

**GST 271: Volunteerism, Social Justice & Civic Engagement  
in the Wake of Hurricane Katrina**  
*Winter Term 2008*

Course Syllabus

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**Course Description:**

This course examines civic responsibilities of citizens in times of natural disasters with a focus on Hurricane Katrina. In this context, students will learn about different aspects of disaster relief by studying related socioeconomic and political issues. More importantly, students will be active, participating volunteers in a project that reflects the idealism of human interconnectedness. Students will travel to the gulf coast region to help in the rebuilding efforts and upon their return, will reflect on the impact and importance of civic engagement to be shared with the Elon campus and local communities.

**Course Objectives:**

By the end of this course students should be able to:

1. Compare and contrast the following terms using specific examples from their service-learning trip: civic engagement, social justice, and volunteerism.
2. Provide specific examples to illustrate multiple ways the mass media shaped perceptions of Hurricane Katrina.
3. Reflect on the importance of their role as a citizen in part of a larger, national and global civic society.

**Required Texts:**

1. Cress, C., Collier, P. and Reitenauer, V. (2005) *Learning through serving: A student guidebook for service-learning across the disciplines*. Virginia. Stylus Press.

### Online Readings:

(available in Blackboard)

1. McIntosh, P. (1988). *White privilege: unpacking the invisible knapsack*. Excerpted from Working Paper 189, "White privilege and male privilege: a personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in women's studies." Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley, MA.
2. Yassin, J. (2005). Deomonizing the victims of Katrina. *Extra*, 18(6), pp. 9-12.
3. Bacon, J. (2005). Saying what they've been thinking. *Extra*, 18(6), pp. 13-15.
4. Langton, P. and Kammerer, D. (2005). Recording and reflecting. In *Practicing sociology in the community* (pp. 67-72). Upper Saddle, NJ: Pearson-Prentice Hall.

### Course Method & Requirements:

Because this is not a typical class, the format and assessments may be different from other courses you have taken. You are about to embark on a journey that is likely to change both you and the people you meet. Our task as a class is to fully experience it while also exploring larger concepts of social justice, civic engagement and volunteerism. By examining Hurricane Katrina from a service learning perspective, we will probably raise more questions than we can answer, discover we have learned things *not* anticipated and become changed in the process.

Your work in the course will be assessed in three different ways. First, your full **participation** in class discussions and the completion of homework exercises is expected. This will help us all start the service learning experience "on the same page." Second, you will be required to keep a **journal** of your experiences while you are in Mississippi. Information about keeping a journal is online in our Blackboard course (see Langton & Kammerer). Your journal will be collected 3 times during the course for grading and feedback. Finally, in order to successfully complete your **final project**, you will draw from your journal reflections to make sense of the service learning experience and demonstrate your personal understanding of the core concepts of the course. A short list of possible final projects is available in our Blackboard site. You can also suggest your own project, pending approval from the instructor.

### Grading:

- 25% Participation & homework exercises
- 30% Journal
- 45% Final project

## Grading Scale

- A 95 and above
- A- 90-94
- B+ 87-89
- B 84-86
- B- 80-83
- C+ 76-79
- C 73-75
- C- 70-73
- D 65-69
- F below 65

## Course Policies:

*Attendance.* Attendance is crucial given the pace, scope, and interactive nature of this course. **Unexcused** absences will result in a one-quarter grade reduction for each incident. Note: absences can only be excused through direct, personal consultation with the course instructor **before or by the next class period.**

*Turning in assignments.* All written materials outside of class **must be typed** (double-spaced) and **stapled**. All work should be proofread for spelling and grammatical errors before being turned in. **No late work shall be accepted or graded.**

*Academic citizenship.* You are expected to fully comply with Elon's Academic Honor Code (<http://www.elon.edu/students/handbook/honsys.asp>).

*Students with special needs.* If there is any student in this class who has special needs because of any type of disability, or if there are any other issues you feel I need to be aware of, please come and discuss this with me during the first week of class. Accommodations are coordinated through the university's Office of Disability Services.

**Course Outline:**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Class Topic</i>	<i>Activities/readings</i>	<i>Assignment due</i>
1/4/08	Course Introduction Service learning & civic engagement	Guest Speaker Discussion	
1/7/08	Katrina & media coverage	Lecture Discussion Film	Read Ch. 1, 2 & 3 • Do Ex. 2.6
1/8/08	Activities	Discussion Film	Read Ch. 4 Read <i>McIntosh</i> article (in Bb) Read <i>Yassin</i> article (in Bb) Read <i>Bacon</i> article (in Bb)
1/9/08	Social justice	Discussion Activities	Read Ch. 5 • Do Ex. 5.5
1/10/08	Volunteerism	Guest speaker	Read <i>Recording and Reflecting</i> (in Bb) • Complete your first journal entry
1/11/08	Project Pericles	Guest speaker Discussion	<a href="http://pericles.org">http://pericles.org</a>
1/12/08	<b>Travel to MS</b>		
1/13/08 – 1/18/08	On site: Bay St. Louis, MS	Discussion Service <b>JOURNALS DUE 1/15</b>	• Daily journal entries
1/19/08	New Orleans, LA	Site visits	• Journal entry
1/20/08	Travel; return home		• Read Ch. 6 • Journal entry
1/21/08	Debrief	Discussion Planning for final project	• Work on final projects
1/22/08- 1/24	Final Projects	Progress reports <b>FINAL JOURNALS DUE 1/24</b>	• Work on final projects
1/25/08 - 1/29/08	Presentations		

**Amendments to the syllabus:**

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the schedule; any changes will be announced in class accordingly.