

American Culture 305:

Community Service and Learning

Fall 2025
Thursday, 4:00-7:00 p.m., G160 Angell Hall

CONTACT INFORMATION

Instructor: Prof. Melissa Borja (she)
Email: mborja@umich.edu

Office: 3767 Haven Hall
Drop-in Hours: Thursday, 2-4 p.m.
Meeting ID for Zoom Office Hours: 934 1922 1555

Instructor: Prof. Roland Hwang (he)
Email: hwangr@umich.edu

Office: 3751 Haven Hall
Drop-In Hours: Wednesday, 12-1 p.m.
Meeting ID Zoom Office Hours: 916 1729 5409, PW
1817

COURSE DESCRIPTION

American Culture 305 is an upper-level three-credit course about the theory and practice of community service and social change. The course centers on an internship with a local community organization. In addition, once a week, students meet with instructors to learn about the fundamentals of working in a community organization and engaging in direct service, activism, advocacy, and organizing. In this course, students will develop professional skills in working with staff and clients in the field and will gain an understanding of the operational detail of a community organization and the impact of these institutions on the well-being of the community. Students will also develop knowledge and practical skills related to activism, organizing, and advocacy that are necessary for sustaining meaningful, long-term engagement in social change. These skills include the ability to reflect on personal identity and values, apply research and knowledge to community needs, and relate effectively to diverse people in the context of community organizations and movements for social change.

LEARNING GOALS AND ASSESSMENTS

Learning Goal	Assessments
1. Identity and Self-Reflection By the end of the course, students will know how to identify and articulate their personal interests, skills, knowledge, values, and capacity and connect them to their community activism, service, and political engagement. They will understand that all of these things are dynamic and require regular reflection.	A. At the beginning of the semester, students will write an activist autobiography, and upon the conclusion of the course, they will reflect on how their internship changed their self-understanding. B. During class discussion throughout the semester, students will reflect on their interests, identities, skills, knowledge, values, and capacities and how it relates to their community engagement and their role in social change.
2. Informed Activism By the end of the course, students will know how to conduct research that informs meaningful responses to a community problem.	A. Students will write a research brief about a specific community problem related to their internship. B. During class discussion throughout the semester, students will relate their academic research and reading to their practical experiences as interns in a community organization.

<p>3. Working in a Community Organization By the end of the course, students will have the skills to work in and make meaningful contributions to a community institution engaged in direct service, advocacy, activism, organizing, and/or other form of social change.</p>	<p>A. At the beginning of the semester, students will set specific goals with their supervisors and create an internship plan. B. At both the midpoint and the end of the semester, students and supervisors will provide feedback and reflection about the students' professional skills, contributions, and progress in the internship. C. At the end of the semester, students will give a brief presentation about their contributions to the community organization and their application of core skills. D. Students will demonstrate their skill at using storytelling in issue campaigns and communicating effectively with the public through a storytelling project that relates to an issue they are working on in their internship.</p>
<p>4. Building and Maintaining Relationships By the end of the course, students will know how to build and maintain relationships that allow them to identify shared interests, build a base, lead a team, and find partners for collaboration and coalition work.</p>	<p>A. Students will conduct a 1:1 with an individual related to their community internship and prepare a written reflection about this experience. B. During class discussion throughout the semester, students will reflect on their community relationships in the context of the internship. C. At both the midpoint and the end of the semester, students and supervisors will provide feedback and reflection on the students' ability to build and maintain relationships in the context of the internship.</p>

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

GRADING AND ASSESSMENTS

There are several components of the final grade, and passing this course involves successfully completing all assignments. The components of the final grade will be weighted as follows:

Written assignments - 25%

1. 500-word activist autobiography and in-class introduction - 5%
2. 1000-word research brief - 10%
3. 500-word reflection on a 1:1 – 5%
4. Storytelling project - 5%

Internship - 50%

1. Internship plan - 5%
2. Midterm evaluation - 15%
3. Final evaluation - 25%
4. 15-minute class presentation about internship - 5%

Class participation and citizenship - 25%

PARTICIPATION AND READING

The focus of this course is your community internship. However, like other American Culture courses, this course involves some reading, which we have chosen to introduce you to important concepts and skills; to contextualize

your internship experience; and to help you understand how diverse people have pursued social change and put their ideas, values, and strategies into practice. It is important that you come to class prepared, having read all assigned texts. We will post readings as PDFs or web links on the class Canvas site, and you are not required to purchase any textbooks.

