

**Self-Awareness, Contemplation and Social Justice**  
**SRVCLRNG 192, Fall 2015**  
**IMPACT! Service-Learning Residential Academic Program**  
**Gorman Classroom | Mondays 2:30pm – 5:15pm**

**Instructor and Faculty Director of  
IMPACT!**

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**IMPACT! Teaching Assistants**

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*This is the first class of a two-semester program. The four credit fall course concentrates on exploring social justice issues and our personal social identities through a practice of self-awareness. In the spring course we continue our practice of awareness to explore our identities beyond our given ones, while focusing on issues, skills and tools of leadership.*

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**Course Description:**

This Fall Semester course explores social justice theory, drawing on historical movements for social change in the United States. IMPACT invites students to deepen their understanding of their own social identities in the context of the diverse society in which we live. SRVCLRNG 192 is a service-learning course. Students volunteer for at least 3 hours each week at a local community organization; in doing so students can directly relate their academic learning about social justice issues to their experience of being involved in a community organization. In addition, throughout the course students engage in mindfulness practice through a range of approaches. Mindfulness, or contemplative practice, invites students to be in the present moment and develop a practice of compassion for themselves and their extending communities.

This course satisfies a Social and Behavioral Sciences (SB) and a U.S. Diversity (U) General Education requirement. The purpose of the General Education curriculum is to provide an expansive educational experience that encourages students to engage in intellectual inquiry, develop the ability to think critically and creatively, apply learning to real-world contexts, demonstrate awareness of multiple perspectives, communicate effectively and persuasively and deepen their knowledge of self in relation to others. Through learning about social justice theory and issues of diversity, the course brings the lens of sociology, psychology, history, and the arts and sciences to a critical analysis of past, present, and changing U.S. culture. The integration of mindfulness practice, weekly service experiences, and attendance at local cultural venues complicates and nuances these issues as well as providing support for students as they explore their own identities within the context of a diverse culture. The intent of the curriculum is to extend beyond critical thinking and analysis and connect “the head and the heart”.

Some of the questions we will explore and examine are:

- What belief systems do you hold that motivate you in your actions?
- How does the knowledge of social justice theory (power, privilege and oppression) help you to understand the dynamics of culture and society and your role within it?
- How do you experience mindfulness and how does your practice influence your daily actions?
- How does your weekly service experience inform and connect with your contemplative practice and your deepening understanding of issues of social justice?

### **Course Objectives:**

After completing this course, you will be able to:

1. Have a deeper understanding of your core values in the context of social justice theory.
2. Identify various forms of power, privilege, and oppression that have existed in the United States throughout history and into present time.
3. Skillfully engage in reflective learning to explore and understand your service experiences
4. Connect the service experiences to academic and personal growth, community needs, and larger systemic contexts.
5. Critically analyze readings and engage in thoughtful dialogue about the content.
6. Make use of contemplative practice to deepen your awareness and discover connections.
7. To understand difference with compassion.
8. Contribute to and benefit from the IMPACT! living and learning community.

### **Textbooks:**

Giridharadas, A. (2014). *The True American: Murder and Mercy in Texas*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company

Zinn, H. (2002). *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Readings selected from Adams et al. *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (2013), will be available on E-reserves or moodle. Credentials to log into E-Reserves can be found on moodle.

All other course readings will be available on the MOODLE course page. Citations for these readings can be found at the end of this syllabus.

### **A Note about Readings**

For each of the reading assignments we recommend and request that students print out the reading material, rather than read it on screen. This way you will be able to underline, take notes for analysis and comprehension, note important themes, and bring the reading and thoughtful quotes to class. However if your learning is not detriment by note taking on a screen you are allowed to do so. See the Technology in the Classroom for further details.

Use your notes to document your understanding or exploration of the material as well as your reactions to the author's opinions, actions (or inactions), any questions you may have, any connections to previous readings/class conversations/ life events.

Ask What? So What? Now What? Look to the Formal Reading reaction prompt for other potential avenues of interpretation. You can then use these notes and direct quotes as a reference in class conversations.

### **Support Services:**

Students seeking support services for writing, time management, and other needs should never hesitate to speak with Katja, Courtney, and Jon directly, as well as with academic advisors. In addition, the university provides numerous support services for students. The Learning Commons, [www.umass.edu/learningcommons](http://www.umass.edu/learningcommons), in the library is one area in which you will find many resources for this course, including writing and research assistance. In addition, the Office of Disability Services, [www.umass.edu/disability](http://www.umass.edu/disability), works to provide accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

### **Role of IMPACT! Program Manager**

The Program Manager oversees administrative functions of the program and connects students to the service sites. He/she will be joining the IMPACT class whenever possible.

