GEN 390
SERVICE LEARNING

COURSE DESCRIPTION

GEN 390 Service Learning is designed to provide students with the skills and knowledge necessary to engage thoughtfully and ethically with individuals and groups from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The course emphasizes the development of intercultural understanding without reinforcing stereotypes under the guise of cultural difference. As a guiding theoretical framework, the course draws on the concept of contact zones—spaces of social, cultural, and linguistic exchange that simultaneously separate and connect communities.

Through this framework, students undertake a short-term program, community-based service-learning project focused on a contact zone within the host context. While abroad, students engage in academic inquiry and sustained service with the local community, with particular attention to Spanish-speaking communities in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The course integrates classroom instruction, community-based work, and structured reflection to support students' communicative competence development in Spanish, deepen their understanding of the local sociocultural context, and contribute meaningfully to the communities with whom they work.

GEN 390 follows a service-learning model in which students learn through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that address community needs, are integrated into the academic curriculum, and include structured opportunities for reflection that extend learning beyond the classroom (Corporation for National and Community Service, 1990). Students are required to participate actively both inside and outside the classroom and to complete community service on a two-hour daily basis throughout the program, totaling 95-100 hours. Detailed project guidelines will be provided in class and elsewhere in this document.

Course objectives and activities include:

- Analyze intercultural encounters within the host community using the theoretical framework of contact zones, identifying power relations, cultural negotiation, and mutual influence.
- Participate in a minimum of 95-100 hours of community service that addresses authentic community needs while demonstrating ethical engagement and cultural humility.

- Synthesize academic readings, classroom discussions, and field experiences to produce informed analyses of social, cultural, and linguistic issues in the host community.
- Demonstrate communicative competence in Spanish (i.e., linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, discursive, and strategic competence) by interacting appropriately and effectively with members of the host community, using language that reflects awareness of cultural norms, context, and communicative purpose in real-world service-learning settings.
- Evaluate personal cultural assumptions, identities, and positionality in relation to service-learning experiences and intercultural encounters.
- Collaborate effectively with classmates and community organizations to design, implement, and assess a short-term program-long service-learning project.
- Document and evaluate the outcomes of community engagement through structured reflection, demonstrating both student learning and community impact.
- Explain the role of service-learning as a model for civic engagement, social responsibility, and global citizenship.

REQUIRED READINGS

Books:

- Batlle, R., Escoda, E., Cuñado, M. J., García Laso, A., Martín Sánchez, D. A., & Prats, D. (2019). 100 buenas prácticas de aprendizaje-servicio. Inventario de experiencias educativas con finalidad social. Santillana.
- Livermore, D. (2012). Liderar con inteligencia cultural: El nuevo secreto para el éxito. Amacon.

Academic Articles:

- Álvarez Castillo, J. L., Martínez Usarralde, M. J., González González, H., & Buenestado Fernández, M. (2017). El aprendizaje-servicio en la formación del profesorado de las universidades españolas. Revista Española de Pedagogía, 75(267), 199–217.
- Díaz Iso, A., Gutiérrez Fernández, N., & Barrenetxea Mínguez, L. (2023). Conectando teoría y práctica: la metodología de aprendizaje-servicio en la didáctica de las lenguas en educación superior. Aula Abierta, 52(4), 343–350.
- Gil-Gómez, J., Moliner-García, M. O., Chiva-Bartoll, Ó., & García López, R. (2016). Una experiencia de aprendizaje-servicio en futuros docentes: desarrollo de la competencia social y ciudadana. Revista Complutense de Educación, 27(1), 53–73.