It is vital that we establish a supportive community that can be a home base for all of you as you think critically about the complex problems we will discuss this semester. We will all get the most out of this class if every individual is fully present and authentically engaged. Thoughtful, respectful, and caring engagement in the readings, films, discussions, and activities will help us get to know one another better and give us all the chance to avail of our diverse ideas, experiences, wisdom, and expertise.

Ultimately, we are all responsible for creating an environment in which everyone can learn and feel enriched by our time together. With this collaboration as a goal, full participation means that all of us make the effort to do the following:

1. To share our own thoughts, reflections, and questions about the course topics;
2. To listen to one another and create space for others to share;
3. To speak and behave respectfully toward everyone who enters our learning environment;
4. To prepare for each class session by completing all assigned readings and other assignments;
5. To engage authentically in the assignments and activities we do in class;
6. To allow our fellow learners to avail themselves of our expertise;
7. To ask for help when it is needed and encourage others to do the same; and
8. To arrive on time to class and be in attendance for each session.

During and at the end of the semester, we will give you an opportunity to reflect on these eight aspects of participation: presence, preparation, listening, sharing thoughts and ideas, behaving respectfully, reaching out for help, sharing expertise, and authentic engagement.

We welcome your constructive feedback along the way and seek to be flexible guides, mentors, and facilitators. And, like you, we look forward to learning much in our collective space.

Please exchange contact information with at least 2-3 other members of the class so that you can reach out to your peers to catch you up in the event that you miss a class.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

CITATIONS AND PLAGIARISM

For all written assignments, please cite your sources properly, using MLA, Chicago Manual of Style, or Turabian formats. Plagiarism on any assignment will result in a failing grade for that assignment and the possibility of further disciplinary action. Please take time to review the university's standards and policies on academic integrity: <https://lsa.umich.edu/lsa/academics/academic-integrity.html>. The University Library and the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching has developed useful resources to guide students in avoiding plagiarism and putting ideals of academic integrity into practice: <https://www.lib.umich.edu/academic-integrity/resources-students>. If you have any questions, please discuss your concerns with the professor.

The use of ChatGPT and other generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) programs has become more prevalent globally. Our aim is to help you develop writing skills that allow you to communicate powerfully and effectively. For this reason, we want to see what your current writing and research skills are and work with you to improve and develop these. GenAI can be a useful tool but is not a replacement for your personal skillset and your ideas. You are responsible for all content (ideas, facts, citations) that appears in the work you submit for our class, however the work is generated. We highly discourage the uncritical use of GenAI, which can be very detrimental, as GenAI-

produced content can include errors and fabricated information. The uncritical use of GenAI without attribution can be a violation of academic integrity and does not excuse you from inaccuracies in your work.

SUBMITTING WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Please submit written assignments on Canvas by 4 p.m. on the due date. To help us keep track of everybody's contributions, please label your file with your last name, first initial, and the assignment (e.g., "LeeM – Final Essay").

LATE POLICY

Please be timely in submitting assignments. We understand that unexpected events—for example, a hospitalization or the absence of an individual with whom a 1:1 conversation is scheduled—and that these events may make it difficult for you to complete assignments. In those situations, please talk to the instructors directly so that we can work together to find a compassionate solution. Consistently submitting assignments past their due date may result in deductions in the class participation and citizenship grade.

WRITING ASSISTANCE

If you seek extra support in your writing assignments, we encourage you to meet with us to discuss your arguments, research approaches, sources, and outlines. In addition, we encourage you to share drafts of writing assignments with peers and to avail of the resources at the Sweetland Center for Writing: <https://lsa.umich.edu/sweetland/>.

