Environmental Nonprofit and Volunteer Management
ENVS 5000 – Spring 2020

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Who should take this course?
ENVS 5000 is required for Environmental Studies and Recreation Resource Management majors, but can be useful for anyone interested in nonprofits as a career or topic. It’s also a Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) course that can be used to meet a requirement for USU’s Community-Engaged Scholar program (https://cel.usu.edu/students/scholars).

Why require a course on nonprofit and volunteer management?
Nonprofit groups and volunteer assistance are increasingly important in conservation. Nonprofits may soon have more human-environment job openings than state or federal agencies. And if you do work for a government agency, you’re likely to rely on volunteers to accomplish some of your goals. This course prepares you to work with nonprofit and voluntary organizations in support of environmental and recreation goals.

Are there additional costs beyond tuition?
There are no required texts for this class, but we will use an online discussion platform called Packback that costs $25/semester. In addition, the university has just instituted a $15 per credit course fee all online courses to sustain current digital technologies and support services required for engaging and effective online learning.

How will the course be taught?
The biggest benefit of an online course is flexibility – you work whenever is most convenient. However, it’s easy to fall behind in a class you don’t have to show up for. To help you avoid that, something will be due each week – a discussion post, a progress report, and/or a short homework assignment. I’ll offer one or two video-captured lectures each week, sometimes there are assigned readings, and you’ll engage in frequent discussions.

However, the most important part of the course will require you to work on your own. You will volunteer with an actual nonprofit organization of your choice, reporting regularly about your experiences. I’ve tried to keep the workload as small as possible while ensuring that you learn essential concepts, but depending on your nonprofit’s needs, there may be times when you’ll spend a lot of time volunteering. I know many of you are balancing school, work, and family responsibilities, and volunteering may seem like a lot to ask. However, I also know from 10+ years of teaching this course that you can make this work if you choose your organization carefully and work with them to find the right service to fit your life as well as their needs.

I will not set a minimum number of hours that you must volunteer. What I ask is that your volunteer work is meaningful to the organization. Some groups may need you a few hours each week; others may need you for an event or task that will a lot of effort over a shorter
period of time. You will be required to log your hours using a web-based platform called AggieSync, because USU must track its Community-Engaged Learning activities and report them for certification purposes. Instructions on using AggieSync will be part of your Week 3 activities. At the end of the semester USU’s Center for Community Engagement will ask you to complete an evaluation – in addition to the regular IDEA course evaluations – to help them assess their overall community engagement program.

What will I expect of you?
Basic expectations of the course are:

- **Service**: You will be a “participant-observer” in a nonprofit organization **of your choosing**, doing volunteer service that fits your interests and/or schedule. You’ll need to choose quickly, but there are many options: Cache County alone has more than 300 nonprofits registered with the National Center for Charitable Statistics.

- **Communication**: Sharing your experiences and ideas is critical to the collaborative nature of this course. There will be many opportunities in this course to interact with me and with each other. Writing assignments will be due roughly every other week, and PackBack discussions in weeks 2-13. At the end of the course I’ll give you a chance to get feedback from colleagues about your final project reports.

- **Responsibility**: You will be representing yourself and the university as you work with your NGO. It is your responsibility to understand and abide by the rules and policies of both the university and the NGO. If there are occasions where you feel uncomfortable or unsafe in your surroundings, contact the appropriate official in the NGO and your instructors.

How will I assess your learning?
Your grade will be based on the following:

- Engagement (service, participation, responsibility) 20%
- Discussions (via PackBack Questions) 15%
- Video uploads 5%
- Biweekly writing assignments 30%
- Final report 30%

Grades will be assigned on a numerical basis. To convert numerical grades to letter grades I’ll use the standard USU formula: A=100% to 93%; A- < 93% to 90%; B+ < 90% to 87%; B < 87% to 83%; B- < 83% to 80%; C+ < 80% to 77%; C < 77% to 73%; C- < 73% to 70%; D+ < 70% to 67%; D < 67% to 60%; and F < 60% to 0%.

Assignments for each week should be completed by midnight on Sunday. The only exception is the final paper, which is due **Friday, April 24**, also at midnight. Late submissions of writing assignments will be accepted, but you will lose 10% of your grade on that assignment for every day it’s overdue (starting 1 minute after the submission deadline). Late participation in discussions is not allowed, so it’s important to join in every discussion during the week it’s scheduled to occur.
About the Discussions

Packback Questions is an online discussion platform powered by artificial intelligence, designed to encourage curiosity and increase critical thinking & writing skills. On Packback, you’ll be encouraged & rewarded for asking complex questions about how what we’re studying relates to the real world.

- **How to Register on Packback:**
  
  If you were on the original roster for this course, your account has already been created by Packback & added to the correct community.

