

**STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT ALBANY
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WELFARE
COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC SERVICE PROGRAM
<http://www.albany.edu/cpsp>**

RSSW 290 Community Service I

RSSW 291 Human Service in Community

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Sharon's Office Hours: Monday 10-11 and Wednesday 1-2 or by appointment

CPSP Office Hours: Monday – Friday 9:00 – 4:30

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Founded in 1970, the Community and Public Service Program (CPSP) has played an important role in facilitating student community engagement in the Greater Capital Region. Administered by the University at Albany's School of Social Welfare, CPSP offers students in all academic disciplines the opportunity to engage in community service while earning course credit.

Students volunteer at an area not-for-profit or public organization that they select from among the approximately 400 approved organizations on the CPSP web site: <http://www.albany.edu/cpsp>. Each student completes either 100 hours of volunteer service for 3 credits in RSSW 290 or 60 hours of volunteer service for 2 credits in RSSW 291 (RSSW 290 is a pre-requisite for RSSW 390).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The primary objective for all Community and Public Service courses is to promote community engagement activities via university and community partnerships. Students have an opportunity to gain insight into how civil society and the public sector operate in a democratic society. The goal is for participants to understand the impact of their service on meeting community needs as well as explore the meaning of democratic citizenship in a multicultural society. The purpose of the course is to foster a lifelong commitment to service and democratic civic engagement.

Class assignments and forms will be available on our website and in the office. Please make sure the email address and phone number we have for you is current and active. Make sure to inform the CPSP office if either of these change.

ASSIGNMENTS and OBLIGATIONS

1. **COMMITMENT AGREEMENT** – Each student will review the course syllabus and acknowledge awareness of course requirements by completing the commitment form. This form is due to the CPSP office within one week after registering for class.
2. **LEARNING CONTRACT** - Each student must create a Learning Contract in partnership with their agency supervisor following the format on page 3. It must be signed and dated by the student and her/his supervisor. It should be turned in by the end of the second week of service. A Learning Contract is required for each volunteer site if there is more than one.
3. **MEDIA PRIOR APPROVAL REQUEST (this is required only if you have chosen to complete the Electronic Media Project)** – Prior to submitting an Electronic Media Project, the student is required to submit a brief description of the intended project that includes procedures to be used if any audio or visual

material includes clients or consumers of the organization where you volunteer. The supervisor must sign off acknowledging that agency policy is being adhered to regarding confidentiality. Along with this information, a release is required if the student would like the option of his/her work to be used to publicize the CPSP program (i.e. on the CPSP web page, campus TV or radio, etc.). See chart below for the Community and Public Service deadlines. **Media Prior Approval Request form** can be found on the CPSP web site or in the CPSP office.

4. REFLECTIVE ESSAY (page 4) **or** ELECTRONIC MEDIA PROJECT (page 6) - Please follow the format/ outline provided. Different deadlines apply depending on the session in which the student is registered. See chart below for the Community and Public Service Program deadlines. *** For students taking both RSSW 290 and 291 please refer to page 6.
5. COMPLETE VOLUNTEER HOURS by the end of the semester (for exact date see chart below). The CPSP does not expect you to volunteer on University observed holidays or during school breaks however you are responsible for working out scheduling details with your supervisor in advance. Some volunteer sites might expect you to be present if it is part of your schedule. Please address this issue prior to beginning your hours.
6. LOG OF HOURS – Signed Log of Hours are due by the last day of class for the semester. A separate signed Log of Hours is due for each volunteer site.
7. COURSE & SUPERVISOR EVALUATIONS are due by last day of class for the semester. A Supervisor Evaluation should be completed by a supervisor from each site.
- 8. Maintain a copy of all documents submitted to the CPSP program for your records.** Although rare, there have been instances where office staff are unable to locate student documents despite the student's assurance that it had been handed in. Please keep a copy of all your signed work and documents.
9. **ALL assignments** are due by the dates listed below **in the CPSP office in order to receive a Satisfactory for the course.** If the office is closed you can slide your paperwork under the door.

ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES

Assignment	Due Full Semester	Due 8 Week 2
Commitment Agreement	Within 1 Week of Registering	
Learning Contract Due *	Within 2 Weeks of Starting Volunteer Hours*	
Prior-Approval for Media Project only required if you have chosen to complete the Electronic Media Project.	Friday March 26	Friday April 9
Reflective Essay OR Media Project **	Tuesday April 20	Tuesday April 27
Course & Supervisor Evaluations	Tuesday May 4	Tuesday May 4
Log of Hours (all hours completed) *	Tuesday May 4 *	Tuesday May 4

*Both student and supervisor’s signatures required

**You have a choice to complete the Reflective Essay or the Electronic Media Project; you are not required to complete both assignments.

LEARNING CONTRACT: *complete in outline format as shown below*

LEARNING CONTRACT
YOUR NAME
STUDENT ID #
RSSW COURSE NUMBER, SEMESTER & YEAR
DATE

Name of Organization:

Purpose of the Organization (or the part of the organization where you are volunteering – in your own words)

Include or attach the organization's mission statement

Name of Supervisor:

Job Description: Please describe the activities you will perform and the responsibilities you will have.

Schedule of Volunteer Hours: (This should be the days of the week and hours that you will be volunteering such as: Monday 3 – 7 pm, Wednesday 2 – 5 pm.)

Learning Objectives: List at least three objectives that you have developed and agreed on with your supervisor. These are individual learning objectives, not organizational goals. These objectives are things you would like to accomplish over the semester. Examples: learning new skills, learning about a new population, understanding how organizations function, etc.

Signatures: Both you and your supervisor sign and date this contract.

Submit the Original to the CPSP Office, SS112. Keep a copy for yourself and give one to your supervisor.

Some suggestions for successfully writing your Learning Contract

1. Make an appointment with your supervisor to discuss the contract.
2. Ask your supervisor to describe your job, or to give you a written job description. This does not replace your Learning Contract, but it is information that you can use when writing it yourself.
3. Agree on a schedule that includes the days and times that you will complete your volunteer service.
4. Discuss your learning objectives. Ask questions like:
 - How can I best assist the organization in achieving its mission?
 - How will the experiences I have here apply to a potential career?
 - How will my service impact the organization's constituency?
 - How will my work enhance social capital in the community?
 - How will my work strengthen my understanding of democracy, civil society or multiculturalism?

REFLECTIVE ESSAY REQUIREMENTS – RSSW 290/291

(You have a **choice** of completing the Reflective Essay or the Electronic Media Assignment)

1. A header that includes the following:

Your name

Name of organization

Course number (RSSW 290 / 291), Semester & Year

Address (including city, state and zip code) where you can be reached after the end of the semester

Your telephone number -where you will be after May 4, include more than 1 if necessary

Active e-mail address

Date

2. The Reflective Essay is an opportunity for you to reflect on your service experience in a way that hopefully provokes you to evaluate how the experience has changed you or affected your life in a tangible and describable way. **Take a moment to read the excerpt from President Obama's 10/16/09 speech at Texas A&M on the following page.** Please include in your essay how it resonates with you having just completed service to your community.

The essay is also an opportunity for you to evaluate your personal impact on the organization and the community. The following questions **can** be used as a guide in your writing process:

Why did you take this course?

What was your impact on the organization?

What do you think the organization agency gained from your service?

Were the learning objectives you developed obtained?

Did your CPSP experience apply to a future career or educational goal?

What did you learn about yourself in relationship to the world of work?

What did you learn about values and ethics, both personally and professionally?

How did this experience change or reinforce your perspectives about people, especially people who might be from backgrounds different from your own?

What was the most important thing you learned as a result of your volunteer service?

How does this experience influence your future commitment to service and civic engagement?

Envision your life 20 years from now, how as this experience impacted your life?

3. Minimum requirements for a satisfactory paper:

- 3 – 5 pages (essays shorter than 3 complete pages will result in an Unsatisfactory for the course)
- Typewritten, double-spaced with a 12 pt font
- Please make sure to check thoroughly for grammatical, typographical and spelling errors. Have your paper proofread for flow.

4. You may submit your essay by dropping it off at SS112 or faxing it to 518-442-5684. If the office is not open, you may slide your assignments under the door.

The following is an excerpt from President Obama's speech to the students at Texas A&M University on 10/16/09. Please read and incorporate your thoughts in your essay as requested.

"In the end, when it comes to the challenges we face, the need for action always exceeds the limits of government. While there's plenty that government can do and must do to keep our families safe, and our planet clean, and our markets free and fair, there's a lot that government can't -- and shouldn't -- do. And that's where active, engaged citizens come in. That's the purpose of service in this nation.

