

Service Learning and the Immigrant Experience in Spain

(Fundación Ortega y Gasset, Toledo)

In this course, students will participate in several Toledo institutions related to the immigration phenomenon in Spain, collaborating directly either with the immigrant population or with the Spaniards who are working with them (each student's profile and availability will determine that student's placement). This ongoing exchange and collaboration will continue in the classroom, since the language and culture contents will be built by the students and teacher from readings, work experience, and constant debate. At the end of the course, a workshop day will be held to which collaborating institutions, students, and anyone from Toledo who wants to participate will be invited.

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE COURSE

1. The nature of this Service-Learning course:
 - a. A Service-Learning course is not an internship: you're not merely trying to improve your résumé working in a company, but serving the community. Also, in this particular case, there are other small differences (less important) between the internship in Toledo and this course:
 - i. 7 hours per week working in the internship course versus 3 hours in the SL course (as a consequence, more hours in the classroom for the case of the SL course, but the same number of contact hours altogether).
 - ii. A general perspective on Spanish society in the internship course versus a focus on immigration in the SL course.
 - iii. A final meeting-celebration to share what you have learned and help the community to raise public awareness about immigration issues in the case of the SL course.
 - b. A Service-Learning course is different from straight volunteering also. The community and you will experience together an exchange: You'll serve in order to learn now, and you will learn in order to serve now and in the future. Accordingly, you will find some differences between the particular volunteer offerings in Toledo and this SL course. The most important ones are:
 - i. Of course, you will receive credits for your SL course.
 - ii. It implies you will have to complete weekly assignments and other homework, like in any other class.
 - iii. The learning is as important as the service. Service is part of the course pedagogy, and the placements are designed as an additional window on the issues studied in the course, in this case immigration.
2. There's no reason to be worried about the first weeks working in Toledo: you will receive all the information you need to feel comfortable and confident, and you will have time to adapt to your new life before beginning to work (just attending classes).
3. There's no reason to be worried about interference between your working hours and your academic life: you won't take exams, and the SL course will be over before the other classes, so that you have time to prepare their final exams. In other words, it's more intense but shorter than other courses.
4. You must understand you will live a very particular situation.
 - a. The immigrant issue requires a very delicate and sensitive behavior.
 - b. When you work with immigrants in the US you can help them to integrate into a society whose language and parameter you can control. In Spain you will have to integrate yourself and try to understand Spanish society while you are trying to help others. That's why you have to understand that your first mission is helping Spaniards to help their immigrants, carrying out the work they consider you can be useful for. You'll have to listen, watch, feel, analyze what you experience, and be extremely respectful and flexible.
5. Some jobs will involve more office work than others, always in connection with immigration (although you will have the chance to listen to immigrants' "voice" on several occasions). Don't think those jobs are less interesting. Remember you don't know the Spaniards yet; working with them

will be a new experience for you too (maybe difficult at the beginning?), and you can be extremely useful organizing the dossiers about immigrants who need help or collaborating on a campaign to raise public awareness. Also, you have to reflect on your academic and personal skills in order to decide what your preferences are: maybe you're better researching than communicating, or you take your time when you face a new situation, or you are kind of shy, etc. Of course, the staff and the professor in Toledo will help you to take the final decision, but think about it in advance: help them to help you!

6. Sometimes, the Fundación Ortega y Gasset can adapt to the students' particular academic interests, but the organizations are working to help immigrants in real life, and you must adjust first and foremost to their needs. Remember you will have a busy schedule in Toledo, so sometimes you'll have to be flexible with the available options for your particular case.

THINGS WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOU

Please, answer these questions briefly in Spanish (don't worry, it's not an exam, but it will help us to know you better). Feel free to attach an additional sheet if you need more space.

1. Could you describe your Spanish language skills?
2. Have you ever volunteered? If the answer is yes, could you tell us some details about that experience?
3. Have you ever taken a Service-Learning course? If the answer is yes, could you tell us something about it?
4. What is your area of interest? (Your major, minor, your dreams about your future career, etc.)
5. Do you mind having office work? Do you prefer that? Do you definitely prefer not? Explain your answer.
6. Why have you decided to take this course?
7. Are you concerned about something in particular? Is there anything else you would like the staff and your teacher in Toledo to know about you?