  1. **Search** your inbox for an email from holla@packback.co with the subject line “Finish registration for Instructor Brunson’s course.” This may be hiding in spam, so search thoroughly!
  2. **Click** “set account password” to get started! (If you already have a Packback account, just log in)
  3. Once you’re logged in, **click “join a community”**. When this course’s community appears, click “join community”
  4. **Input payment information** & follow the prompts to complete checkout.
  5. Enter the community & start asking questions!

  If you did not receive a welcome email, head to packback.co, create an account (use your school email!), and find our community with the community look-up key: **4fd73729-0356-48c4-a92a-6d4ed7f3239f** (Note: this is not a payment or free access code!)

- **Packback Posting Requirements:**
  
  Every week, you must **ask 1 Question and post 2 Responses** by **Sunday at 11:59 pm**. On Packback you can’t post early or late, you must post within the designated posting interval.

- **Packback Grading:**
  
  Packback is **15%** of the overall course grade.

**Note:** Packback utilizes Artificial Intelligence that will moderate (remove) posts if they don’t meet the Community Guidelines. If your post is moderated, you will receive a coaching email, prompting you to edit & re-submit for credit. **However,** it can take up to 24 hours for the Packback team to moderate a post and send a coaching email. This is why it is important that you complete your Packback questions and responses far before the deadline!

If you have ANY questions or concerns regarding Packback registration or throughout the semester, please contact the customer support team at holla@packback.co!

Packback FAQ ◆ Coaching & Question Tutorial Video ◆ Curiosity Score FAQ ◆ Terms of Use
Schedule of Activities and Assignments

Week 1 (Jan. 6-12)
Topics: Introduction to course topic, expectations, methods, and instructor.
        Getting started: finding the right organization; how to introduce yourself to
        a prospective partner
Readings: Introductory course materials
Assignments: Use the media tool in Canvas to record and upload to Discussions a brief
            introduction of yourself

Week 2 (Jan. 13-19)
Topics: Introduction to the “citizen sector”
Readings: “Defining and Scrutinizing the Nonprofit Sector”
Assignments: Writing assignment – progress and perspective
             Packback discussion

Week 3 (Jan. 20-26)
Topic: Social and environmental entrepreneurship
Readings: “Defining Social Entrepreneurship”
Assignments: Packback discussion
             Get started in AggieSync

Week 4 (Jan. 27-Feb. 2)
Topic: Starting a nonprofit organization
       Crafting an effective mission statement
       Mentorship
Readings: None
Assignments: Writing assignment - mission statement exercise
             Packback discussion

Week 5 (Feb. 3-9)
Topic: Planning and goal-setting
      Staffing a nonprofit: paid staff, boards of directors, and volunteers
Reading: “Wanted: Strong Capable Nonprofit Boards”
Assignment: Packback discussion

Week 6 (Feb. 10-16)
Topic: Volunteers: The lifeblood of every nonprofit
Reading: “Working with Volunteers”
Assignments: Writing assignment - second progress report
             Packback discussion

Week 7 (Feb. 17-23)
Topic: Why people volunteer, and what it means for natural resource managers
Reading: “Volunteering to Manage Rangeland Weeds”
Assignments: Packback discussion
Week 8 (Feb. 24-March 1)
Topic: Citizen science: A special form of volunteering
Reading: “Bridging the Nature Gap: Can Citizen Science Reverse the Extinction of Experience?
Browse this website: https://www.citizenscience.gov/
Assignments: Writing assignment – citizen science opportunities in nonprofits and agencies
Packback discussion

Spring Break (March 2-8)

Week 9 (March 9-15)
Topic: Finding and managing money: Fundraising and tax obligations
Reading: None
Assignment: Packback discussion

Week 10 (March 16-22)
Topic: Marketing an organization; website design and assessment
Reading: “World Vision Tinkers with its 70-Year-Old Child Sponsorship Model”
Assignments: Writing assignment – third progress report
Packback discussion

Week 11 (March 23-29)
Topic: Evaluation and transparency; mission vs. leader focus
Reading: Charity Ratings Compared
Assignments: Writing assignment – evaluating your nonprofit
Packback discussion

Week 12 (March 30-April 5)
Topic: Ethical and humanitarian considerations
Reading: “The Moral Dilemma of Volunteer Tourism”
Assignment: Packback discussion

Week 13 (April 6-12)
Topic: When nonprofits get into trouble
Reading: ”Ten Ways to Lose Tax-Exempt Status”
Assignment: Packback discussion

Weeks 14-15 (April 13-21)
Topic: Sharing and reflection
Reading: None
Assignments: (Optional) Share your ideas and questions with others
Your final project report is due no later than 11:59 pm, Friday, April 24