

Preclinical Elective

Course: International Service Learning Elective (MED-1044)

Course Director: Angela Mihalic, MD

Course Co-Director: TBD – Faculty Mentor Chosen by Student

Department: Pediatrics

Rationale:

"Service-learning" is defined in the literature and LCME accreditation standards as a structured learning experience that combines community service with preparation and reflection. Students engaged in service-learning provide community service in response to community-identified concerns and learn about the context in which service is provided, the connection between their service and their academic coursework, and their roles as citizens and professionals.¹ Medical students have become increasingly aware of the health care needs and disparities in lesser developed countries. Gassererud and colleagues describe international health and medicine as "the practice of medicine outside the practitioner's culture that addresses the cultural, economical, political, and environmental factors that affect the health, health perceptions, and health-behavior of individuals and populations in diverse communities across the globe."² Participation in international health experiences outside of the curriculum is common during medical school. To maximize the educational and professional development imparted by these powerful experiences, it is important to provide a framework for students to reflect on their experience and its impact and include formal evaluation.³

Objectives:

1. To prepare by planning one's participation in an international health and medicine experience.
2. To participate in international health experience.
3. To reflect upon one's experience and capture that reflection in an essay.

Format:

There are three requirements for this elective: 1) a project proposal sent in advance of the experience, 2) at least 12 hours working in this international health experience as guided by that project proposal, and 3) an essay. Medical Students apply by submitting a brief, single page proposal for their international service learning project to the course director. Each project must describe where the student hopes to do the experience, how the time spent there will be accounted for, and what the student hopes to learn from the experience (preparation). The student must then spend at least 12 hours in this international health experience and subsequently submit an essay reporting on the lessons learned from the experience (reflection). The essay must be approximately two pages long, with normal font size, margins, and single spacing. Essays will be due at the end of the semester in which the international experience occurred. Proposals and essays will be evaluated and approved by the course director of this elective along with the International Health Advisory Committee.

¹[Definition from Seifer SD. "Service-learning: Community-campus partnerships for health professions education." *Academic Medicine*, 73(3):273-277 (1998).

²Gaaserud A, Jotkowitz A, Gidron Y, et al. Development and validation of a new measure of student attitudes and knowledge of international health and medicine. *Med Teach*. 2005;2:136–139.

³Parsi K, List J. Preparing medical students for the world: Service Learning and Global Health Justice. *Medscape J Med*. 2008; 10(11):268.

Student Evaluation:

Grades will be pass/fail. The experience must be documented in some manner by the supervisor or agency at which the student rotated. In addition, the reflective essay must be submitted to the course director for evaluation.

Course Evaluation:

An evaluation of the course must be completed before transcript acknowledgment may be provided for this elective.

Representative Sessions:

The International Health Interest Group hosts a list of international health opportunities that have been evaluated as worthwhile in the past along with trusted organizations. Annual experiences during Spring Break that are affiliated with UT Southwestern include the Southwestern Christian Fellowship's medical mission to Mexico and Ede Jodi: Haiti Service Trip. Any of these opportunities, as well as others not listed, could serve as venues for completion of this elective.

Registration:

To register for this elective, please contact the Office of Student Affairs, at 214 648-2168.