

Subject Description Form

Subject Code	COMP 3911
Subject Title	Service Learning and Civic Engagement in the Information Age
Credit Value	3
Level	3
Pre-requisite/ Co-requisite/ Exclusion	Nil
Objectives	<p>The objectives of this subject are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To introduce the concept and practice of learning through community service to our students. 2. To nurture a sense of civic responsibility and engagement in our students. 3. To acquaint students with significant issues of social needs, justice and ethics related to the information age, such as the concept of the information divide.
Intended Learning Outcomes	<p>Upon completion of subject, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Articulate the needs of the underprivileged in society, particularly in relation to information technology. b. Reflect on the relationship between (1) service learning & social engagement and (2) their own education and sense of civic responsibility. c. Develop and evaluate solutions to specific societal needs using information technology.
Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus	<p><i>Seminars and lectures</i></p> <p>The <i>seminars</i> portion of the course will cover main topics as described below, and are designed to educate the students on major issues relevant to the digital divide.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social engagement & service learning. What are some of the social issues that can be addressed with service learning? Why should social engagement be an objective of university education? What is Discipline specific service learning? How is it related to social engagement? What are the benefits to the recipients? To the providers? 2. Proper attitude of the service provider. What are some of the pitfalls and what can be done to prevent them? 3. The digital divide. Who are the ones that have, and the ones that do not? How does it come about? The global and the local issues. Impact of the current intellectual property laws. Impact of the digital divide on society: economical, cultural, political. 4. Possible solutions to the digital divide. Global and local solutions. Significant efforts such as the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC), open source software movement, Creative Commons, etc. Technology to empower and mobilize social justice.

	<p>5. Case studies of service learning – local and overseas.</p> <p>6. Ethical concerns relevant to service learning. Introduction to information ethics, privacy and security. Moral and ethical concerns specific to the project and beneficiaries.</p> <p>7. Specific historical, cultural, and political background for off-shore sites (e.g., mainland China, Cambodia), or targeted local communities (e.g., refugees, new immigrants from mainland China, ethnic minorities from South Asia).</p> <p>8. Project planning, health, safety and other issues relevant to service learning.</p> <p><i>Service Learning Projects</i> Students will propose and carry out service learning projects under the guidance of the project teaching team. These projects may be local in Hong Kong, in mainland China, or overseas.</p> <p>The nature of the projects may vary. They can involve the rendering of direct service to recipients, researching on issues of social justice and ethics, learning about the work of non-government organizations, development of practical solutions to problems of social justice, etc. In all cases, the students will be required to interact with the service recipients to understand their needs.</p>
<p>Teaching/Learning Methodology</p>	<p><i>Seminars</i></p> <p>The seminars are designed to introduce the students to the relevant issues. They also provide a forum for the students to discuss these issues. There will be opportunities for small group discussions, assignments, and presentations – to explore these issues in greater depth.</p> <p><i>Service Learning Projects</i></p> <p>The service learning projects will emphasize <i>hands-on</i> tasks. They will involve team as well as individual work. Students will be encouraged to research on specific problems. They will also be challenged to design and implement solutions, applying their knowledge in information technology to solving social problems. Students will be given strong support, either through the Office of Service Learning or through the department. They will be assisted in identifying collaborating NGOs or other organizations, the planning of projects, and their execution.</p> <p>Examples of projects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Local Teachingbased Projects.</i> In these projects, students will plan, coordinate and teach short courses on STEM (science, engineering, technology and mathematics)-related topics to ethnic minority children or refugees in Hong Kong. • <i>Developmentbased Projects.</i> In these projects, students will design and develop an IT solution for an NGO. They will be required to interact with their clients to get requirements, design and implement a solution, and train their client to use their system.

- *Offshore Projects.* These projects will be held overseas in rural areas or poverty-stricken regions. For logistical reasons, the execution phase for these projects will involve approximately one week of intensive frontline service. Examples might be planning, coordinating and teaching short courses on digital literacy to young people in Cambodia or ethnic minorities in China, or IT infrastructure installation for NGOs in third world countries.

The projects will involve around 40 hours of frontline service and will be designed to be comparable in nature and difficulty.

Some projects (such as some particularly challenging or off-shore projects) may necessitate specific selection requirements on participating students. The teaching team will make the final decisions on project allocation, but efforts will be made to accommodate student preferences on their choice of project.

Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes

Specific assessment methods/ tasks	% weighting	Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed		
		a	b	c
Class discussions, assignments, plans/ proposals for service.	30%	✓		✓
Performance in rendering service.	40%		✓	✓
Reflective journal/report.	30%		✓	✓
Total	100%			

The class discussions and assignments are designed to help the students to learn and to gauge the students' understanding of the issues discussed. The students will be asked to write proposals for the projects, as preparation for service as well as assessment of their understanding of social needs.

The students' attitude in the rendering of service, their degree of engagement with service recipients, their collaboration with other students, and relationship with collaborating NGOs are obviously indicators of their sense of civic responsibility.

Students' reflective journals on their experience, and reflective term reports testify to the students' reflection on their learning experience, and the breadth and depth of their learning.

Student study effort expected

Class Contact:	
Lectures and Workshops	28 hours
Other student study effort:	
Planning and preparation of project	57 hours
Rendering of service	40 hours
Reflection and review	10 hours
Total student study effort	135 hours

Reading list and references

1. Mark Warschauer, *Technology and Social Inclusion – Rethinking the Digital Divide*, The MIT Press, 2003.
2. Barbara Jacoby and Associates, *Civic Engagement in Higher Education*, Jossey-Bass, 2009.
3. Cathryn Berger Kaye, *The Complete Guide to Service Learning*, Free Spirit Publishing, 2004.
4. Anne Colby, Thomas Ehrlich, Elizabeth Beaumont, Jason Stephens, *Educating Citizens – Preparing America’s Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility*, Jossey-Bass, 2003.
5. Christine M. Cress, Peter J. Collier, Vicki L. Reitenauer and Associates, *Learning Through Serving – A Student Guidebook for Service-Learning Across the Disciplines*, Sterling, Virginia, 2005.
6. Dan Butin, *Service-Learning in Theory and Practice – The Future of Community Engagement in Higher Education*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
7. Grace Ngai, Stephen Chan & Vincent Ng. *Cambodia 2010: A Milestone for 15 Years of Service Learning*, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 2010.