But I also want to be honest with you: While we'll do our best to make it easy to get involved, the service itself won't always be easy. People won't always appreciate what you're trying to do for them. You won't always make the difference you had hoped for. And let's be honest, some problems are so big, so stubborn, that even your best efforts will only help just a little bit. They might just help one person. They might just help one corner of a neighborhood. But those are the efforts that matter the most. It's through that struggle, the fact that it's hard, that the difference is made -- not just for others, but for yourself. That's how you young people in particular will discover your strengths and weaknesses and the depths of your compassion and courage. It's how you will grow -- and how you grow closer to the people you serve.

And once you've formed those connections, you'll find that it's a little harder to numb yourself to other people's suffering. It's a little harder to convince yourself that their struggles aren't your problem. It's a little harder to just stand by as a bystander.

Once you've tutored young people in a struggling neighborhood, it's hard not to care about that ballot measure to fund their school. Once you've volunteered at a food bank, it's hard not to care about poverty and unemployment. Over time, the needs of the people you serve become your stake in the challenges of our time.

In the end, service binds us to each other -- and to our communities and our country -- in a way that nothing else can. That's how we become more fully American. That's what it means to be American. It's always been the case in this country -- that notion that we invest ourselves, our time, our energy, our vision, our purpose into the very fabric of this nation. That's the essence of our liberty -- that we give back, freely.

You don't have to devote your entire career to service -- though I hope that many of the students here will. But I'm asking you to have a public service mindset. I'm asking that no matter where you live, or what job you do, or what obstacles you face, you're always looking for ways to make service part of your life.

Whether through it's -- it's through your workplace, your house of worship, or your local school. Whether it's in your own neighborhood or another where the need is greater. Whether you offer some special skill, or just an extra set of hands and a sympathetic ear.

(referring to George W. Bush Sr.) And that, ultimately, is the idea at the heart of President Bush's vision: that each of us has a role to play, and all of us have something to contribute. He didn't call for one blinding light shining from Washington -- (laughter) -- he didn't just call for a few bright lights from the biggest nonprofits; but he called for "a vast galaxy of people and institutions working together to solve problems in their own backyard....And today, 20 years later, think for a minute about the impact that he's had. Think of the thousands of people and organizations who've been named Points of Light -- and the countless others he inspired to do their part. Think of all the people they touched and the lives they changed -- and all of those who were helped who went on to help others. That's the extraordinary ripple effect that one life, lived humbly, with love for one's country, and in service to one's fellow citizens, can have. May we each strive to make that kind of difference with our own lives.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA PROJECT REQUIREMENTS – RSSW 290/291

(You have a **choice** of completing the Electronic Media Assignment or the Reflective Essay)

1. In the body of the email or accompanying sheet with project provide the following information:

Your name

Name of organization

Course number (RSSW 290 / 291), Semester & Year

Address (including city, state and zip code) where you can be reached

Your telephone number/s where you can be reached from May 4th on

Active e-mail address

Date

2. The Electronic Media Project is an opportunity for you to creatively display what you have learned overall and about yourself through your volunteer hours. This can be displayed through a power point, booklet, audio or video recording (examples, advertisement, training, public service announcement, documentary, commercial, etc.), web page, etc. This project could be posted on the CPSP web site, or used for publicity purposes. When you are working on this project, please consult with your supervisor to ensure there are no confidentiality issues.

Use the questions below to guide you in your creative process:

What was your impact on the organization?

What do you think the organization gained from your service?

Were the learning objectives you developed obtained?

Did your CPSP experience apply to a future career or educational goal?

What did you learn about yourself in relationship to the world of work?

What did you learn about values and ethics, both personally and professionally?

How did this experience change or reinforce your perspectives about people, especially people who might be from backgrounds different from your own?

What was the most important thing you learned as a result of your volunteer service?

How does this experience influence your future commitment to service and civic engagement?

How does this experience influence your future in general?

Envision your life 20 years from now, how as this experience impacted your life?

3. Minimum requirements for a satisfactory electronic media project:

When reviewing your project, it should be obvious which points from the above list you are covering. It should reflect how you have grown or progressed from the experience.

