http://www.students.vcu.edu/rg/policies/rg7conductguide.html and the *VCU Resource Guide* for more information: http://www.students.vcu.edu/insider.html

Certainly the expectation in this course is that students will attend class with punctuality, proper decorum, required course material, and studious involvement.

The *VCU Resource Guide* contains additional important information about a number of other policies with which students should be familiar, including Guidelines on Prohibition of Sexual Harassment, Grade Review Procedure, and Ethics Policy on Computing. It also contains maps, phone numbers, and information about resources available to VCU students. The *VCU Resource Guide* is available online at the link above or through the Division of Student Affairs**.**

Students with Disabilities

SECTION 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 require that VCU provide an "academic adjustment" and/or a "reasonable accommodation" to any individual who advises us of a physical and/or mental disability. To receive accommodations, students must declare their need for disability-related accommodations with the Disability Support Services Office (DSS). The DSS office is located in the Student Commons, Room 102. The office phone number is 828-2253. The Director of Disability Support Services is Joyce Knight. More information is available at the Disability Support Services webpage: http://www.students.vcu.edu/dss/

If you have a physical or mental impairment that requires an academic adjustment or accommodation, arrange a meeting with me at your earliest convenience. Additionally, if your coursework requires you to work in a lab environment, you should advise me or department chairperson of any concerns you may have regarding safety issues related to your limitation(s). This statement applies not only to this course but also to every other course in this University.

Statement on Military Short-Term Training or Deployment

Military students may receive orders for short-term training or deployment. These students are asked to inform and present their orders to their professor(s). For further information on policies and procedures contact Military Services at 828-5993 or access the corresponding policies at **http://www.pubapps.vcu.edu/bulletins/about/?Default.aspx?uid=10096&iid=30704** and **http://www.pubapps.vcu.edu/BULLETINS/undergraduate/?uid=10096&iid=30773.**

Excused Absences for Students Representing the University

Please be aware that students who represent the university (athletes and others) do not choose their schedules. Student athletes are required to attend games and/or meets. All student athletes will give you their schedule in the beginning of the semester. The Intercollegiate Athletic Council (IAC) strongly encourages you to treat missed classes or exams (because of a scheduling conflict) as excused absences and urges you to work with the students to make up the work or exam.

Campus Emergency information

1. What to Know and Do To Be Prepared for Emergencies at VCU: Sign up to receive VCU text messaging alerts (**http://www.vcu.edu/alert/notify**). Keep your information up-to-date. Within the classroom, the professor will keep her phone on to receive any emergency transmissions.
2. Know the safe evacuation route from each of your classrooms. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in on-campus classrooms.
3. Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorities. Within the classroom, follow your professor's instructions.
4. Know where to go for additional emergency information (**http://www.vcu.edu/alert**).
5. Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police (828-1234). Report suspicious activities and objects.

Important Dates

Important dates for the Spring 2012 semester are available at:
http://academiccalendars.vcu.edu/ac_fullViewAll.asp?term=Spring+2012http://academiccalendars.vcu.edu/ac_fullViewAll.asp?term=Spring+2012

VCU Mobile

The VCU Mobile application is a valuable tool to get the latest VCU information on the go. The application contains helpful information including the VCU directory, events, course schedules, campus maps, athletics and general VCU news, emergency information, library resources, Blackboard and more. To download the application on your smart phone or for more information, please visit http://m.vcu.edu/http://m.vcu.edu/.

Class registration required for attendance

Please remember that students may only attend those classes for which they have registered. Faculty may not add students to class rosters. Therefore, if students are attending a class for which they have not registered, they must stop attending.