- Martínez, P., Fuentes, J. L., & López, E. (2025). El aprendizaje-servicio en la universidad europea: un análisis de su desarrollo actual. Revista Iberoamericana de Aprendizaje-Servicio, 19, 37–58.
- Mayor Paredes, D. (2019). El aprendizaje-servicio como eje articulador de procesos de desarrollo personal-estudiantil y social en el estudiantado universitario. Perfiles Educativos, 41(166), 124–140.
- Mella-Núñez, I., Quiroga-Carrillo, A., & Comesaña, J. C. (2021). Aprendizaje-servicio y desarrollo cívico-social en titulaciones universitarias del ámbito educativo: preparando al alumnado para la práctica de una educación inclusiva. Educar, 57(2), 363–377.
- Pérez Cabello, A. M., & Oliva Pérez, F. J. (2021). El aprendizaje-servicio mediante segundas lenguas: diversidad y diversión. En P. Úcar Ventura (Ed.), Estudios sobre la diversidad y la globalización: Imbricaciones culturales y traductivas (pp. 379–392). Comares.
- Salgado-Robles, F. (2020). Relación entre tipo de programa académico en el extranjero, competencia intercultural y adquisición del leísmo por aprendices de español como lengua de herencia.
- In P. Taboada de Zúñiga Romero y R. Barros Romero (Eds.), Perfiles, factores y contextos en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje de ELE/EL2 (pp. 1013–1026). Santiago de Compostela University Press
- Salgado-Robles, F. (2014). Desarrollo de la competencia estratégica oral en español como segunda lengua mediante el aprendizaje-servicio en el Bluegrass de Mexington. Estudios de Lingüística Aplicada, 59, 125–148.
- Tejada, J. (2013). La formación de las competencias profesionales a través del aprendizaje-servicio. Cultura y Educación, 25(3), 285–294.

ASSESSMENT

The grade scale is presented below, followed by a description of the components that make up the course grade:

A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
97-100	93-96	90-92	87-89	83-86	80-82	77-79	73-76	70-72	67-69	63-66	60-62	Below 60

Components of the grade:

Attendance and Participation (2)	Written Reflections (3)	Academic Article Presentation	Final Project
20%	30%	20%	30%

Attendance and Participation (20%):

Active participation and your regular attendance, both in class and at your site visits, are required for successful completion of this class.

CLASS (10%): You will be allowed two (2) unexcused absences from class meetings; after these absences, each additional missed class will result in the deduction of five points from your final average grade. Grades will be assigned according to the criteria listed on page 5 of this syllabus.

SITE VISITS (10%): By agreeing to volunteer with these community agencies, you are engaging in a serious commitment that affects many more individuals than you or your classmates (see page 6 of this syllabus). All cancellations or changes to site visits must be discussed with and approved by the site coordinator well in advance.

Unexcused absences from site appointments are not allowed and may result in your withdrawal from the course. Grades will be determined according to the rubric on page 7 of this syllabus.

Written Reflections (30%):

Through our Google Classroom account, each student will carry out one (1) reflective essay in Spanish. These essays will be graded according to quantity (2 pages) and quality of language, as well as on their content (i.e., (1) information regarding tasks accomplished, (2) linguistic and intercultural challenges, and (3) brief comments about the visit, on page 8).

No assignments will be accepted after the published due date/time.

Academic Article Presentation (20%):

Throughout the program, each student will prepare one (1) oral presentation (20 minutes) based on an assigned academic paper. All students are expected to participate in the Q&A session.

Presentations will be evaluated according to the criteria outlined on page 9 of this syllabus.

Final Project (30%):

The final project consists of a 15–20 minute in-class presentation or a recorded video in which students critically analyze their program-long service-learning experience. Drawing on course readings, theoretical frameworks, and classroom discussions, students will apply key concepts such as contact zones, intercultural communication, communicative competence (including linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, discursive, and strategic components), cultural humility, and civic engagement.

The project should demonstrate the student's ability to synthesize academic inquiry with experiential learning by examining reciprocal learning processes, including what the student learned from the community and how the service work contributed to community goals. Students are expected to reflect critically on intercultural encounters, power relations, and personal positionality within the service context.

The final project must be submitted via Google Classroom. Grades will be assigned according to the criteria provided on page 10 of this syllabus.