EVALUATING WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

We will evaluate all written assignments with a rubric, which we will discuss during class and make available to you well before the assignments are due. If you wish to appeal a grade for a particular assignment, you may request that the assignment be regraded. Should you pursue this option, you accept the possibility that the second, final grade may be lower than the original.

CLASS POLICIES

ATTENDANCE

Our time together in class is valuable, and for this simple reason, please make every effort to attend each class in person. If you expect to miss class for any reason, please communicate with us to arrange for reasonable accommodations. Given the ongoing state of the pandemic, we urge you to stay home when you are sick.

The internships will have their own expectations for attendance. Please work out those expectations at the start of the semester and adhere to them throughout your internship.

ELECTRONICS

Out of respect to our class community and to encourage you to be fully present for our time together, we ask that you limit cell phone use and texting when class is in session. You may use laptop computers or tablet devices but for class-related work only. Please minimize computer and tablet use during the discussion segment of class. Students are not permitted to record the class without the permission of the professor.

The internships will have their own expectations about electronic devices, especially if privacy concerns are involved. Please work out those expectations at the start of the semester and adhere to them throughout your internship.

COMMUNICATION

Assignments, readings, useful websites, and other material will be available electronically on the course page on Canvas. Please be sure to check Canvas regularly, as well as the email account to which Canvas messages are sent. Many important communications are sent through Canvas and University of Michigan email accounts, so it is vital that you use these systems. If there are any difficulties with receiving email or messages sent via Canvas, please address these issues within the first week of class.

In all forms of communication, whether it is email or spoken communication, we ask that demonstrate respect, professionalism, and care.

The internships will have their own expectations about communication. Please work out those expectations at the start of the semester and adhere to them throughout your internship.

DROP-IN HOURS (OFFICE HOURS)

Drop-in hours, otherwise known as office hours, provide an excellent opportunity for you to ask questions and understand course material in greater depth, receive help on writing assignments, get valuable mentoring, and simply have pleasant conversations and build better relationships with your professors. If you are unable to visit our drop-in hours during the weekly scheduled meetings, please do not hesitate to contact us to schedule an appointment to meet at another time.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

The University of Michigan community functions best when its members treat one another with honesty, fairness, respect, and trust. The college promotes the assumption of personal responsibility and integrity, and prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty and misconduct. All cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the LSA Office of the Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Education. Being found responsible for academic misconduct will usually result in a grade sanction, in addition to any sanction from the college. For more information, including examples of behaviors that are considered academic misconduct and potential sanctions, please see lsa.umich.edu/lsa/academics/academic-integrity.html.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The University of Michigan recognizes disability as an integral part of diversity and is committed to creating an inclusive and equitable educational environment for students with disabilities. Students who are experiencing a disability-related barrier should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (<https://ssd.umich.edu/>; 734-763-3000 or ssdoffice@umich.edu). For students who are connected with SSD, accommodation requests can be made in Accommodate. If you have any questions or concerns please contact your SSD Coordinator or visit SSD's Current Student webpage. SSD considers aspects of the course design, course learning objects and the individual academic and course barriers experienced by the student. Further conversation with SSD, instructors, and the student may be warranted to ensure an accessible course experience.

STUDENT SEXUAL MISCONDUCT POLICY

Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, which includes sexual misconduct — including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We understand that sexual violence can undermine students' academic success and we encourage anyone dealing with sexual misconduct to talk to someone about their experience, so they can get the support they need. Confidential support and academic advocacy can be found with the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC) on their 24-hour crisis line, 734.936.3333 and at sapac.umich.edu.

Alleged violations can be non-confidentially reported to the Equity, Civil Rights, and Title IX Office (ECRT) at institutional.equity@umich.edu

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

University Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressures and challenges associated with relationships, mental health, alcohol or other drugs, identities, finances, etc. If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help is a courageous thing to do for yourself and those who care about you. If the source of your stressors is academic, please contact me so that we can find solutions together. For personal concerns, U-M offers a variety of resources, many which are listed on the [Resources for Student Well-being](#) webpage. You can also search for additional well-being resources on that website.

