

Civic Leadership Institute

Civic Engagement & Contemporary Social Issues

Course Description:

News media and popular culture surround us with stories of violence, poverty, and urban decay. Political leaders exchange ideas about education, the economy, health care, and welfare reform. But what are all of these issues really about? What is life like for someone who is homeless or on welfare? Where have these problems come from? And most importantly, what can we do about them, as individual citizens and as a society? Civic Leadership Institute students, through an introductory course in *Civic Engagement & Contemporary Social Issues*, explore the complex challenges that affect our communities today, and are introduced to tools and strategies for community development and positive social change.

This innovative curriculum combines rigorous academic work with community service and experiential learning. Several times each week, students travel to dynamic urban neighborhoods throughout the local metropolitan area to engage in service-learning projects with respected local community organizations, and to visit with key community leaders and important institutions. In addition to the core curriculum, students have the opportunity to engage in focused explorations of social issues of their choosing, through the Special Topic Seminar series. Students also participate in an Evening Colloquium Series featuring outstanding guest speakers from a variety of fields, including political theorists, business leaders, local activists, and other people who are making an impact on their communities.

Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, CLI participants will:

- Be able to recognize **inequality and injustice** in the world and empathize with those affected
- Feel a sense of **empowerment** and a sense of **responsibility** to be active citizens
- Have developed better communication and critical thinking **skills**
- Be familiar with **theories and methods** of community development and social change throughout history
- Be able to apply an asset-based approach to **problem solving**
- Be able to identify **practical strategies** to begin to create both small-scale and large-scale change in their communities
- Understand how to engage in **civic leadership** – active participation in a group process that creates change for the common good

Methodology

Urban poverty in Chicago, Baltimore, or San Francisco is the lens through which course concepts are explored. These understandings are achieved through a methodology that integrates:

- challenging academic study
- meaningful volunteer service
- firsthand experience and interactions with community members and leaders
- in-class activities, exercises, and simulations
- self-reflection on one's own values, strengths, and skills
- an experience of the rewards and challenges of living in community

Resources and Materials

The primary text for this course is a course reader, which consists of a variety of articles by prominent scholars of sociology, political science, philosophy, and education, as well as historical documents and media coverage of current issues and events. This course reader will be supplemented with articles and resource materials selected by instructors.

Evaluation

Students are expected to attend and actively participate in all class meetings, and complete all readings, writing assignments, and group projects carefully and thoughtfully. Students will be evaluated based on participation in class and field experiences, individual work, and group projects. Rather than assign grades, our instructors write detailed evaluations providing feedback on each student's achievements in the course, and outlining areas for further growth.

Course Schedule

Week One

Date	Unit	Topic	Activities	Readings / Assignments
Sunday <i>evening</i>	1: Foundations	Introduction to class		
Monday <i>morning</i> <i>afternoon</i> <i>evening</i>		Introduction to community, social issues, asset-based problem solving Introduction to service Values exploration <i>Speaker:</i> Introduction to the city	Identify personal values	<i>Building Communities from the Inside Out</i> “What We Don’t Talk About When We Don’t Talk About Service” Portfolio: Brainstorm social issues important to you
Tuesday <i>morning</i> <i>afternoon</i> <i>evening</i>	2: Poverty & Injustice	Urban Poverty – individual and institutional causes	<i>Field Study:</i> Community Snapshot DVD: <i>The Corner</i> – selection from “DeAndre’s Blues”	<i>Working Poor</i> – “At the Edge of Poverty” <i>Blame Welfare</i> – “The State of Poverty” Portfolio: Select a focal issue important to you
Wednesday <i>morning</i> <i>afternoon</i> <i>evening</i>		Social Mobility & “The American Dream” Cycle of Poverty: root causes Living on Welfare Welfare-to-Work <i>Speaker:</i> Living in poverty	Cross the Line DVD: <i>30 Days</i> “Living On Minimum Wage” Welfare budgeting exercise Welfare Debate “Entering a Community”	“The High Cost of Being Poor” <i>Blame Welfare</i> - Intro Portfolio: Identify root causes of focal issue <i>Working Poor</i> – Debra <i>Blame Welfare</i>
Thursday <i>morning & afternoon</i> <i>evening</i>		Global perspective	<i>Field Study:</i> Urban Poverty	“Being Poor” “100 People”
Friday <i>morning</i> <i>afternoon</i>	3: Power & Privilege	Identity & Stereotypes Introduction to privilege <i>Special Topic Seminar #1</i>	Stereotypes Identity Cards	“Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”

Week Two

Date	Unit	Topic	Activities	Readings / Assignments
Sunday <i>evening</i>		Considering our privilege	Privilege Walk	
Monday <i>morning & afternoon</i> <i>evening</i>		Inequality & Justice	<i>Field Study:</i> Urban Poverty Four Corners	<i>Working Poor – “Dreams” There Are No Children Here</i>
Tuesday <i>morning</i> <i>afternoon</i> <i>evening</i>	4: Leadership	Power & Privilege Personal responsibility to act Introduction to civic leadership Asset-based approaches to leadership Stakeholders Visioning and goal-setting Group roles	StarPower True Colors Asset inventory Future Cover Stories Teambuilding activity	“The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” Portfolio: New insights on power and privilege <i>Exploring Leadership – The Changing Nature of Leadership,”</i> and “Interacting in Teams and Groups” Portfolio: Visioning and goal-setting around focal issue Portfolio: Stakeholder mapping
Wednesday <i>morning & afternoon</i> <i>evening</i>		<i>Speaker:</i> Politics	<i>Field Study:</i> Approach to Change	“Collected Writings on a Non-Violent Resistance” “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”
Thursday <i>morning</i> <i>afternoon</i> <i>evening</i>	5: Social Justice 6: Approaches to Change	What is the “common good”? What is “justice”? What is “social justice”? Societal institutions and how citizens can influence them Historic approaches to change: violent action, nonviolent action, political action, social movements/organizing, direct service, advocacy, & philanthropy <i>Special Topic Seminar #2</i>		“Selection from <i>The Republic</i> ” “The Singer Solution to World Poverty” Portfolio: Relate social justice to focal issue “Social Change Wheel” “198 Methods of Nonviolent Action” “Organizational Tactics” “Four Traditions of Philanthropy” Portfolio: Social Change Wheel for focal issue
Friday <i>morning & afternoon</i>			<i>Field Study:</i> Approach to Change	

