

Bachelor of Arts Community Studies

REQUEST FOR CREDIT – PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Community Studies 1100: Introduction to Community Studies

Student Information

Student Name:

Student ID:

Date Submitted:

Requirements:

The following items ***MUST*** be included with this form:

1. A **portfolio** including the following:
 - a) A complete list of all prior work / volunteer experiences relevant to the guidelines for this course, including the length of each position and your supervisor's name and contact information;
 - b) A complete list of duties and responsibilities;
 - c) A letter of verification from each employer listed;
2. An **essay** demonstrating how you have fulfilled the course objectives (see details attached).
3. The \$50.00 application processing fee.

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF THE COMPLETED PACKAGE FOR YOUR RECORDS AND SUBMIT THE ORIGINAL COPY TO THE ATTENTION OF BRENDAN MACDONALD. YOU WILL RECEIVE NOTIFICATION WHEN REVIEW OF YOUR APPLICATION IS COMPLETE.

Office Use Only:

CREDIT GRANTED [Y/N] _____

COMMUNITY STUDIES DEPARTMENT CHAIR	DATE
DEAN	DATE

Your processing fee of \$50 must be paid at the Registrar's Office before this application will be given consideration. Successful applicants will also be required to pay one half the current course costs for which PLA is being granted.

For more detail on completing this application, please contact the Community Studies Department.

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What is Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)?

Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is a process whereby academic credit is assigned to learning which has occurred in areas other than the traditional classroom setting. Experiences can be drawn from the workplace, volunteer activities, and/or family and community life.

The purpose of this application is to provide you with a context in which to articulate, reflect upon, and organize your prior learning as it relates to the Community Studies 1100: Introduction to Community Studies course. In addition to detailing what you have accomplished thus far, you will also be expected to identify the skills and knowledge you've gained and demonstrate how this fulfills the objectives of this course.

ESSAY GUIDELINES

Step 1 Identification of university level skills:

First, reflect on your life experiences, review your resume, and make a list of the following:

- All full or part-time jobs you have had
- All independent reading and study you have done
- All training programs or in-service courses you have completed
- All volunteer work you have done
- All community activities you are involved in
- All military service you have completed
- Your cultural, artistic, and religious pursuits
- Your hobbies and recreational pastimes
- Any significant travel or travel study you have completed
- Your organizational memberships
- Other relevant and meaningful areas of learning and experience

You should now have a list of at least five areas to draw from. The next step is to determine if your experience is relevant to, and the equivalent of, this university-level course.

Step 2 Review of the COMS 1100 Course Handbook

Carefully review the handbook and identify how your experience matches the stated course goals, **at a university level**.

Step 3 Write the Essay

Your final step is to write a narrative, similar to a research paper that is supported by theory or concepts, demonstrating that you understand and have integrated theory with your personal experiences. This narrative should clearly outline your learning and explain how your knowledge was acquired. You will also need to provide objective evidence and/or documentation to demonstrate support of the learning and knowledge you describe in your narrative. See requirements on "Request for Credit" form. Additional types of evidence may also be included.

Remember, you need to demonstrate that your learning is equivalent to that of a university level, 6 credit (year-long), course.

Presentation:

Title page, Table of Contents, Introduction, Body, Conclusion, References, Appendices (if needed).

Format:

- 12 font
- Times New Roman
- 1 inch margins all sides
- Typed and doubled spaced
- Quotes, citations, and references should be in American Psychological Association (APA) or Modern Language Association (MLA) format

Length: 12-16 pages (excluding the title page, table of contents, reference pages, and appendices)

COMMUNITY STUDIES 1100 COURSE HANDBOOK

PEDAGOGY AND RATIONALE FOR COMMUNITY STUDIES COURSES

The aim of Community Studies (COMS) courses is to facilitate the development of skills valuable to you in your capacity as an engaged citizen, a worker in a rapidly changing economic environment, and as a creative individual.

To develop these attitudes and capabilities, the COMS Department encourages cooperative, non-competitive pedagogies. Students work together in small groups of approximately eight students. A high degree of self-direction and organization grow as students conduct research and write essays collaboratively on topics of mutual interest. Problem solving, research, analysis, communication and group skills are acquired through experiential and discursive learning. Throughout this process the faculty advisor adjusts his or her role depending on the learning requirements of individuals and groups.