If you face challenges securing food or housing and believe this may affect your performance in the course, we urge you to contact the Dean of Students for support. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to talk with us, and we will do our best to connect you with the appropriate student support services.

COVID PROTOCOLS

Class meetings will follow all of the Covid-related protocols set by the University of Michigan. These protocols may include an indoor mask mandate, which requires “a face covering that covers the mouth and nose.” In addition, as part of the College of Literature, Science, and Arts (LSA), our course is committed to delivering our educational mission while aiming to protect the health and safety of the community, which includes minimizing the spread of COVID-19. Our entire LSA community is responsible for protecting the collective health of all members by being mindful and respectful in carrying out the guidelines laid out in our Wolverine Culture of Care and the University’s Face Covering Policy for COVID-19. Individuals seeking to request an accommodation related to the face covering requirement under the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact the Office for Institutional Equity.

In our classrooms all students are expected to adhere to the required safety measures and guidelines of the State of Michigan and the University of Michigan. These campus requirements may include wearing a face covering (ideally a highly protective one like an N95) that covers the mouth and nose in all classrooms, not coming to class when ill or in quarantine, completing the ResponsiBlue screening checks, getting vaccinated and boosted, and seeking testing if symptomatic at University Health Services. Full details about these university policies are available at <https://campusblueprint.umich.edu/>.

Students who do not adhere to these safety measures while in a face-to-face class setting, and do not have an approved exception or accommodation, may be asked to disenroll from the class. If you do have an approved exception or accommodation, please contact me ASAP.

If we are operating under an indoor mask mandate, please do not eat or drink during the class.

MAJORING OR MINORING IN AMERICAN CULTURE AND ETHNIC STUDIES

The American Culture Department is home to 2 majors and 5 minors in American Culture and Ethnic Studies, as well as a new Ethnic Studies Sub-Major plan (<https://lsa.umich.edu/ac/undergraduates/majors-minors/american-culture-major.html>). American Culture courses at the 200+ level, including this course, can be used towards these majors and minors, and our programs are open to students across the University of Michigan. If you are interested in learning more about our degree offerings, you can make an appointment with a departmental advisor at <https://lsa.umich.edu/ac/undergraduates/advising.html>.

NOTE: THE SCHEDULE OF READINGS, TOPICS, AND ASSIGNMENTS MAY CHANGE THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER, AS CIRCUMSTANCES WARRANT.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Date	Theme and Learning Objectives	Readings	Guest Speaker or Film	Assessment Due
August 28	Getting Oriented	Community organizations overview Bobo et al, "Fundamentals of Direct Action Organizing," <i>Organizing for Social Change, 4th Edition</i> Kaba, "We Can Only Survive Together," <i>Let This Radicalize You</i> Garza, "The Meaning of Movement," <i>The Purpose of Power</i>	None	
September 4	Connecting Identity with Activism and Organizing	Garza, "Where I'm From" and "The Power of Identity Politics," <i>The Purpose of Power</i> Hayes, " Reclaiming Possibility: A Rant Against Despair ," <i>Truthout</i> Wong, "First Person Political," <i>Year of the Tiger</i>	Guest speaker: TBD	Due: Internship applications; we will inform students of their placement by Friday Due: 500-1000-word activist autobiography + a short two-minute self-introduction to present to the class
September 11	Finding a Role in the Movement	Goodson and Iyer, " What's Your Role in Social Change? " <i>Liminal Podcast</i> Iyer, " The Social Change Ecosystem Map "	Film: <i>American Revolutionary</i>	Internships begin this week.
September 18	Learning about Detroit	Readings about Detroit	Film: <i>Hamtramck USA</i>	Due: Internship plan
September 25	Connecting Scholarship with Social Change	Umemoto, "Ho'opono Mamo and Restorative Practices," <i>Contemporary Asian American Activism</i>	Guest Speaker, TBD	