COURSE CALENDAR

DATE	CONTENT, READINGS, & ASSIGNMENTS
Week 1 Day 1	- Livermore, 1 - Batlle et al., 1
Week 1 Day 2	- Livermore, 2 - Batlle et al., 2 - Presentation #1 - Reflection #1 (by Sunday, 11:59 p.m.)
Week 2 Day 3	- Livermore, 3 - Batlle et al., 3
Week 2 Day 4	- Livermore, 4 - Batlle et al., 4 - Presentation #2 - Reflection #2 (by Sunday, 11:59 p.m.)
Week 3 Day 5	- Livermore, 5 - Batlle et al., 5
Week 3	- Livermore, 6

Day 6	- Batlle et al., 6 - Presentation #3 - Reflection #3 (by Sunday, 11:59 p.m.)
Week 4 Day 7	- Livermore, 7 - Batlle et al., 7
Week 4 Day 8	- Presentation #4 - Reflection #4 (by 11:59 p.m.) - Final Project (by Sunday, 11:59 p.m.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Assessed by Instructor

CRITERIA	EXCEEDS STANDARD (4)	MEETS STANDARD (3)	APPROACHING STANDARD (2)	DOES NOT MEET STANDARD (1)
Consistent class attendance and active engagement in discussions	Attends all or nearly all class sessions and participates actively and thoughtfully.	Attends class regularly and participates appropriately.	Attendance or participation is inconsistent.	Frequently absent or disengaged.
Analysis of intercultural encounters in the workplace	Contributions demonstrate strong preparation and sustained engagement with readings, discussions, and internship experiences. Shows insightful analysis of intercultural dynamics, professional norms, and power relations	Contributions show adequate preparation and understanding of course concepts, including intercultural issues and workplace practices. Provides relevant analysis of professional cultural interactions.	Contributions are occasionally relevant but show limited preparation or superficial engagement with course concepts. Demonstrates minimal insight into intercultural or professional dynamics.	Rarely participates or contributions are minimal, off-topic, or lack grounding in course concepts or workplace experiences.

	in the host workplace.			
Synthesis of academic readings, discussions, and internship experiences	Integrates internship experiences with academic content and classroom discussion with depth and critical insight. Demonstrates reflective awareness of professional identity, personal assumptions, and cultural norms in the workplace.	Makes relevant connections between academic content and internship experiences. Demonstrates basic reflective awareness of professional and cultural assumptions.	Demonstrates difficulty applying academic concepts to internship experiences or integrating workplace observations into discussion. Reflection is minimal or descriptive rather than analytical.	Demonstrates little understanding of course concepts or the internship context. Shows minimal or no reflection on professional or cultural assumptions.
Demonstration of communicative competence in Spanish	Uses Spanish accurately and appropriately when required, showing sensitivity to context and purpose.	Uses Spanish competently when required.	Use of Spanish is limited or uneven when required.	Does not meet communicative expectations in Spanish when required.
Explanation of the value of international internships and professional engagement	Clearly articulates the value of international internships for professional development, ethical engagement, and global citizenship.	Can explain the role of international internships and professional engagement at a general level.	Understanding of international internships and professional engagement is vague or superficial.	Unable to articulate the role or value of international internships or professional engagement.

COURSE CONTRACT

Working in the community is an important commitment. Organizations depend on you. Clients depend on you. Failing to fulfill your responsibilities will seriously affect your final grade.

Internship Responsibilities

A. **Duration**: Each student will volunteer 95-100 hours with a partner community organization. Students must maintain a log recording their daily hours and the cumulative total to date. The instructor may request this log at any time during the program.
B. **Schedule**: It is the student's responsibility to coordinate with the organization's staff regarding the day(s) and time(s) they will volunteer each day
C. **Transportation**: Students are responsible for traveling to the work site by private or public transportation. Travel time to the site does not count toward service hours.
D. **Punctuality**: Students must arrive on time. If a student is late or absent, the staff of the partner organization will inform the course instructor.
E. **Absences**: If a student must miss a volunteer session, they must contact both the partner organization and the instructor to notify them or request permission. Missed hours must be made up.