The COMS courses that constitute the core of the Bachelor of Arts Community Studies degree are organized over a three or four year period. The learning objectives listed below are developed incrementally across time. In each year, there is a growing interaction between group and community. Students are not only required to broaden their knowledge by taking discipline-based courses, but also are encouraged to establish learning relationships with other members of the community, at CBU and beyond. Tying this all together are the objectives listed below. They are infused throughout the programme, providing coherency of philosophy, pedagogy and evaluation within COMS.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMUNITY STUDIES CORE COURSES

The Community Studies Department delivers the core courses for the Bachelor of Arts in Community Studies Degree. Collectively these courses are designed to offer students with the opportunity to develop:

- the skills associated with self-directed learning
- the confidence and understanding necessary for assuming an active role in community life
- the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively engage in group work
- broad and adaptable primary, secondary and applied research skills
- the ability to effectively analyse a wide variety of issues from different perspectives
- flexible, audience-sensitive, written and oral communication skills
- the ability to respond creatively to problems and develop solutions
- an on-the-job understanding of career options and an opportunity to reflect critically on work experiences.

SOME IMPORTANT FEATURES ABOUT COMMUNITY STUDIES 1100

1. Your Advisor

Your advisor is a facilitator and catalyst. Each advisor has her or his field of expertise and becomes a co-learner with the students in other areas. You will find that your advisor spends most of the class time listening and posing questions, and little time lecturing. Therefore, we hear occasionally from students, that our advisor does not give us enough direction. Indeed, this may be true, because we assume that reasonable amounts of

floundering, making errors, and struggling are consistent with the COMS's educational philosophy.

We also promote student ownership of the group process and project. Consequently, although each COMS group has its designated advisor who is responsible ultimately for the submission of your grades, you are encouraged to view the entire COMS faculty as a resource pool.

2. Group Building and Group Cohesion

Most of your formal education prior to COMS took place on an individual basis. You sat behind a school desk. You wrote exams. Your final grades represented what you accomplished as an individual student. In contrast, COMS students work together in groups and the group's togetherness [unity or cohesion] and its effectiveness affect your grades. Working as a group may be a joyful and rewarding experience; it may also bring frustration and dissatisfaction. Therefore, in the first term of COMS 1100, considerable time is devoted to learning how groups work.

3. Self-Directed Learning

As self-directed learners you and your group members assume a major role in defining your learning needs and the methods of meeting these needs.

4. Reading, Writing and Critical Thinking

In COMS 1100, you will have an opportunity to develop skills in reading, writing and critical thinking through individual and group library research, group discussions, written papers and oral presentations.

It is important to note again that the hallmark of COMS is critical thinking. Once you have selected a topic and gathered sufficient information, you will be expected to critically analyse that information and articulate your findings orally and in written form.

5. Group Reports

One method of demonstrating the group's attainment of the course objectives is through the group papers that are submitted at the end of each term. In these papers the group demonstrate their ability to research, analyse and write, not only as individuals but as a cohesive unit.

6. Oral Presentations

Another way of demonstrating the group's experiences is through the oral presentations held at the end of each term. Again the group must present their research findings in a clear, concise fashion, with each person making an equal contribution.

7. Evaluating Your Program, Yourself and Your Peers

On-going peer and self evaluation is an integral part of the COMS process. In addition, a formal written evaluation takes place at the end of each term and your advisor will use this information to determine your final grade.

COMS 1100 ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Oral presentations will be a part of first term's group assignments and will take place with your peers in the classroom setting.

Oral presentations are held at the end of the second term with a visiting advisor in attendance. An evaluation of both your individual and group presentation will be provided and this will make up a portion of your second term grade. The oral will take approximately 40 minutes, divided equally between the group presentation and a question and answer session.

The second term oral focuses primarily on the group's research project and a balance is sought between a presentation of the findings and an analysis of those findings. In addition you are asked to relate the learning from the research project to the overall course objectives.

COURSE OBJECTIVES FOR COMMUNITY STUDIES (COMS) 1100

Group Work

- **develop skills for analysing, participating and effectively engaging in group activities**
- **build theoretical understandings of group dynamics**
- **gain problem-solving skills**

Community Studies Model/Problem-Centred Studies Model

- **understand the philosophy of the core courses in Community Studies**
- **understand the different ways of learning in COMS**
- **define the problem-centered studies model**
- **understand fundamental components of the problem-centered studies model as an educational model**

Community

- **define and understand community**
- **identify communities on a local, regional and global level**
- **analyze a specific community**

Research:

- **develop project research skills**
- **learn to access and select from a wide variety of secondary sources**

Analytical /Critical Thinking Skills

Develop analytical skills with particular attention to:

- **learning to approach issues from more than one perspective**
- **developing the ability to formulate exploratory questions**
- **recognizing the need to examine the basis of authority**
- **developing the ability to synthesize and integrate understandings gained from other courses**

Writing Skills

Develop collaborative writing skills and build individual writing skills with a focus on:

- **spelling and basic grammar**
- **effective paragraph construction**
- **coherent paper organization**
- **clear thesis statements**
- **correct use of citations**
- **proper format for bibliographies**

Communication Skills

Develop oral communication skills, particularly those necessary for:

- **sustained and productive communication with one another**
- **effective communication with resource people**
- **effective articulation of research findings**