### **Role of Teaching Assistants**

The undergraduate teaching assistant, will engage in the classroom, support students in an academic capacity and provide administrative support for the course. Teaching Assistants will read and grade assignments and presentations along with the instructor.

### **Role of Peer Mentor**

The Peer Mentor will provide academic support to students within Gorman. The Peer Mentor can be found in the RASC on the first floor of Gorman. Hours will be posted in Gorman.

### **Technology and the Classroom:**

This course uses a Moodle page to disperse information about the class, course materials and Instructor correspondence. Additionally, Students should be using their UMASS email account to electronically communicate with the support staff and their service sites. If students are having trouble accessing either please see University OIT.

Cell Phones need to be off and away while in class. Laptops and Tablets may be used to take notes/access readings, however only use this if you can effectively learn this way. ([Many studies have shown](#) most students remember more when taking handwritten notes!) If the technology becomes a distraction during class the instructor holds the right to suspend this privilege.

**Service:**

***A note about the service hours requirement:*** IMPACT! students should plan to volunteer about 3 hours at their site a week. This sustained service aims to best support your chosen organizations to achieve their mission while allowing you to develop authentic reciprocal relationships. Your community service will be the heart of learning: aiding you to see and experience firsthand the ideas that you read about, write about, and talk about in class. You will be able to apply this learning through written reflections and in and out of class conversations.

As a program, we have worked extensively to identify community service opportunities that are a good fit for the Service, Contemplation and Social Justice focus of this course. You will get more information at the start of the semester on how to go about selecting your service placement. Details about the service sites can be found on the CESL webpage and in the IMPACT handbook. Hours will be recorded online on the [CESL IMPACT! Webpage](#).

**Attendance and Participation:**

Since our class meets once a week, attendance is *critical*. You are expected to attend each class and complete the day's reading and assignment before class. If you are absent, your participation will be missed, and the experience of that class cannot be recreated for you. Each unexcused absence reduces the final grade by **five points**. *Late arrivals and early departure count as half an absence.*

An absence may be excused if you have a severe illness or another extenuating circumstance. If you wish to have an absence excused, you must email a request *in advance* of the class meeting (if possible) to the instructor. In addition, we reserve the right to assign make-up work for absences.

Active participation is essential for success in the course and counts for 33 points of your grade. You participate by contributing your ideas, questions, and experiences to the conversation, by listening actively, and by facilitating the involvement of others. **In addition, your participation grade will encompass the learning and experience at your community service placement, including your ability to be at your service site for three hours every week.**

**Assignments:**

We expect all assignments to be turned in on time. The assignment will no longer be accepted *one week* after the original due date. Please contact the course instructor ahead of time so that we can find solutions or negotiate extensions if needed. Late assignments will result in point deductions.

Paper Citations must be done in APA format. As this course satisfies a Social and Behavioral Science requirement the formatting of assignments and research findings will appropriately follow the style of this field.

All assignments must include a thoughtful title, the student's name, and the due date. The body of the paper must be formatted with 1-inch margins and double-spaced size 12 font. The header

must include the current page number. For Reading Reactions and the Final Paper please include a cover page. Refer to the moodle document “Writing Formatting” for more specific instructions and examples.’

### **My Story Paper:**

4

### **Service Reflections:**

Length- 2 to 3 pages, double-spaced

The goal of these reflections is to help you process your service through writing and further the connection between your service work, readings, and class conversations.

Service Reflections are informal and personal. What is your personal learning in your service site and what connections are you able to make to the readings and class conversations? What questions are you left with? Be concrete, give examples, and describe your observations and involvement. In developing these reflections, be mindful that you may be entering a pre-established community with a culture to which you may not be accustomed. Use this tension as a tool for exploration and reflection.

Specific and relevant questions for any of the three service reflections are posted ahead on MOODLE. Be sure to check each assignment as the prompt changes throughout the semester.

### **Contemplative Reflections:**

Length- 2 to 3 pages, double-spaced

We will practice awareness as a means of gaining a deeper understanding of self: becoming an observer of our individual thought processes; while fostering the ability of being present in the moment, the group, and the world around us.

The reflections will be tailored around guiding questions posted on Moodle in advance. For example: How does mindfulness practice impact your experience inside and outside of class? How do you apply the contemplative practices?

### **Formal Reading Reactions:**

Length: 5 pages, double-spaced

Grading: 8 points total

- 4- Content,
- 3- Organization & Formatting
- 1- Citations

These assignments give you the opportunity to respond to readings. Carefully review your personal reading notes before choosing your topic and working on your outline. Demonstrate your critical thinking and understanding of the text and how the reading relates to our class conversations, your life and your work in your service site.