Confidentiality and Professional Information

All information regarding clients of the organization is strictly confidential. Students may not discuss clients with anyone outside the course or the volunteer work. Students also may not discuss private client information with each other.

Contract Signature

I understand the terms of this contract and agree to adhere to the rules outlined herein.

Full name: _____
Signature: _____
Date: _____

Release

I agree to allow my image and my work in this course to be used for promotional purposes (online or in pamphlets) for the community partners, this course, or other Institution-related publications. I do not expect any remuneration.

Full name: _____
Signature: _____

Date: _____

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Assessed by Internship Supervisor

CRITERIA	EXCEEDS STANDARD (4)	MEETS STANDARD (3)	APPROACHING STANDARD (2)	DOES NOT MEET STANDARD (1)
Completion of 95-100 hours of internship work addressing organizational needs	Consistently attends scheduled internship hours (approximately two hours weekly) and exceeds required commitments. Demonstrates strong reliability and accountability in completing assigned tasks.	Attends internship hours regularly and fulfills assigned responsibilities as expected.	Attendance is inconsistent, occasionally late, or below expectations; completion of responsibilities is uneven.	Frequently absent, late, or unprepared; fails to meet internship hour requirements or assigned responsibilities.
Ethical and professional engagement in the host workplace	Demonstrates exceptional professionalism, initiative, and ethical conduct. Engages respectfully with supervisors, colleagues, and clients, showing strong cultural humility and awareness of workplace norms.	Engages ethically and professionally with supervisors, colleagues, and clients; demonstrates appropriate workplace behavior.	Engagement meets minimum expectations but shows limited initiative or inconsistent professionalism.	Demonstrates inadequate professionalism, ethical conduct, or respect for workplace norms and relationships.

Demonstration of communicative competence in Spanish in real-world contexts	Communicates effectively in Spanish, adapting language appropriately to context, audience, and task.	Communicates effectively in Spanish for required tasks and interactions.	Communication in Spanish is uneven or occasionally inappropriate for context.	Communication is ineffective or inappropriate for the setting.
Effective collaboration with supervisors, colleagues, and peers	Collaborates proactively with supervisors and colleagues, communicates effectively, and contributes meaningfully to organizational objectives.	Works cooperatively with supervisors and colleagues and contributes positively to workplace tasks and projects.	Requires guidance to collaborate effectively or to understand workplace expectations and professional roles.	Does not collaborate effectively or contribute meaningfully to workplace tasks or organizational goals.
Meaningful contribution to organizational goals and evaluation of internship outcomes	Demonstrates reflective awareness of the impact of internship work on the organization and on personal professional development.	Demonstrates awareness of the purpose and value of the internship experience for both the organization and personal learning.	Demonstrates limited reflection on the purpose or impact of internship activities.	Shows little awareness of the purpose or impact of the internship experience.

WRITTEN REFLECTIONS ON INTERNSHIP

Detalles de la visita			
Nombre			
Organización			
Fechas		*Horas / Total*	_____ / _____

Lugar	
RESUMEN ¿Qué hiciste durante las últimas visitas? Indica las tareas específicas que realizaste. ¿Qué hiciste para superar lo mínimo? Dicho con otras palabras, ¿cómo fuiste más allá de lo que esperaban de ti?	
RETOS COMUNITARIOS ¿Con quién interactuaste en estas visitas? Describe a las personas, las interacciones y los resultados.	
RETOS COMUNICATIVOS ¿Cómo fue la comunicación en español durante estas visitas? ¿Tuviste éxito en términos lingüísticos, sociolingüísticos, pragmáticos, discursivos y/o estratégicos? Explícalo con ejemplos. ¿Qué estructuras, palabras o información cultural fueron necesarios para cumplir con tus deberes durante estas visitas?	
IMPRESIÓN GENERAL Teniendo en cuenta tus propios retos y los de la organización, ¿cómo evalúas el éxito general de tu visita?	
Añade cualquier otro comentario que quieras compartir	

