INSTRUCTOR: TBD
CREDITS: 4

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course is designed to immerse students in a sector of Costa Rican society through volunteer placements in an organization whose work is relevant to students’ academic interests as a context for understanding specific contemporary social, political, and economic challenges. Guided and facilitated by the course instructor and the supervisor at the host organization, students write a proposal to define the goals of the practicum and describe how the practicum will be carried out and its projected outcomes. Students will spend approximately 20+ hours at their community placement work-site each week, submit journal entries reflecting on their experiences, and complete a number of related assignments, including a final community engagement learning project to be shared with the placement site.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
By the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe and analyze a specific issue based on their community placement, for example children’s education, youth issues, human rights, public health, animal rights, conservation, etc.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the history and current role of their organization as it relates to the specific issue;
- Demonstrate improved skills including Spanish language and cultural competencies through successful interactions in a Costa Rican professional setting.

REQUIRED TEXTS
To be determined

COURSE CONTENT
This course will include seminars, discussion and workshops designed to prepare students to design and participate in a month-long community engagement practicum. Topics will focus on Costa Rican cultural norms, proposal writing, being a professional in Costa Rica, volunteerism, etc.

ASSESSMENT
Submission of a Formal Community Engagement Practicum Proposal: Your formal proposal should describe the objective of this practicum including some contextualization of your topic (how is this relevant to the community and/or city), include a bibliography that identifies relevant resources (organizations, people, written, audio and visual materials) and outline all relevant work/tasks, including a working timeline. At this time, you should also submit your list of questions for your in-depth interview and a draft of your project statement. You should also decide on which format you will use for your final project.
Organization Profile
Students will submit a paper of approximately 750 – 1000 words on the organization in which they are placed, its role in providing services, and the sectors in which it works (i.e. education, legal services). Topics to cover in the paper include:

- What is the general background on the organization (type of organization, sector, and management style)?
- What specific services does your organization provide? What is your role in providing those services?
- Who are the clients? Do they come from different national and religious backgrounds?
- Who staffs the organization (males, females, locals, expatriates)? What is its source of funding?
- In what ways is this organization most effective? In what ways could it be improved? What are the major barriers to that improvement?
- What are some of the culture-and logistic-based differences that can be highlighted between this organization and a similar one in your country home?

Students should demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the work of the organization as well as the context in which the organization is operating. They must present work based on literature gathered from their organizations and include references from external sources (e.g., newspaper articles, interviews, journal articles, primary studies).

Completion of an In-Depth Interview: You are required to conduct at least one, extended in-depth interview with a person related to the community engagement topic. Your instructor can provide support for your interview prospects. The goal of the interview is to assist in anchoring your community engagement practicum through conducting primary research. You are required to submit a detailed summary of the interview containing the name of the person, date and location of the interview and the questions asked. It must be a minimum of three-five typed, double-spaced pages. The name of this person must be included in the formal proposal, see above, and approved by your instructor.

Documentation/Journal: You will be monitoring your time working on the Community Engagement practicum and should average 20 hours of work per week on your practicum equating to a minimum of at least 80 hours. This time will normally be outside of formal class or consultation sessions. You are required to keep a log of your activities and the hours spent performing them. Logs will be reviewed at your consultation meeting with your instructor and will be factored into your final grade at semester’s end. You will find that an honest accounting of your time will reflect your work habits and tendencies. In addition, knowing precisely how much time and energy it took to bring your project to completion will allow you to plan future projects more effectively.

Final Project: You have a variety of options available for your final project. You must decide what form it will take with the Instructor prior to starting your Community Engagement practicum. The final project is an opportunity to share what you have learned through this course with a wider audience. Students are expected to submit final projects for publication or posted online (as in the case of blogs or documentaries). Even though these are creative assignments, you are still
expected to have a meaningful argument. Your writing, photos or film should explore a larger question pertaining to your community-based learning experience, develop a theme that relates to your organization or present what you think are the most important facts for other Americans to know.

**Op-Ed Article**

Write an opinion piece for your local or student newspaper based on the knowledge, observations, and insights gained through your community-based learning experience. Your writing should be clear, concise, and grammatically correct. In such a short piece, every word counts. Look to the Op-Ed page of *The New York Times* or *Wall Street Journal* for examples. Op-Eds are based on opinions informed by personal experiences and observations. Students are expected to express their opinions through pursuing an interesting and well-founded argument backed up with evidence, analysis and findings.

Op-Eds are usually about 750 words, but your article should meet the guidelines of the publication to which you plan to submit your article. Please include the name of the publication, along with a copy of the submission guidelines, with your proposal.

**Photo Blog**

Create a blog with 5-10 photos and accompanying narrative describing why the photo is meaningful. The photos should explore a theme or issue coherently and should not be a random collection of photos. For safety reasons, some individuals may not want to be photographed so you must obtain permission in advance, particularly when photographing minors. Also, be sure to ask your supervisor before taking any pictures at your community placement.

**Documentary**

Create a short (10-20 minute) documentary film to be posted on YouTube. The film could include discussions with staff and/or clients at your organization, interviews with other experts in Costa Rica and/or your own narration of a specific issue.

Never film a demonstration or government building. If you choose this option, discuss it first with the course instructor and your volunteer supervisor to be sure you can film safely. Always obtain permission in advance before filming any individuals. Also be sure to ask your supervisor before doing any filming at your community placement.

**Student Journal Submission**

If your home campus publishes student journals of related topics, you may submit an article that addresses some relevant aspects of your community-based learning experience. Journal articles are usually similar to the type of paper you would write for an academic class. They generally require an academic tone and footnotes and may be anywhere between 5 and 15 pages in length with multiple references from credible sources. Please include the name of the publication, along with a copy of the submission guidelines, with your proposal.

**Oral Presentation:** You are expected to publicly share the key aspects of learning that relate to your Community Engagement Practicum. Each student's presentation should focus on their interest in the topic and what they discovered and learned through completing the practicum. Oral presentations will be limited to 10 minutes with opportunities for the audience to ask questions.
**Reflection Paper:** You are required to write a 2-3 page reflection paper identifying what you had in mind when you originally chose your topic and then how your ideas regarding your topic evolved leading to the final product / project and the impact the Community Engagement practicum had on you. You are encouraged to discuss the challenges and growth that took place over the course of your practicum. You should also examine the relationship between your interview(s) and connections to your overall practicum interest.

**ASSESSMENT**
- Engagement 10%
- Attendance at Community Placement 10%
- Practicum Proposal 10%
- Organization Paper 10%
- Interview Write-up 10%
- Documentation/Journal 10%
- Final Project Presentations 10%
- Final Project 20%
- Reflection Paper 10%

**ACM POLICY ON ACADEMICS**
A complete listing of ACM policies can be found in your student handbook.

Class attendance and participation: You are expected to attend and participate fully in all classroom sessions, site visits, and field trips.

Academic honesty: Actions of dishonesty are destructive to the well-being of the academic community, and ACM staff respond to them vigorously. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic theft will result in a failing grade for that assignment and may result in failure for the course.

**ACM POLICY ON NON-DISCRIMINATION**
The Associated Colleges of the Midwest does not discriminate in the operation of its educational programs, activities, or employment on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, color, religion, national origin, age, veteran status, marital status, or disability.

**CLASSROOM CONDUCT**
Laptops, tablets and mobile phones are strictly forbidden during class time.