

**Course Title: Service-Learning Seminar PPW**  
ENGCOMP 1903  
1 Credit

Instructor: Jean Grace

**Departmental Approval:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**David Bartholomae, Chair, English**

**Note to Chairs:** Your signature indicates that you and the appropriate faculty or committee in your department believe that there is a demonstrated need for this course in your department's curriculum, and you have adequate resources, including TA support when appropriate, to offer this course on a regular basis.

**Rationale for New Course:** The proposed Service-Learning Seminar is a one-credit course administered through the Public and Professional Writing Program (PPW). This course would be open to students who are enrolled in regularly offered PPW courses and may be taken concurrently with these "anchor courses" as a voluntary, one-credit add-on during the same term. The main objective is to pair meaningful and sustained service activities in a professional non-profit organization with the students' work in PPW courses; the one-credit seminar would serve as a bridge between this service and learning in the courses. Students in this course will not receive credit for this service as in an internship placement, rather, participation in this seminar will require weekly meetings and a number of short assignments designed to help participants reflect on their service experiences and workplace professionalism in their placement. These assignments are also designed to help students leverage their experiential learning into enriched academic outcomes consistent with the anchor course objectives and the wider programmatic objectives of PPW.

## Course Description

**ENGCMP 1903: Service-Learning Seminar**

**SPEN**

**1 credit**

1. Service-Learning Seminar is a one-credit course open to students who are enrolled in a three-credit course offered through the Public and Professional Writing Program during the same term. Students who enroll in the Service-Learning Seminar will gain valuable real world experience by performing meaningful community service in a local non-profit organization. The main objective of the Service-Learning Seminar is to help students learn more about workplace professionalism in the non-profit sector by providing opportunities to carry their reflections on their workplace experiences back to their courses in the program. Participants are required to perform service in an approved non-profit organization for a minimum of thirty hours, or roughly three hours per week throughout the term. They are also required to participate in a weekly one-hour seminar meeting conducted by faculty in the Public and Professional Writing Program. During the term they will be expected to perform a number of short written reflection activities, including the keeping of a journal documenting and reflecting on their service work. Finally, students in this course will be expected to work with participating faculty to determine demonstrable ways in which they will apply their experiences in the Service-Learning Seminar toward completing the course requirements in their regular Public and Professional Writing courses. Permission is required to register. Contact the Director or Associate Director of Public and Professional Writing at (412) 624-6556.
2. Prerequisite: This course is open to any student enrolled in a regular Public and Professional Writing course during the same term.
3. Recitations: none.
4. Expected class size is 22 students.
5. This course is offered regularly.

## **Expanded Course Description:**

Service-Learning Seminar has been developed through a partnership of the CAS Office of Experiential Learning and the Public and Professional Writing program. In the Spring Term of AY 2004, a core committee of PPW faculty conducted a pilot model of this course, offering it as a one-credit academic internship administered jointly through the OEL and the PPW. Thirteen students completed the course, working at a variety of placements. The academic and instructional support for this internship work was conducted using service-learning methodology outlined below. This proposal seeks to instantiate this work beginning in the Fall Term AY 2006 as a designated service-learning course.

In designing the Service-Learning Seminar, the faculty committee has developed course objectives around four broad course themes. These themes address specific objectives in service-learning methodology and they provide multiples ways in which students can leverage their work in this course into their anchor courses while fulfilling general PPW programmatic objectives:

1. Workplace Communication: Students in the course perform a number of activities observing and researching workplace communication, especially the place of professional writing, internal communication and publicity in their non-profit placement.
2. Workplace Professionalism: Students in the course study a wide array of issues of workplace professionalism, including the placement process and socialization of new employees, standards of dress, behavior and language, as well as organizational structure and other aspects of organizational culture.
3. Professional Development: As a number of students enrolled in the PPW program are actively pursuing careers in the non-profit sector, this course provides valuable opportunities to learn about potential internships and careers in this area.
4. Civic Engagement: Course participants reflect on the nature of non-profit work and their own stance toward the importance of service and civic responsibility in their own lives.