ssa
education abroad

ACADEMIC ARTICLE PRESENTATION

CRITERIA	EXCEEDS STANDARD (4)	MEETS STANDARD (3)	APPROACHING STANDARD (2)	DOES NOT MEET STANDARD (1)
Quality of the information	Relevant, logically presented from beginning to end, and on target.	Adequate information, most ideas were developed, and on target.	Limited information, some ideas were not fully developed or on target.	Minimal or limited information, ideas were not developed, information lacks substance.
Delivery of the information	Clear, easy to follow, and interesting; the presenter rarely read notes.	Mostly clear, easy to follow, and interesting; the presenter occasionally read notes.	Mostly clear, easy to follow, and interesting; the presenter read most of the time.	Unclear, difficult to follow, and uninteresting; the presenter read all of the time.
Familiarity with the assigned topic	Full knowledge of the assigned topic; the presenter was able to answer all the questions of the audience.	Knowledge of the assigned topic; the presenter was able to answer most of the questions of the audience.	Limited knowledge of the assigned topic; the presenter was able to answer only some of the questions of the audience.	Limited knowledge of the assigned topic; the presenter was not able to answer the questions of the audience.

Analysis	Demonstrated a thorough and critical analysis of all the components of the article; an in-depth evaluation of the topic.	Evidence of critical analysis of all the components of the article, but it could have been more thorough.	Little evidence of critical analysis of some of the components of the article, but it could have been more thorough.	Very little evidence of critical analysis of all the components of the article.
Language use	No errors in spoken and written language.	Few errors in spoken and written language.	Some errors in spoken and/or written language.	Many errors in spoken and written language.
Overall quality of the presentation	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Peer feedback	Demonstrated a thorough and critical analysis of the presentation.	Evidence of critical analysis of the presentation.	Little evidence of critical analysis of the presentation.	Very little evidence of critical analysis of the presentation.

FINAL PROJECT

CRITERIA	EXCEEDS STANDARD (4)	MEETS STANDARD (3)	APPROACHING STANDARD (2)	DOES NOT MEET STANDARD (1)
Integration of Course Concepts	Demonstrates exceptional understanding and insightful application of multiple course concepts. Integrates theory	Demonstrates solid understanding and appropriate application of key course concepts.	Demonstrates limited understanding or incomplete application of course concepts; connections between theory	Demonstrates minimal or incorrect understanding of course concepts; theory-practice connections absent.

	and practice seamlessly.		and experience are weak.	
Analysis of Internship Experience	Provides a thorough, nuanced analysis of learning from and contribution to organization goals. Shows deep reflection.	Provides clear analysis of personal learning and organization impact. Reflection is adequate and relevant.	Analysis of learning and organization impact is superficial or incomplete; reflection lacks depth.	Little or no analysis of personal learning or organization impact; reflection missing or off topic.
Intercultural Awareness & Positionality	Shows exceptional awareness of cultural dynamics, personal positionality, and professional engagement.	Shows good awareness of cultural dynamics and personal positionality; engagement is appropriate.	Shows limited awareness of cultural dynamics or positionality; engagement may be inconsistent.	Shows little awareness of cultural differences, personal positionality, or professional engagement.
Communicative Competence	Communicates very effectively in Spanish; language is accurate, contextually appropriate, and nuanced.	Communicates effectively in Spanish; minor errors do not impede understanding.	Communicates in Spanish with errors that occasionally impede understanding; limited contextual appropriateness.	Communication in Spanish is ineffective or inappropriate; comprehension is hindered.
Presentation Quality	Presentation is highly organized, clear, engaging, and exceeds expectations in format and creativity; time is well managed.	Presentation is organized and clear; meets expectations in format and time; generally engaging.	Presentation is somewhat disorganized or unclear; may not fully meet time or format requirements; limited engagement.	Presentation is disorganized, unclear, or incomplete; does not meet time or format requirements; not engaging.