Help Us Name Our E-Bulletin!

Welcome to the first edition of the UofA Community Service-Learning bi-monthly e-bulletin. As our community of CSL students, instructors, and community partners grows, we want to make sure to keep you in the loop. We are trying to keep it short and informative, with Announcements, a CSL Fact for Thought (including resources), and a feature story on CSL in Action. If you have ideas for the e-bulletin, or to unsubscribe, please contact us at cslhouse@ualberta.ca. And you can always visit the website at www.arts.ualberta.ca/csl for more information. We hope you enjoy the e-bulletin!

The CSL Program Staff

We are having a contest to name our e-bulletin! Please send your suggested titles to cslhouse@ualberta.ca by December 1. The winner will receive a gift certificate to a locally sustainable business.

CSL Courses for Winter term 2010

This winter, CSL will be part of 26 courses in 7 faculties. And in addition to CSL 300 (this year focused on community, space, and embodiment), we are offering CSL 100 for the first time. Both of these courses count toward the Certificate in Community Service-Learning.

CSL 300: Theory and Practice of Community Service-Learning
Embodying Community: Learning, Space & Social Justice

Winter 2010: Wednesdays  1-3:50 pm

Open to students with previous CSL experience or substantial volunteer experience, CSL 300 provides an opportunity for students to delve further into the theories, methods, and debates of community-engaged learning. The winter 2010 offering will combine interdisciplinary texts with a diverse set of hands-on community projects to examine how both space and embodiment are mechanisms of marginalization, resistance, and the politics of identity, as well as of service-learning itself: how do social conceptualizations of communities and bodies reproduce dominance and resistance in urban environments? And, what are the implications of examining such questions in the classroom?

Course requires approval to register. Please contact instructor Dr. Mebbie Bell (mebbie.bell@ualberta.ca) for details and registration assistance.

New CSL Course:
CSL100: Introduction to Community Engagement

Winter 2010: Tuesdays/Thursdays  9:30-10:50 am

Community engagement is a term we hear a lot these days, particularly on university campuses. Universities are trying to be more engaged with the community and to promote strategies for student engagement. But what exactly does community engagement mean? And what are the intended results of community engagement in university education?

CSL100 will explore these questions and related concepts such as, community, citizenship, social responsibility, and experiential education through theoretical and practical approaches inside and outside of the classroom. Students will participate in community service-learning (CSL), which integrates community-based activities with classroom learning, for 20 hours over the course the semester. The course will also introduce students to research tools and skills that will provide a foundation for undertaking further experiential educational opportunities (e.g., Internships, Study Abroad, CSL).

Space is limited. There are no prerequisites for this course. Please contact Dr. Joanne Muzak (jmuzak@ualberta.ca) for more information about the course.
The Journeys Program (HECOL 492) is a unique course from the Department of Human Ecology that explores relations between urban streets and the university. Participants in the course create direct cultural exchange between U of A students and inner city youth, aged eighteen to twenty-nine. Throughout the course students meet for one evening each week to share a meal with youth from Edmonton’s inner city and participate in a group activity. Students take turns planning activities that challenge the group and provide new shared experiences that become the source of the cultural exchange.

The components of this program – the practice of cultural exchange, and course readings and assignments - focus on raising awareness with respect to the poverty and marginalization issues often experienced by at-risk youth. Emphasis is also placed on creating meaningful paths toward community engagement and personal growth. Activities are facilitated in a safe environment for the purpose of increasing cultural awareness, as well as creating relationships and support systems among individuals and organizations in our local environment.

Here’s what some participants had to say about the course:

“Journeys is more than just a course – it’s about making a difference, building a group of acceptance and belonging that lasts a lifetime with others. Journeys is a course that ACTUALLY teaches you more about life and life lessons than you will ever learn in the period of completing a course or degree.” (Tara Kikel)

“The Journeys Program is exactly that... a Journey. One that I am so glad I took. Being a Master’s Student now I really credit this experience as one of the most beneficial things I have done both personally and professionally. I learned new ways of building relationships and truly got to understand myself better - the lasting affects of this are extraordinary!” (Anya McDonald)

“The Journeys program opened my eyes to the community I had thought I knew so well. It made me realize the differences among different social, ethnic and cultural groups in my own city. This program has offered me the insight and desire to make my self aware of social issues and to make a difference. Now I am conducting research in this area so that I may open the eyes of others and advocate the importance of engaging ourselves in our communities and learning more about the cultural mosaic that defines Canadian communities. (Josh Koehli)

Fact for Thought

In our last survey of students, instructors, and community partners, 71% of students, 88% of instructors, and 84% of community partners agreed that community service-learning helps students to develop critical thinking skills.

Critical thinking has been described as "that mode of thinking — about any subject, content, or problem — in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing it. Critical thinking is self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking. It presupposes assent to rigorous standards of excellence and mindful command of their use. It entails effective communication and problem-solving abilities, as well as a commitment to overcome our native egocentrism and sociocentrism." (www.criticalthinking.org)

Developing such a disciplined approach to thinking is useful for many applications, in school work and beyond. To learn more about critical thinking – what it is, how it can be developed or further developed, how it can be applied and practiced – visit the following websites:

The Critical Thinking Community: www.criticalthinking.org
The Critical Thinking Consortium: www.tc2.ca