The aim of this seminar, therefore, is to offer students multiple ways to reflect on their experience and to provide a mechanism to consider this experience more critically as the course proceeds. By providing a number of critical models throughout the term, the course encourages students to direct their reflections, observation, and research during their service experiences toward the specific objectives of their anchor courses.

## **Course Components:**

Service Requirement: Students in the course would be required to perform a minimum of 30 hours of community service at a single placement in regular service throughout the term, usually at minimum three hours per week.

- While students are required to perform a minimum of service hours to receive a passing grade, students do not receive credit for this service. An important rationale for this requirement, however, is that students gain a relatively long-term service experience and thereby have an opportunity to gain an extended experience of workplace culture over the course of the term.
- The placements would be administered by the Director of the PPW; all parties involved would sign a service-learning agreement as a prerequisite for enrollment in the course. This agreement would list the minimum requirements of work and confirm that the placement site volunteer coordinator agrees to monitor the service work and confirm regular participation throughout the term.
- Students would be permitted to select from service in a non-profit organization in any area of their interest so long as the service site meets minimal standards as a professional workplace. While we encourage students to select sites that involve professional writing, it is not a basic requirement for this specific course model. The course themes bear well different kinds of service in a number of professional environments, and the course objectives are enriched by a diversity of service placements among course participants. At present, students may select from a list of sites supplied by the PPW, the OEL and the United Way offered through the Student Volunteer Outreach website.

Seminar Activities: The work of the course is designed to help students to leverage their experience into academic coursework using three separate yet interrelated mechanisms:

- Structured reflection: students would be required to do regular, structured and written reflection weekly during their service, keeping a reflection journal throughout the term. This journal serves two purposes: it helps students to document workplace experiences and it enables the students to critically process their experiences throughout the term guided by the prompting of regular assignments. A typical assignment, for example, might ask students to observe and reflect on standards of workplace professionalism and communication at their service site, In addition to documenting their experiences that week, students would be expected to write an extended journal entry describing professional standards at their site and thinking critically about their observations and experiences of these standards according to questions raised in the prompt. During regular meetings the students would reflect further on these observations through an in-class writing assignment that serves as a springboard for class discussion.

Seminar Meetings: Students would be required to attend a weekly class meeting. To accommodate different students' schedules, these classes would be offered at regular times twice during the week, and students may select which session to attend. Specific times would be based on faculty availability and the university schedule of courses for MWF and TH courses. These meetings are designed to promote active experiential learning while at the sites and critical thinking in reflection. An important aim of class discussions, further, is to encourage collaborative learning through the sharing of experiences, usually through debriefing and reading of journal entries. The classes would be planned and administered by the Director of the PPW program and a committee made up of program faculty who serve on a voluntary basis. Class meetings also would involve a number of guest speakers drawn from university faculty, professionals in the field, and professional development support staff.

Short Reflective Assignments: Students would be required to complete a number of short assignments. These assignments have been developed to address explicitly the College of Arts and Science initiative for writing and speaking across the curriculum. They would include, performing a research interview at the site, writing a professional "thank you" letter, a short paper revising their journal entries, and a formal presentation with poster as a capstone requirement for the course.

PPW Anchor Courses: Students in the Service-Learning Seminar would be actively encouraged to bring their experiences and reflections from the Service-Learning Seminar to their anchor courses to help fulfill course objectives and complete assignments. Because PPW draws from a wide pool of English Department faculty members, both full-time faculty and part-time professionals, it is unrealistic to require all PPW faculty to accommodate this service-learning work in their anchor courses. That having been said, however, in the pilot model, most students were able to apply their service-learning experiences to their anchor courses in significant ways. The core committee is committed to further outreach among PPW faculty members to promote enrollment in the Service-Learning Seminar and to assist students and anchor faculty to leverage service-learning work into the anchor courses. Indeed, we believe that this new emphasis on service-learning may provide an important impetus to programmatic cohesion around outreach and student support.

