**Syllabus NCLC 295: Leadership and Community Engagement**

Spring 2016

Fridays, 10:30-11:45pm, Robinson Hall B208

George Mason University

## Course Instructors

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**Note Classes will be split up on the following dates : 2/12, 3/18, 4/8**

**On these dates, NCLC 295 will be held in Robinson B208 and NCLC 395 will be held in Piedmont MPR.**

## Course Description

In this course, students will explore concepts of leadership, social justice and community engagement, with particular attention to: social change, effectiveness in groups, and personal leadership development.

## Course Goals

* Students will work collaboratively to learn about a social change issue and address it through community engagement strategies such as service or advocacy
* Students will reflect on the leadership and social change issues that arise from this work and continue to inform their own personal approach to these issues
* Students will have a supportive community in which to experiment with leadership approaches and explore their passions around social change.

## NCC Competencies

# Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is practice based on an informed understanding of communities and the roles and responsibilities of individuals within those communities. Students will:

* Develop the ability to examine contemporary issues and their historical contexts.
* Recognize and value multiple perspectives in civic life.
* Understand how actions are shaped by multiple forces, including values, and economic and social inequity.
* Make informed choices regarding personal community involvement, social justice issues and leadership roles.
* Work collaboratively with diverse partners to solve problems for a common good

**Communication**

Communication is the process of creating and sharing meaning through human interaction. A competent communicator will be able to:

* Speak, read, write and listen effectively, with attention to audience, purpose and context.
* Use appropriate language, nonverbal and visual symbols.
* Organize ideas and information strategically.
* Design, revise and produce work tailored to diverse audiences.

**Group Collaboration**

Group collaboration is the process of working toward a shared agenda and/or common purpose while capitalizing on the diversity within the group.  Effective group collaboration means that students should be able to:

* Create shared expectations and a common purpose.
* Understand and choose roles and tasks.
* Make decisions and track progress collaboratively.
* Facilitate constructive consensus-building, compromise and conflict.
* Integrate individual talents and strengths toward the accomplishment of goals and tasks.
* Be inclusive and value the diversity of the group.
* Demonstrate pro-social behaviors and emotions (e.g., compassion, joy, gratitude, cooperation).

## Principles Grounding an NCC Learning Community

A learning community differs from most other courses in several specific ways.  As YOU are an important part of creating a learning community, it is important that you understand their basic principles.  Learning communities emphasize:

* Valuing of multiple sources of knowledge
* Learning from experience and reflection
* Working collaboratively with others
* Integration of knowledge from multiple sources
* Self-directed learning facilitated by clearly articulated learning competencies
* Learning through evaluation and assessment

Commitment to Diversity:  New Century College, an intentionally inclusive community, promotes and maintains an equitable and just work and learning environment. We welcome and value individuals and their differences including race, economic status, gender expression and identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and disability.

As a member of this learning community, it is an expectation that you will help contribute to the creation of an open and welcoming learning environment. You are welcome to question and challenge, but with civility and respect for the variety of perspectives reflected here.

***Assignments***

*Please note all assignments and due dates are subject to revision by the instructor.*

**Reflection Papers:**

As part of this course, you will be required to write 2 brief papers/activities reflecting on your service experience. Prompts will be given prior to service experience. Activities may include additional forms of reflection.

**Blog Post: Each person will pick a date to write a short less than 1 page blog post for SAIL and the LLC Blog.** Can be about your service, experience in the LLC, retreats, programs you are a part of or a social issue that you are concerned about. Can be poetry, a synopsis of an article regarding a social issue etc.

**This I believe statement: (295 Only) Due April 8th**

You are to compose a 1-2 page personal essay describing an idea or principle you believe in that shapes your daily life. Your belief may not be unique to you, but the way you present it should be personal and individualized. You may begin with a larger, general belief, but you should narrow your belief down to one story that describes a particular life experience. Your audience should read your story and see through active description how your belief emerged from the experience. Answer these questions: What influences your decisions, your outlook, and your interactions with those around you? What principles guide your life? What significant event or person shaped a strong belief in you? Examples will be given in class but feel free to look through <http://thisibelieve.org/themes/> this website to hear more examples.

***Change Agent Interview:* Due April 29th**

Select a social issue of interest and identify individuals or organizations in the community who currently address that issue. These might be individuals who are leaders within student organizations, political organizations, local nonprofit groups, or activists who stage demonstrations or protests. Each student will arrange and conduct an interview with his or her targeted person (preferably in-person, although telephone interviews might be permissible in some cases;) and should address the following topics:

* Basic biographical information and information about the person and his or her organization (if applicable)
* Brief history or description of the social issue you are tackling and how she or he has been involved also include
  + Successes/Challenges
  + Ongoing Needs
  + Major forms of resistance
  + Suggestions for others interested in having an impact on the issue?
  + Resources recommended

Finally, students will then turn in a paper (2-3 pages) regarding their interview. The paper should be in essay form and should not simply be a transcript or recap of the interview. The paper should integrate the topics discussed during the interview, the class material, and in particular, emphasize strategies that college students (alone or in collaboration with others) could do to effect change on the issue discussed. In addition, students should share how this connects to their own passions for social change and visions for the future and how they themselves can become a change agent.

**Service:**

Volunteering 12 hours during the Spring semester, students will engage with the local community utilizing and reflecting upon what they are learning in class in their service experience. A commitment has been made to this community partner and students are expected to be present, positive and engaged during their service experience. You must commit to one community partner for your hours, track your hours online and regularly reflect on service experiences. You will be graded on your service journal.