		<p>Hsieh, "Examining Racism and Firearm-Related Risks among Asian Americans in the United States During the COVID-19 Pandemic"</p> <p>Hsieh, "Firearm Injuries Are a Critical Driver of Health Disparities in the United States"</p>		
October 2	Core Skills: Building a Base	<p>Boba et al, "Recruiting," <i>Organizing for Social Change</i></p> <p>Garza, "No Base, No Movement," <i>The Purpose of Power</i></p> <p>Cabande and Nasol, "The Streets of SOMA," <i>Contemporary Asian American Activism</i></p> <p>Hayes and Kaba, "Refusing to Abandon," <i>Let This Radicalize You</i></p>	No speaker; in-class 1:1s	
October 9	Core Skills: Political Education	<p>Fu, "Political Education as Revolutionary Praxis," <i>Contemporary Asian American Activism</i></p> <p>Garza, "Political Education and Common Sense," <i>The Purpose of Power</i></p> <p>Maira, "We Ain't Missing"</p>	Film: <i>Who Killed Vincent Chin</i>	<p>Due: 1000-word research brief about a community problem related to class internship</p> <p>Note: Brief should include citations to academic research</p>
October 16	Core Skills: Crafting a Strategy	<p>Bobo et al, "Developing a Strategy" and "A Guide to Tactics," <i>Organizing for Social Change</i>, 4th Edition</p> <p>Ayers, "Balancing Urgency and Patience When the World Is Burning All Around Us"</p>	Guest speaker: TBD	<p>Due: Midterm evaluations from both agencies and students</p> <p>Note: evaluation will include self-reflection on how students have changed as activists and how they are maintaining good community relationships</p>
October 23	Core Skills: Storytelling	Zia, "Detroit Blues," <i>Asian American Studies Now</i>	Guest Speaker: Helen Zia	Due: 500-word reflection about a 1:1 with a member of your

		<p>Antonio, "Bayan USA," <i>Contemporary Asian American Activism</i></p> <p>Hayes and Kaba, "Beyond Alarm, Toward Action," <i>Let This Radicalize You</i></p> <p>Lee, "Organizing Wherever Your Feet Land," <i>Contemporary Asian American Activism</i></p>		community organization
October 30	Core Skills: Communicating Across Differences	Readings, TBD	Film: <i>Purple</i>	
November 6	Core Skills: Working Across Differences	<p>Bobo et al, "Building and Joining Coalitions," <i>Organizing for Social Change, 4th Edition</i></p> <p>Fujino, "Drivers on the Frontlines," <i>Contemporary Asian American Activism</i></p> <p>Alicia Garza, "Unity and Solidarity," <i>The Purpose of Power</i></p> <p>Rodriguez and Jopanda, "Pete Wilson Trying to See Us All Broke," <i>Contemporary Asian American Activism</i></p>	Guest speaker: TBD	<p>Due: storytelling & political education project related to your chosen community problem</p> <p>Note: this project should present the material in your research brief and project proposal in an engaging, publicly accessible way and can take a variety of forms - an op-ed, an Instagram carousel, a TikTok video.</p>
November 13	Core Skills: Countering Disinformation and Misinformation	Readings, TBD		
November 20	Core Skills: Assessing and Adapting	<p>Hayes and Kaba, "Don't Pedestal Organizers," and "Organizing Isn't Matchmaking," <i>Let this Radicalize You</i></p> <p>Zheng, "Prison to Leadership Pipeline," <i>Contemporary Asian</i></p>	Guest speaker: Eladio Nino	

		<i>American Activism</i>		
December 4	Individual presentations	None	None	<p>Due: 15-minute class presentation on internship project</p> <p>Note: presentation should be 10 minutes long with slides, like a Ted Talk</p> <p>This is the last week of the internship.</p>
December 11 - no class, final exam period	No class		None	<p>Due: Final evaluations from both agencies and students</p> <p>Note: evaluation will include self-reflection on how students have changed as activists and how they are maintaining good community relationships</p>