

# Overview of Service Learning at Eastern University

What is service learning?

*Through Eastern University's service learning program our students **seek to address issues of systemic injustice** such as poverty, hunger or food insecurity, homelessness or a lack of stable housing and education inequality **in partnership** with local nonprofit agencies and **in conversation** with their professors and peers.*

Service learning (SL) is the field study (lab or practicum) component of INST 150: Introduction to Faith, Reason, and Justice. Service learning integrates Eastern's core values (faith, reason, and justice) through active learning in the community. Twenty hours of service constitutes 20% of your INST 150 grade. Reflection assignments and a paper add 15% for a total of over one-third of your grade.

Each year first semester Eastern students serve over 7,000 hours in communities of need in the greater Philadelphia region.

Service learning is:

- focused on a social need/justice issue (e.g. poverty, educational inequality, hunger, homelessness) in marginalized areas or vulnerable populations
- service in the local community in a cross-cultural experience
- building relationships by serving over time at a single site
- linked with academic study (INST 150)

Service learning is NOT:

- playing the piano at church or working with the youth group
- tutoring another Eastern student
- painting a professor's office or working on campus
- the same as Federal Work Study community service

Service learning choices:

You can complete your service learning in one of two ways:

1. **Take Eastern transportation:** choose a site that has transportation provided at a set time and day of the week.
  - a. Pros: a regular schedule is already set for you and you can get to know others riding in the van
  - b. Cons: popular sites and times will fill up quickly, less flexibility in schedule

2. **Own Hours**: ONLY choose this site if you have a car or have pre-arranged a ride with someone going to the same site. Encouraged if you have a car or can get a ride. Provide your own transportation or get a ride and set up your own regular, weekly service hours at one of the available Own Hours options.
  - a. Strongly recommended if you have a car on campus or commute. There aren't enough van spots for everyone and van trips to popular sites at popular times (evenings and weekends) fill up quickly.
  - b. Carpool with others in your INST 150 class or residence hall.
  - c. Pros: flexibility and convenience. Gas cards are available to offset expenses. This is an excellent option for commuters who can pick something near home from the approved list (or under extreme circumstances, petition for approval of a different site). You can finish your hours at your own pace, preferably early in the semester and avoid the frantic busyness of the end of the semester.
  - d. Cons: you must be disciplined to start and continue on your own.

Questions? FIRST, ask your TA, if they cannot answer it for you THEN email Megan Acedo, Coordinator of Student Ministries and Service Learning at [macedo@eastern.edu](mailto:macedo@eastern.edu)

# Service Learning FAQs

[Office of Faith & Practice](#), Walton 1A, 610.341.1830  
[serve.eastern.edu](http://serve.eastern.edu)

1. When does service learning begin and are there any days off?

Service learning runs from mid-September until the last day of classes. Your site may start later or have special days off listed in the site description. Make sure to check with your site about their closed days. *There is no service learning on EU holidays: Fall Free Days and Thanksgiving Break.*

2. Is transportation provided?

If you can provide your own transportation you can set up your *own hours* independent from the van schedule at one of the indicated Own Hours options online. For those that need it, regular van transportation is provided to/from the **shuttle stop in Upper McInnis parking lot**. Be sure to show up 5-10 minutes before the van is scheduled to leave; drivers are instructed to leave on time.

3. How are the hours documented and who keeps track of the service learning hours?

Service learning hours must be logged online at [serve.eastern.edu](http://serve.eastern.edu). **It is the student's responsibility to go online and log your hours after serving.** Once you have logged your hours that information will go to our site coordinators to verify your participation in service at the day and time you logged. Almost all sites will have their own volunteer sign-in process to keep track of hours served at their organization and you will need to sign in there as well. **This DOES NOT substitute for submitting your hours at [serve.eastern.edu](http://serve.eastern.edu). Hours logged and verified via [serve.eastern.edu](http://serve.eastern.edu) are the only hours for which you will earn academic credit.**

Student athletes who requested permission **and** received approval from the Coordinator of Student Ministries & Service Learning to serve over the summer must submit a Verification of Hours form to their TA.

Two other sources of hours: 1) four hours for the Service Learning Kickoff event will be documented by TAs taking attendance and 2) credit hours (explained below but to include EQUIP program and issues with van transportation) will be emailed to the TA in December.

4. When are my hours due?

Hours are due in early December. INST 150 professors set the due date in the syllabus.

5. How do I find out if there is a last-minute change or cancellation?

Any changes in the schedule will be communicated to you via your eastern.edu email. Make sure yours is set up and check your email on the days you have service learning. All students, including commuters, have been assigned an EU email address which should be used for all University-related business. You are responsible for the messages sent there.

6. What should I do when I can't go (illness, home emergency, etc.)?

Your site will expect you every week; service learning is a regular part of your schedule. Please be responsible as with a job and **call your site coordinator ahead of time** if you can't make it. This will affect your service learning grade if you miss too many hours. We recommend serving to the end of the semester but be sure to tell your site coordinator when you are done serving if you will not be returning. *The main complaint about Eastern students is that they don't notify their site when they are not coming.*

7. What if there's an issue with the van (it isn't there, no driver, etc.) and we can't go?

First, wait at least 15 minutes. **Then everyone who showed up should sign a piece of paper with the date and an explanation and drop the list off at Walton 1A. Then call the site and let them know you won't be coming due to a transportation issue.** If this procedure is followed, then credit hours will be emailed to your TA at the end of the semester. If classes are canceled due to a weather emergency, service learning will also be cancelled and those hours will also be credited.

Credit will not be given if the change was communicated in advance by email or if students miss their ride or forget that it was a day off/closed date for the site. There is currently no system for giving credit hours for Own Hours students since those hours are not scheduled directly through the Office of Faith & Practice.

8. Does travel time count as service learning time?

No, you earn credit only for the time you're on site.