Malawi, Africa: International Service Learning | GST 2??
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Course name | designation (e.g., GST 260)
Tomasek, Terry | 7
Faculty leader | # of years at Elon
Other faculty interested in Africa and/or international service learning. | WT 2015
Others (if any) who could teach this course | proposed term (e.g., WT 2012)

Tomasek co-led the India: Education and Development course twice (2011 & 2012) and will again co-lead this course WT2014. She was also the faculty advisor on the most recent Malawi Alternative Break Service Trip. During this trip, preliminary arrangements were discussed for the service component of this course. Tomasek has taught in the Education program for the past 8 years and has 8 additional years of 6-12 teaching experience. Although she is not a literacy expert, peer to peer tutoring is a strategy that she is familiar with. Other faculty who have expressed an interest in this course are Joan Barnatt and Rich Mihans, both have strong literacy backgrounds. Joan has not led a study abroad course at Elon but Rich Mihans has led the Costa Rica: Jungle Service course twice and the MED embedded travel Costa Course once. Evan Small (staff-Kernodle Service Learning Center) has led two Alternative Break Service Trips to Malawi and he would also be a good second leader.

Organizing the details of the service component of the course will be one challenge. Although the principal at the partner school was very positive and willing to work on details, there is limited Internet access so email will be tricky.

Transportation for a large group will also be a challenge. The road system in Malawi is not well developed. For longer distances, we will use tour buses but for local transportation in the city of Blantyre we will use local taxi service.

Food and water-borne illness and their related gastrointestinal troubles are always a concern in Africa. The local diet does not offer the choices that might be expected by Elon students. The STA course will be used to make students aware of limited food choices and recommendations for supplements. Bottled water is cheap and readily available.

Near Lake Malawi there is a higher incidence of Malaria. Students will be advised to check with their personal physicians about precautionary measures.

January is in the middle of the rainy season so we will need to be flexible in case of flooding.

What do you see as the most pivotal logistical challenge of this course?
This proposal will be reviewed only when accompanied by the following:

- a course description
- an explanation of how the course meets the goals of academic content, cultural awareness and personal growth
- an explanation of why your course should be taught in the proposed location
- a tentative itinerary
- a tentative syllabus for the 4-credit Winter Term course
- a tentative syllabus for the 1-credit STA course

Proposals will be reviewed only when the Chair and Dean have indicated their approval by their signatures below.

__________________________    __________________________
Signature of Department Chair    Signature of Academic Dean

Date  ____________           Date  ____________
Malawi, Africa: International Service Learning

General Studies category
Civilization, Society

Course Overview
The purpose of this winter term course is to immerse Elon students in Malawian culture in ways that will help them understand themselves and the Malawian people better. The content of the course will expose Elon students to difficult concepts such as poverty, governmental corruption, third world development, AIDS, street children, environment/economic tensions, and illiteracy. One of the central components of this course is the integration of an international service learning experience. We will partner with a local school in Blantyre to introduce peer-assisted literacy strategies. The course has been designed with relevant and meaningful service with the community, enhanced academic learning supported with reflective journaling and purposeful civic engagement. Learning activities will include readings, classroom discussions, presentations, guest speakers, and journal and paper assignments that support analysis of experiential and service experiences.

Catalog Course Description
Malawi is known as the ‘warm heart of Africa’ because the people exude warmth and friendliness. This Southeastern Africa country has magnificent mountains, plateaus and the most beautiful lake in Africa, Lake Malawi. The focus of this course will be to learn about and experience the beauty of Africa and the Malawian people but also their challenges and struggles. The heart of this course is a service learning project that will be conducted in Blantyre, Malawi. Elon students will lead peer-assisted literacy training sessions for students in a public K-8 school. Elon students will gain the experience for literacy training during the fall preparatory course. NO EDUCATION BACKGROUND OR EXPERIENCE IS REQUIRED FOR THIS COURSE.

Background
This course developed from two Kernodle Center Alternative Break trips that took place in the summer of 2012 and 2013. The trips were designed by student leaders with a passion for the region and the issues of Rural Education and Youth Development. Each trip was about 15 days long and incorporated two main service sites. As with every trip in the Alternative Breaks program, this course was designed to do collaborative, sustainable service in partnership with the local community. In addition, the course incorporated cultural experiences to introduce the participants to the country and its people. The Alternative Breaks program strives to make every trip accessible to all Elon students through extensive fundraising. With this trip being twice as long and traveling much further than our other trips, the cost has been prohibitive to many students. By reclassifying this experience as a study abroad, our hope is that it will deepen the service and academic experience and make the opportunity available to a broader range of Elon students. In short, this course proposal is a response to the passion of Elon students!

Tomasek accompanied the students during the 2013 service trip. I worked closely with the students and sought their feedback about course design. I have continued to return to students with my course proposal to gain their insight. I must admit, designing this winter course WITH students has really been a lot of fun!! [also a lot of work 😏]

Rationale for Proposed Location
Malawi is a well suited location for this course for the following reasons (not in any particular order):

- The country is close to the equator and unaffected by seasons
- January is a particularly good time to visit because it is the growing season (there is a greater variety of fruits and vegetables)
• English is widely spoken in most areas. The school that we will be partnering with delivers instruction in English.
• We will be working with partners (for the service learning project) with whom we have an established relationship. Elon has had two very successful Alternative Break Service Trips to the same area of Malawi where this course is situated.
• Malawi is a relatively stable and safe African country that is welcoming of international visitors.

Service Project
We will be spending five (5) days in the Namasimba School in the village of Baluti. Ms. Lonelyn Nkhoma is the Principal. There are 3489 students in grades 1-8 (they call them standards not grades). There are 12 classrooms and 34 teachers. There are two sessions in the school day, 7:30-10:30 for 1, 2, 3, 6, & 7 standard students and 11:30-4:30 for 4, 5 and 8 standard students. There are about 200 children in a single classroom! This is a public city school in the Blantyre Urban District. Ms. Nkhoma identified literacy as one of their greatest challenges, mainly due to the large class sizes. Our service project will be to train older students in peer-assisted literacy strategies (PALS) (Fuchs, Fuchs, Kazdan, & Allen, 1999; Mathes & Babyak, 2001). We will teach the older children how to be peer tutor so that when we leave Blantyre these students will partner with younger students to share the same strategies. The PALS model is to have children working in pairs on reading activities intended to improve reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. The nature of the program is that paired students will read aloud, listen to their partner read, and provide feedback during various structured activities. Elon students will train the older students on how to teach the younger students to use the following learning strategies: passage reading with partners, paragraph “shrinking” (or describing the main idea), and prediction relay (predicting what is likely to happen next in the passage).

Health and Safety
Malawi is not a country that would be considered to have ‘hostile environments’; however, students will be advised to travel in groups when they are away from the large group. They will also be advised about not going into the village at night. In addition, students will be advised to wear shoes when walking around lodging grounds in the evening (snakes). As of 10 September 2013 there are no travel advisories for Malawi. There are no extreme physical requirements related to this course. There will be a considerable amount of walking at times. Students will have the option to swim but that is not required. There are no extreme altitudes problems.

The CDC does not require any vaccinations or medications for travel in Malawi. They do indicate that most travelers take Hepatitis A, Malaria, and Typhoid vaccines and medications. There is no risk of yellow fever in Malawi. [http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/extended_student/malawi]