Read the text with an open mind AND an open heart. Use **quotes and examples** to substantiate your ideas and analysis.

#1 will cover the Social Justice Theory and *The True American*

#2 will cover Howard Zinn's *You Can't be Neutral on a Moving Train* as it intersects with Social Justice issues and possibly the *True American*.

Don't know where to start? Brainstorming question stems can be found on moodle.

Great papers often employ a What, So What, Now What format. [Check it out in this pdf](#),

### **In-Class Presentations**

Work as a team to gather up-to-date information on a chosen topic related to our course of study. These investigations provide a window into topics and help us understand the complexity of issues presented in the rest of the course.

As a Group:

- Research and gather up-to-date and reliable information about your topic
- Synthesize information into a logical, meaningful presentation 15 minutes in length
- Choose an appropriate presentation format (PowerPoint, Activity, Video discussion etc.)
- Create a Handout for the class to allow for interaction with the content you are presenting- include a bibliography
- Provide a Summary, bibliography, and a copy of your presentation to the Teaching Team.
- Send all materials to the Course Manager at least a day before for copying and distribution.

*Grading:*

15 points, Rubric can be found on Moodle- use of library time, Content, Format and Delivery of Presentation, Engagement with audience, Handout, Bibliography

**Final Paper:**

Length: 10 to 12 pages

Grading: 20 points

Content - 10

Organization (Cover Page, flow, mechanics- editing/grammar)– 7

Bibliography & Citations - 3

This paper is a synthesis of your first semester in IMPACT! and a bridge to your experience in the second semester.

The purpose of this paper is to make **connections** between your academic learning, your service experience and your contemplative practice. **Reflect** on what you have experienced in this program. **Look forward** to the next semester, what are your goals and hopes? As you do this, make explicit connections to course material, class conversations, class exercises, and even your thought development from previous papers- how have you changed? **Be specific.**

**You must have a minimum of five references or quotes from course readings for your paper.** You may use outside sources beyond the five references. Please remember to cite sources used (in APA), regardless of whether you use content verbatim from the source or paraphrase. A bibliography should be included.

Look back at the title of this course. Consider some of the following questions to begin writing your essay. You do not have to answer all questions, creativity is readily welcomed.

- **Contemplation: Living Together**
  - What value did you find in living together with other members of the IMPACT community?
  - What did you learn about yourself, your social and spiritual identity?
- **Social Justice: Learning Together**
  - What have you learned about yourself in relation to power, privilege and oppression?
  - What insight have you gained with your social identities?
- **Service: Making a Difference**
  - How has your service experience deepened your understanding of self, your organization, and the course material?
  - What have you been able to do—in community service, in community-building within IMPACT!, or in other ways—because you are part of this program?



**Grading:**

Grades will be assigned on a point system, using the following structure-

Participation	33 points
• Service Site Evaluation (13)	
• Active and Engaged in Class (20)	
Papers	32 points
• My Story (4 points)	
• Reading Reactions (2 x 8 points each)	
• Contemplative Papers (3 x 2 points each)	
• Service Reflections (3 x 2 points each)	
In-Class Presentation	15 points
• Handout/Bibliography	
• Presentation	
• Group Process	
Final Paper	20 points
• Outline	
• Content	
	<b>= 100 points</b>

A= 93-100

B+ = 87-89

C+ = 77-79

D+= 67-69

F = Don't go There

A-= 90-92

B = 83-86

C = 73-76

D = 60-66

B- = 80-82

C-= 70-72

**Academic Dishonesty:**

If the instructors suspect academic dishonesty, they will notify the student(s) and follow the procedure to report to the Academic Dishonesty Office without any exception. Students have the responsibility to be knowledgeable of the university's policies and should read the Code of Student Conduct, available through the Dean of Students Office and online:

[www.umass.edu/dean\\_students/codeofconduct](http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct).

**Events:**

IMPACT! students will be invited to numerous events throughout the semester. Some events are mandatory- these are listed on the class agenda. Some will be sponsored by IMPACT! staff and the Civic Engagement and Service-Learning office, while other events will be sponsored by The Residential Academic Programs office and the University. Students are encouraged to attend events (performances, discussions, movie nights, lectures, ect.) presented by the many cultural organizations on campus.

If students have a class conflict with an event scheduled for IMPACT!, they need to let the teaching team know as soon as possible. Otherwise, an absence from an event will be treated similarly to an absence from our regular class meetings.

## Course Bibliography

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