MEDIA RELEASE & PRIOR APPROVAL REQUEST must be completed and submitted in advance of the submission of your project.

Technical support is available through the Library's Interactive Media Center. They offer a wide array of services and support. Contact the office via email to find out how they can be of assistance.

4. You may submit your project electronically by emailing it to sharon.stevens01@albany.edu or drop it by the office, SS112. If the office is not open, you may slide your assignments under the door.

For Students taking RSSW 290 and 291

ASSIGNMENTS and OBLIGATIONS – (due dates remain as previously stated in syllabus)

1. COMMITMENT AGREEMENT – one Commitment Agreement will count for both classes.
2. LEARNING CONTRACT – If volunteering in two different locations, two Learning Contracts need to be submitted following above guidelines. If volunteering in one site with the same supervisor, list at least six (6) learning objectives.
3. REFLECTIVE ESSAY (page 4) or ELECTRONIC MEDIA PROJECT (page 6) – You have the option of submitting a **Reflective Essay** and **Electronic Media Project** or an **Extended Reflective Essay** that is 5 – 7 pages in length following above stated guidelines .
4. LOG of HOURS – if volunteering at one site, one log with hours totaling 160 can be submitted with appropriate signatures. If multiple sites, signed logs are required from each site.
5. COURSE EVALUATION –
 - One Student Course Evaluation will count for both classes
 - One Supervisor Evaluation will count for both classes if volunteering at one site
 - Two Supervisor Evaluations will be required if volunteering at two or more sites

IMPORTANT INFORMATION, TIPS AND HINTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCE

BE DEPENDABLE: Develop a realistic schedule that you can meet. Be on time, be pleasant and don't leave early. Discuss University holidays up front. Be very clear about your availability. Call your supervisor if you will be late. Call your supervisor with as much notice as possible if you are sick. Make up any missed hours as soon as possible. Students may work during University breaks but you do not have to, as long as you work it out in advance with your supervisor.

DON'T LET PROBLEMS LINGER! If you have concerns or questions bring them to your supervisor right away. If you need any assistance in addressing a concern contact the CPSP staff. We can assist with any situation.

BIAS: Report any instance of harassment (sexual, racial, religious, etc.) to the CPSP office immediately. University guidelines are available at www.albany.edu/affirmative_action/

DRIVING--STUDENTS CANNOT DRIVE AGENCY VEHICLES OR TRANSPORT CLIENTS IN THEIR OWN CARS unless the organization carries liability insurance for this purpose. Because students' auto insurance would not cover them, we do not permit students to drive agency vehicles or their own vehicles **WITH AGENCY CLIENTS IN THE CAR.** You might be asked to run errands in your own car. This is up to you, and if you agree to help in this way, you may ask to be reimbursed for gas, parking, etc.

INCOMPLETES: The expectation when a student signs up for **RSSW 290 or RSSW 291 is that they will complete their hourly commitment by the end of the semester in which they registered for the course.** That being said, there are occasionally extreme situations that preclude this from happening. Incompletes must be requested in writing before the end of the semester. Please use the form available on the web site. All required course documentation must be turned in, except for the log of hours, and a minimum of 1/2 of your hours need to be done in order to be considered for an incomplete. This is in keeping with the UAlbany grading policy.

EMAIL CONTACT: The majority of our communication with you will be via email. Please check your email regularly.

STUDENTS CANNOT GET PAID WHILE COMPLETING THEIR VOLUNTEER SERVICE.

BY UNIVERSITY DEFINITION OUR COURSE IS NOT AN INTERNSHIP. Internships are programs administered within specific Schools of the University and are supervised by instructors within that School, or as UNI courses. Our program is available to students in all academic disciplines. It is important that we use the correct terminology, in part, to avoid the confusion. By definition, this is a volunteer program, all service is performed free of charge.

SUPERVISORS ARE ASKED TO COMPLETE EVALUATIONS OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS. A copy is attached. Please give it to your supervisor. At the end of your service your supervisor can mail it to the, University at Albany, 1400 Washington Ave, CPSP Office, SS112, Albany, NY 12222 or fax it to (518) 442-5684.

WHAT TO WEAR: Please check with your immediate supervisor regarding the organization's dress code.

ENJOY YOUR EXPERIENCE! If you have any suggestions for additional information that should be on this page please send them to sharon.stevens01@albany.edu