



## *The Faith-Justice Institute*

### *Service-Learning Immersion Course Core Criteria*

Rooted in the Service-Learning Course Core Criteria, Service-Learning Immersion courses fulfill the five essential standards of academic rigor, critical reflection, reciprocity, learning goals and objectives as outlined below. Service-Learning Immersion courses integrate course texts and community engaged immersion experiences in academic assignments utilizing critical reflection and sustained partnerships. Immersion experiences engage marginalized communities as related to course content and often include community engagement and simple living.

1. **Academic Rigor:** “In a Jesuit school, the focus is on education for justice. Adequate knowledge joined to rigorous and critical thinking will make the commitment to work for justice in adult life more effective” (*Characteristics of Jesuit Education, 77.*) Actualizing the Jesuit mission, service-learning courses seek academic excellence while educating for justice.

- Students are challenged to examine systemic issues of social justice.
- Students learn and test theories through their classroom experience and the communities in which they are learning and/or working with during the immersion experience.
- Syllabi include immersion as a component of learning objectives.
- Course materials include course texts as related to immersion experience--both integral to a successful service-learning course.
- In addition to full, in-class contact hours, full immersive attendance is required.

2. **Critical Reflection:** Critical Reflection is a core aspect of Ignatian Pedagogy as reflection “forms the conscience of learners (their beliefs, values, attitudes, and their entire way of thinking) in such a manner they are led to move beyond knowing to undertake action” (*Ignatian Pedagogy, 16.*) Faculty design assignments and assignment sequences that incorporate critical reflection on systemic social issues. Assignments are intended to deepen learning by explicitly linking service site experience with course content and social justice. Reflection clarifies the link between classroom learning and the students’ growth as persons and citizens and their appreciation of issues of social justice. Assignments are both written *and* oral opportunities that:

- Occur in-class or as part of course requirements.
- Occur frequently throughout the immersion experience.
- Process academic theory in relation to immersion experience.
- Process and explore personal values.
- Explore social injustices affecting the engaged community population.
- Allow instructor feedback.
- Offer oral and written reflection assignments with clear methods of assessment.



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3. **Reciprocity:** Rooted in the [Jesuit Way of Proceeding](#), mutually beneficial relationships between the University and community partners reflect right relationships. “To the extent that we develop a wide-ranging web of respectful and productive relationships, we fulfill Christ’s priestly prayer that they may all be one” (General Congregation 34: 551, 17.) All immersion service-learning courses must engage in mutually beneficial relationships and sustainability with host community.

- Immersion community host(s) must either be part of a long term partnership with SJU or an in-country partner organization which facilitates a long-term relationship with visited communities. The partnership can be through the university or through an organization contracted by the university that maintains a long term mutually beneficial relationship with the host community.
- Immersion experiences should be predominantly relationship-based and provide meaningful exchange for students and the community hosts.

4. **Learning Objectives:** Ignatian Pedagogy “calls for the infusion of approaches to value learning and growth within existing curricula rather than adding courses...What is needed is a framework of inquiry for the process of wrestling with significant issues and complex values of life and teachers willing to guide that inquiry” (4, 14). As a framework for inquiry and derived from the above criteria, each service-learning course must use at least **three** of the below objectives on its syllabus:

- Students will integrate their service-learning immersion experiences and academic course work through critical reflection.
- Students will explore concepts of systemic injustice through analysis of their immersion host community’s experiences.
- Students will engage in activities related to course content during the immersion.
- Students will engage in discernment activities and reflect on their personal values in connection with systemic injustice.
- Students will produce final papers or projects that explore relevant issues to host community lived experiences.
- Students will explore concepts of reciprocity, diversity and solidarity through reflections on the immersion experience and course material when appropriate.
- Students are challenged to consider existing social values and priorities in light of Gospel values and faith-based traditions of social justice.
- Immersion experiences must relate to course syllabus and furthers integral learning in the course.

5. **Learning Outcomes:** “Students, in the course of their formation, must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering and engage it constructively” (Kolvenbach, *The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education*, III, i). Learning outcomes ensure that students’ service site experiences are employed as an instructional method which informs theoretical course content.

- Goals must be clear, specific, and linked to the service experience and to the pedagogical methods.
  - Service is an additional text. When creating learning goals it is essential to reflect community engagement as an integral part of educational experience.
- When appropriate, final papers and projects should be shared with associated immersion host organizations.