**Active Engagement in this Learning Community and LLC Activities**

In a learning community, learning is understood to occur through active participation in classroom activities, small and large group discussion, and personal reflection upon experiences and readings. Effective participation involves active listening, honest but respectful dialogue, and comments that reflect thoughtfulness on ideas. Learning community participants are expected to arrive to class on time, prepared to engage in active learning by having read the assigned work. When you are unable to attend class, notifying the instructor in advance is appreciated. Documented reasons to miss class will be taken into consideration in calculating the final grade.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Assignment | Points | Total | 98 ‐ 100 = A+  93 ‐ 97 =A  90 ‐ 92 = A‐  87 ‐ 89 = B+  83 ‐ 86 = B  80 ‐ 82 = B‐  77 ‐ 79 =C+  70 ‐ 76 = C  67 ‐ 69 = C‐  60 ‐ 66 = D  Below 59 = F |
| Blog Post | 10 points each | 10 |
| Change Agent Interview |  | 15 |
| This I Believe |  | 10 |
| Active Engagement in Learning Community |  | 30 |
| Service/Reflections (at least 12 hours) |  | 30 |
| Total |  | 100 |  |

Should you have a concern about the grade you receive on a specific assignment you should contact the instructor within two weeks of receiving your grade for that assignment.

**Tentative Schedule**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Theme** | **Due** |
| 1/29 | Carrie Hutnick Speaker |  |
| 2/5 | Controversy with Civility |  |
| 2/12 | Separate Classes 295: Community Engagement |  |
| 2/19 | Decision Making Activity |  |
| 2/26 | 395 Teaches Class | **Strengthsquest results due** |
| 3/4 | Strengthsquest |  |
| **3/11** | **SPRING BREAK No Class** |  |
| 3/18 | Separate Classes 295: This I Believe |  |
| 3/25 | 395 Teaches Class |  |
| 4/1 | Community Organizing- Kalia Harris |  |
| 4/8 | Separate Classes 295-Culture | **This I Believe paper due** |
| 4/15 | 395 Teaches Class |  |
| 4/22 | Community Asset Maps |  |
| 4/29 | End of Year Celebration | **Change Agent Interview Paper Due** |

**Class Expectations and Policies**

Technology: As a learning community, our classes will be based on discussions and we will be learning from each other. Laptops, cell phones and mp3 players detract from this kind of learning environment. Unless you have a documented reason to use certain forms of technology during class time, web-enabled devices and phones should be silenced and put away.

Late Work: Assignments will be reduced by a letter grade for each day they are late. Late work may be accepted if a written medical excuse is provided, but generally, there will be no grace period for late work.

Professionalism**:** Since you will be representing George Mason University and the LCE LLC on and off campus, behaving as a professional is imperative. Students are expected to adhere to their experience learning site standards regarding appearance, conduct and confidentiality.

Mason E-mail**:** Because we meet just once a week, expect communication from the instructor and class members between class times via e-mail. In keeping with university policy, I will correspond only with your Mason email account.

NCC’s Commitment to Diversity: New Century College is an intentionally inclusive community that celebrates diversity and strives to have faculty, staff and students that reflect the diversity of our plural society. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, class, linguistic background, religion, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, or physical ability.

Religious or Cultural Observances: Some class times are in close proximity to religious or cultural observances.  If a class date or assignment creates a conflict, please let me know in advance so I can make appropriate arrangements.

The Honor Code and Academic Integrity: The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. This is especially true in New Century College. Mason has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. If you feel unusual pressure or anxiety about your grade in this or any other course, please talk with us or to a trusted friend or counselor to get your situation in perspective. The University provides a range of service to help with test anxiety, writing skills, study skills, and other related concerns.

Some projects are designed to be undertaken individually. For these projects, you may discuss your ideas with others or ask for feedback; however, it is not appropriate to give your paper to someone else to revise. You are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. If only your name appears on an assignment, your professor has the right to expect that you have done the work yourself, fully and independently.

As in most learning communities and in many other classes, your final integrated group project in this unit is designed to be completed by a study group. With collaborative work, names of all the participants should appear on the work. Over the course of the semester you may find that it is necessary for different group members to take the lead on various assignments leading up to the integrated final group project. However, the faculty do expect that all group members will contribute equally and that the pieces will be conceptually integrated in the final end product.

Using someone else’s words or ideas without giving them credit is plagiarism, a very serious offense. It is very important to understand how to prevent committing plagiarism when using material from a source. If you wish to quote verbatim, you must use the exact words (including punctuation) just as it appears in the original and you must use quotation marks and page number(s) in your citation. If you want to paraphrase ideas from a source, that is, convey the author’s ideas in your own words—you must still cite the source, using MLA or APA format.

The re-use of papers, presentations, etc., from one course in another course is not appropriate. In every NCC course, faculty expect that work that is submitted has been done only for that class. An exception is made for materials included within course and year-end portfolios.

**Student Support**

Office of Disability Services: If you have a learning difference which may influence your work in this class, please provide the form from the Disability Resource Center which details the accommodations you need to complete the course enjoyably and successfully. Faculty can only offer accommodations to students who have identified themselves to the Disability Resource Center. Contact information: SUB I Rm 211, (703) 993-4306, http//ods.gmu.edu.

Writing Resources: The University's Writing Center, offers free, expert tutoring to writers at all levels who want to improve their writing. Each individual session lasts for 45 minutes, and you should try to book an appointment in advance. Located in the Johnson Center room A114, writingcenter.gmu.edu. NCC’s online writing guide, is also a useful resource: <http://classweb.gmu.edu/nccwg/>

Student Technology Assistance and Resources (STAR) Center: This resource is available to assist you with questions about technology. Johnson Center 229, (703) 993-8990

Counseling Center: While coursework and academic expectations are stressful enough, many times personal events or circumstances can also affect your ability to handle the stress of college life. Please know excellent resources are available to you at the Counseling Center, SUB I, third floor, (703) 993-2380.