Below are some examples of student outcomes from the pilot model describing how participants enacted this transfer to the anchor courses:

Natalie was a student in a section of ENGCMP 400, Written Professional Communication. She was volunteering at a new after-school tutoring center. As she was studying the site, she realized that they lacked adequate training materials for new volunteers, which made training vary widely from trainer to trainer. It also meant that volunteers had to rely on their ability to remember everything that was said to them in their orientation session, which was overwhelming. So as part

of her Written Professional Communication class, Natalie created a training manual for volunteers. It explained the background and goals of the program, volunteer responsibilities, common challenges and ways to approach those challenges, strategies for effective tutoring, developmental information on children at various ages, and where tutors could get more information and support. This project was informed by the work that Natalie did as she studied the organization, its culture, its mission, and the populations it serves in the Service-Learning Seminar.

Elizabeth had a similar experience in a different section of Written Professional Communication. She was volunteering in the Healing Arts Program at Hillman Cancer Center. A talented artist with graphic design experience, Elizabeth noticed that the Healing Arts program did not have a brochure for patients and family to explain why they might consider participating and how they could use the techniques of the program when they returned to their homes. Drawing on what she learned through the site research component of the Service-Learning Seminar, Elizabeth researched, wrote, and designed a brochure that met the needs of the intended audience and reflected the values and goals of the Hillman Cancer Center. She had a powerful experience that yielded a well-received final project.

**ENGCOMP 1903: Service-Learning Seminar**  
**Public and Professional Writing**  
**Course Description**

Weekly Meetings

Tuesdays 9:00 to 9:50; Wednesdays 1:00-1:50

Course Overview

**What is Service-Learning?**

Service-learning is an educational methodology in which meaningful community service is integrated into your educational experience. During this course we will be discussing four broad themes that will bridge your service work and the courses offered in the PPW Program: workplace communication and professional writing; workplace professionalism; professional development; and civic responsibility. The idea behind service-learning is that you will be better able to understand and apply the concepts you are studying if you can see them in a context beyond our academic context. Service-learning can expand your professional preparation, therefore, while also supporting the larger goals of a liberal education. As you are working in the wider Pittsburgh community, you will have the opportunity to consider this service work in the context of our critical reflections on community membership and civic responsibility.

There are four key concepts in service-learning that you will see at work in our conversations together:

I. Integrating Academic Coursework and Service Work:

This service-learning seminar is offered as a one-credit supplement to your public and professional writing (PPW) course. The seminar has specific goals, but your instructor will also suggest ways in which you can apply your experiences of service work toward fulfilling the regular course requirements. We will encourage you to draw on this context as part of your work in the PPW class—in a final project or report, for example, it may be entirely appropriate for you to focus on your sponsoring organization/community partner or the field that it represents. Throughout the term we will work with you and your instructor to develop ideas for ways in which you can carry your work in this seminar back to your regular course.

II. Addressing Needs through Partnership:

Through service-learning, we will be working as a community of learners in order to provide meaningful service to the wider communities in Pittsburgh. During week 2 of class, each of you will be asked to select a community partner with whom you will work throughout the term. This community partner must provide you a safe, professional environment in which to work and must be approved by the PPW Director.

You can also select a service partner from a list of providers offered by the United Way, but it still must gain approval. By selecting from this list you may have the potential to choose a more specific service activity, but you should be aware that we have not

contacted these providers to explain the objectives of our course and, therefore, you will have to explain to them in more detail how you are coming to them and what your needs are as a potential service provider.

### III. Critical Reflection as a Central Course Component:

Reflection is the bridge between service and learning. Reflection allows you to use focused questions and discussion to connect the coursework, your service work, and your own personal values or development. Some of these questions will be offered by the service-learning facilitators, while others will emerge as you experience challenging situations during your work. You will have an opportunity to practice reflection at many points during class discussion and in a journal you will keep for the course.

### IV. Community Membership and Civic Responsibility:

During this course you will have opportunities to participate in a number of communities both at the University of Pittsburgh and in the wider communities we serve. This course provides an important opportunity, therefore, for you to consider your role in the communities in which you regularly participate. Among our major topics of reflection will be, therefore, the responsibilities of community membership and a consideration of civic values.

