

Community Health / Global Health Service Learning in the Dominican Republic Spring Break 2019 GINS _____	
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1. Course Description/ Overview

The Community Health / Global Health Service Learning in the Dominican Republic program provides participating students a unique opportunity to engage in education abroad activities in the Dominican Republic (“the DR”) designed to expand global public health understanding while providing meaningful service in targeted low income communities. This faculty-led experience is organized and implemented in conjunction with Community Service Alliance (CSA), a not-for-profit Dominican organization founded and run by a UAlbany School of Public Health alumnus/Department of Health Axelrod Scholar.

Through this program students will learn about and experience first-hand the history and culture of this island nation. They will also learn about the basic building blocks of any healthcare system and about health care delivery in the DR. In addition, course participants will gain a profound understanding of the major public health challenges in the DR through meetings with public health officials and local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to address them. Most importantly, participants will engage in service learning activities designed to help improve the health and quality of life of selected families living in the country’s rural poor “bataye communities” (former sugar plantation areas).

Note: While some knowledge of Spanish is helpful, there is no language requirement to participate. Students must be in good academic and judicial standing to apply; applications are welcome from students in all majors who have a completed at least one semester in college. A willingness to engage in physical labor is a must.

2. Course Competencies

The Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health (ASPPH) established the Global Health Competency Model for use in formal educational programs related to global health. Seven domains were selected for emphasis: (1) Capacity Strengthening; (2) Collaborating and Partnering; (3) Ethical Reasoning and Professional Practice; (4) Health Equity and Social Justice; (5) Program Management; (6) Socio-Cultural and Political Awareness; and (7) Strategic Analysis. For each domain, specific competencies were developed. It is anticipated that students completing this course will gain insight into the following specific competencies:

- 1.4 Develop strategies that strengthen community capabilities for overcoming barriers to health and wellbeing.
- 2.6 Exhibit interpersonal communication skills that demonstrate respect for other perspectives and cultures.
- 4.1. Apply social justice and human rights principles in public health policies and programs.
- 4.3. Critique policies with respect to impact on health equity and social justice.

3. Course Learning Objectives

The learning objectives for this course include ***the development and demonstration of*** the following:

- A basic understanding of the **building blocks of any national health care system (WHO)**;
- An understanding the structure of **the DR's health care system, and the role that international and local NGOs play in the health sector of the country**;
- An appreciation for the **cultural diversity of the country and how the DR's history, belief systems and values influence the country's approach to and attitudes about health care and health promotion**;
- An understanding that **global health cannot be separated from issues of human rights and social justice**; and
- An understanding of **the social determinants of health and key concepts of health disparities**.

4. Course Activities

The faculty-led program will include two or three days in the Dominican capital of Santo Domingo to gain an overview of the country's health sector and an orientation to its culture and history. During this portion of the program students will live in homestays arranged by CSA, providing a unique opportunity for them to gain a deeper understanding of and affinity for the Dominican people. The next four to five days of the program will be spent working on a number of service learning activities in rural communities near the city of El Seibo in the interior of the country. This is an area of sugar plantations and of the small communities, or "bateyes," where the workers, primarily those from Haiti and descendants of Haitians, live.

These service learning activities will focus on basic needs such as water, sanitation, nutrition, and youth empowerment. Previous projects have included installation and training on use of biosand water filtration systems, planting of community gardens and health education on improved nutrition, as well as the building of latrines in low-income communities. The final day will be spent relaxing on one of the country's beautiful beaches.

5. Course Requirements

As is outlined above, students will participate in a number of lectures, meetings, site visits, and field-based activities designed to provide first-hand knowledge of the DR's health care system and of the cultural and historical influences that have helped to shape it, while also providing meaningful service to families living in some of the country's poorest rural communities. In addition, students will be expected to read any articles, reports, websites, or other documents shared by the course instructor.

In order to receive a satisfactory grade, "S", for this course, the following must be completed.

Active Engagement and Participation: 50%

Course participants are expected to fully engage in all of the program's activities and their level of participation will be assessed. Students will spend anywhere from eight hours a day engaged in different course activities (a mix of lectures, meetings, site visits, and community-based project work) for a total of approximately 48 hours of service learning in the field. Their willingness to engage in at-times laborious tasks as assigned by service coordinators is crucial to the success of this program and to the group's collective learning.

A student's participation assessment score will also encompass evaluation of the following: respect for the program schedule/timeliness, professionalism, eagerness to learn, individual contributions to the group's learning through sharing personal experiences and questions, respect for fellow students and host-country counterparts, and engagement during daily/regular group debrief sessions.

Participation during all field-based activities will account for up to 50% of a student's ultimate course grade.

Reflective Journals: 25%

On a nightly basis while in the DR, students are expected to spend anywhere from thirty minutes to an hour writing reflective journal entries about their experiences, highlighting the specific service-based tasks and cultural activities they were exposed to and/or participated in on that particular day. The completion of these journal entries will serve as a catalyst for students' final essays to be written upon return to the University at Albany. Journals will not be evaluated for content but rather for completion and consistency.

One journal entry per day while abroad will contribute towards up to 25% of a student's ultimate course grade.

Final Reflective Essay: 25%

No later than two weeks after returning to Albany, students will be expected to submit a final reflective essay to be evaluated. This final essay is an opportunity for students to reflect on their experiences abroad. Students should specifically respond to the following questions:

- How has the experience in the DR changed you and/or affected your life?
- How have you impacted the organizations and the people you worked and/or lived with in Santo Domingo and in the "bateye" communities visited?
- What does it mean – to you – to have a global perspective?
- How has this experience changed your understanding of global health disparities and the commonly held belief that "health is a human right"?
- What does civic engagement/community service mean to you? Why is this important?
- What has this experience suggested to you about your strengths?
- How did the experience help you identify opportunities for personal and/or professional growth?

The content of students' reflective essays may include anecdotes and/or experiences from students' time spent engaged in program activities and in family home stays.

Minimum requirements for a satisfactory essay include:

- 4-6 pages answering a minimum of four of the seven questions outlined above
- Typewritten, double-spaced with 12 point Times New Roman font and one inch margins
- Thoroughly reviewed for grammatical, typographical and spelling errors

A student's Final Reflective Essay will account for up to 25% of their ultimate course grade.

6. Standards of Conduct

All students should be aware of the University at Albany's standards of conduct as described in the booklet entitled "Community Rights and Responsibilities." In addition to other standards, the standards related to academic dishonesty are defined as follows:

"Conduct including, but not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, multiple submission, forgery, sabotage, unauthorized collaboration, falsification, bribery, or the use of purchased research service reports without proper notation; and theft, damage, or misuse of library or computer resources. Attempts to commit such acts shall . . . constitute academic dishonesty. Students assume full responsibility for honesty in academic exercises" (p. 4). Appendix C of the document provides a complete definition of each type of misconduct as well as the penalties for violations of academic integrity (pp. 11 and 12).