### Some Nuts and Bolts of the Course:

#### **How will I be graded?**

This course will be graded pass/fail (S/N). In order to receive credit for the course you must participate actively in all areas of the course. This participation includes regular attendance and active participation at our weekly meetings, completion of short reading assignments, sustained work with a service partner, regular journal writing, and a few brief written assignments required throughout the term.

#### **What are the requirements?**

##### Service Projects:

You are expected to perform at least three hours of service a week beginning in Week 3 and running throughout the term for a total of at least 30 hours. You and your community partner you work with will both be required to sign a service-learning agreement and the PPW Director will contact your supervisor to verify that you have satisfactorily completed the work you agreed to do.

##### Attendance:

You will be permitted one absence from our weekly meeting, no questions asked. Any subsequent absences will require a written excuse in conjunction with university policy.

Class Participation: For our purposes, class participation is defined as coming to our weekly meetings, arriving on time, having completed appropriate assignments, having reflected upon them, and ready to discuss them. The same principles apply to planning



and implementing scheduled service projects. You should do your best to arrive on time at scheduled meetings, ready to participate in appropriate ways. You should try to remain attentive and engaged with the class discussion and participate actively in all forms of class conversation. While we do not consider regular vocal participation an absolute necessity for good participation, you should try to contribute to the conversation whenever possible. For people who tend not to actively contribute to class conversation, we recommend setting goals such as contributing a comment once or twice every class period.

Journal: Since we believe that the process of writing allows us to learn from the experience we write about, we will ask you to keep a journal as part of your work for the course. Indeed, this journal work should become a central course activity for you. Use your journal as a reflective tool to help you better understand your experiences in the agency or organization you are serving, the nature of public service in American culture, your reading, your preparation for each class, and your reflections after your experience in class. We will provide frequent opportunities and ideas for such journal work during our conversations.

Other Assignments: You will be required to do a few brief written assignments throughout the term including participation in the PPW discussion board. These assignments will often draw upon writing in your journal. At the end of the term, we will ask you to present to the other participants on your service learning experiences.

Format: You should present all written work for this course in reasonably correct standard English, properly formatted and documented in MLA style. The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, edited by Joseph Gibaldi is available in the Book Center.

Disability Resources: If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructors and the Office of Disability Resources and Services, 216 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890/(412) 383-7355 (TTY) as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Plagiarism: Please see the University's statements on Academic Integrity and read them closely. Flagrant plagiarism in this course, that is plagiarism deliberately intended to deceive the reader as to the authorship of the work in question, will result in failure on any individual assignment for the first offense and automatic failure for the course on subsequent offense. We will discuss plagiarism in some detail so be well advised that plagiarism will not be tolerated.

## Seminar in Service-Learning Sample Topic and Assignment Schedule

Week 1—No meeting

Week 2—Information and logistics. Students are instructed on course logistics and requirements, how to find a site, complete a learning agreement, and deadlines for registration.

Regular Course Meetings:

A typical meeting:

- 5-10 minutes of in-class journaling
- Debriefing: a discussion of how students' experience is unfolding, issues that are coming up, items of interest. Instructors track patterns of issues or problems to address or for which to offer support in future sessions.
- Topic: a lecture/discussion of the day's topic.

Date: Week 3	Instructor:	Theme: Keeping a Reflective/Field Journal
In-class writing: Think about your experiences securing your placement at your service site. What do your experiences tell you about the organization? Spin out as many details as you can.		
Journal Assgn for next week: How do people in your service organization behave professionally? What are the standards of dress, of language? How do you account for these standards?  Also, participate in the discussion board. Your first assignment for the discussion board: tell us where you will serve, why you chose this site, what you hope to learn, and what challenges you anticipate.		

Date: Week 4	Instructor:	Theme: Professionalism and Your Service Learning Experience
Journal Assgn for next week: Who does your chosen organization claim to help? What does it claim about its impact in the world? How does it substantiate its claims in and through the materials it circulates, the events it organizes, the work it does? Does it have structures in place to ensure its accountability to the groups it serves?		

Date: Week 5	Instructor:	Theme: Professionalism and Your Service Learning Experience (contd.)
Journal Assgn for next week: What do you notice about race, class, and gender at your site? Among staff? Volunteers? Clients? Are race, class, and gender discussed at your site? How are such issues discussed in the writing or self-descriptions of the site?		
Collection Assgn. due Week 5: Be on the lookout for professional documents that are used at your service-learning site. Please collect and bring an interesting example to class in Week 5, and be ready to briefly describe its use. We will collect your documents and use them during a later class to talk about conventions of form and will select a few genres for special focus in a later session. Note: To ensure that you're not violating any confidences, ask permission from your site supervisor before bringing in an example. If you are thinking of bringing in a form that patients complete, for example, it would be better to bring in a blank form rather than one with confidential information on it.		

Date: Week 6	Instructor:	Theme: Civic and Social Engagement
Journal Assgn for next week: Your assignment this week is to observe your site closely and collect as many details as you can about the use of physical space, the design of the surroundings, the furniture, accommodations for people with disabilities, use of technology, and so on. Describe it all as thoroughly as you can—paint a picture using words to make the space come alive for someone else. When you are done with your observational notes, reflect on what the physical space says about what the organization stands for.		
Writing Assgn. due Week 8: For this assignment, interview someone at your site or in the field your site represents. Start setting up your interview now, since it can take a surprisingly long time to schedule a conversation. Your goal for the interview is to better understand (and help your readers better understand) the significance of the field, the challenges people face when they work in it, what they see as crucial to change, and the potential for making a difference. Write up your interview as a story, not just as a list of questions and answers. When you have completed the interview, post it on the discussion board.		

Date: Week 7	Instructor:	Theme: Understanding Workplace Dynamics
Journal Assgn for next week: How does writing and the writing process function in your service learning site? How does your site represent itself to the public? How does writing function in internal communication? How does writing contribute to socialization in your site? And what specifics make you give the answer you give?		

Date Week 8	Instructor:	Theme: Forms of Workplace Writing
Journal Assgn for next week: Continue your reflections on workplace writing. How does the writing that you observe in your site compare to the writing that you are studying or composing in your PPW class?		

Date Week 9	Instructor:	Theme: Preparing for the Next Step...an internship?
Journal Assgn for next week: Fill in the chart handout on career choices and internships and bring it back to class next week. Then journal about what the next steps might be for you in terms of future internships/service-learning/employment.		
Reading Assgn for next week: Read the interviews on the discussion board and be prepared to discuss what you see as significant patterns. You can raise questions, make observations, or talk about anything you see as exciting, surprising, or disappointing.		

Date Week 10	Instructor	Theme: Discussion of interviews, thinking about closure, and Writing formal thank you letters
Journal Assgn for next week: Are there other people in your life you wish you had the time to write a thank you to? A parent or grandparent? Best friend? Employer, teacher or mentor? Here's the time for you to use your journal to draft a letter to someone else who has helped you. You might consider sending it --- people appreciate being appreciated!		
Writing Assgn due 3/29 or 31 Write a thank you letter to your service-learning sponsor. This thank you letter should be detailed and developed; it should serve as a reflection for you in which you think about how your experiences in the site have contributed to your thoughts and reflections this term. Refer to the assignment for further specifics.		

Date Week 11	Instructor:	Theme: Preparing for a Presentation
Journal Assgn for next week: Take some time to consider your fears and expectations about oral presentations. Have you had to speak in public before? How did it go? What tricks/tips that we discussed in class might help you as you prepare your presentation? If this presentation were to be made at your service-learning site, how would it change for that audience?		

Date Week 12	Instructor: Group	Theme: Your Presentations on Your Experience
Journal Assgn for next week: Respond to the questions and ideas posed in one or two of the presentations.		

Date Week 13	Instructor: Group	Theme: Your Presentations on Your Experience (continued)
Journal Assgn for next week: Respond to the questions and ideas posed in one or two of the presentations.		

Date Week 14	Instructor: Group	Theme: Reflecting on the Service Learning Experience & Celebration
Final Writing Assgn: Drawing on your journal as well as your presentation, your audience's responses to it, and the other presentations you have heard, please write a brief (500 words or so) description of what you learned through your service learning experience and what you plan to do with what you learned. Post your final thoughts on the discussion board.		