

Catalog Description

This course is a practicum course in honors to allow students to do experiential learning within their respective disciplines. *Prerequisites:* 6 credits of undergraduate honors.

Required textbook

None

Instructor Description

A practicum course affords students the opportunity to do the kinds of things they have learned in principle. It is, in short, learning by doing, or experiential learning. You have a choice of three practicum options (see below). All three options lead students to a more practical sense of what they have studied in their coursework, and importantly, each asks students not only to engage in practice for a semester but also to adequately reflect on and analyze that practice through journal entries and a final reflection/analysis assignment.

Practicum Options

Each of the three options below should engage students in about 8-9 hours each week. This figure is not an arbitrary number; it corresponds to the amount of time a student would be expected to spend on any upper-level course at UTRGV.

1. Research Practicum: This option asks students to assist a faculty member in his or her research project(s). Students should choose to work with faculty they already know and who agree to mentor them during the semester. Note: the faculty member should be tenured or on the tenure track, though some exceptions can be made in unique circumstances.

2. Internship: This option allows students to receive academic credit for work they complete during an official internship, which can take place on campus, locally, state-wide, or nation-wide. An internship appropriate for HONR 3380 is one that lends itself to academic analysis and reflection, ideally but not necessarily related to the student's course of study and career plans. Students should have a faculty mentor from UTRGV who helps guide their analysis and reflection. NOTE: Students awarded an Archer Fellowship may substitute three hours of HONR 4680 for HONR 3380.

3. Service Practicum: This option asks students to involve themselves in a service-learning project for the entire semester. This may include work with existing organizations such as *Habitat for Humanity*, *Food Bank of the RGV* or an animal shelter, though it might also include the development of a service project from the ground up (ideally one that serves the greater RGV community). Students should spend approximately 8-9 hours per week involved in this service work, and they should have a faculty mentor who helps facilitate their work.

Practicum experiences do not always fall uniquely within just one of these categories; it is not uncommon for a practicum experience to overlap with two or more of these categories. This, however, does not affect the importance or relevance of the experience. Such a practicum experience is completely acceptable.

Required Coursework

During the semester in which the practicum is taken, students should keep a [weekly journal](#) in which they document and reflect upon their practicum experiences. At the end of the semester, students will be asked to compose a [reflection assignment](#) in which they reflect more deeply on these experiences and their connection to other courses and professional development. The weekly journals should assist in the preparation of this reflection assignment, which is described below.

Reflection Assignment

The culmination of HONR 3380 involves a reflective writing assignment that allows students to think deeply and critically about their practicum experiences. The paper should be in a narrative format and should adhere to MLA or APA style guidelines if outside sources are cited. Always use specific examples to support your reflective narrative. Since you were asked early in the semester to keep a reflective journal, the reflection assignment should easily be able to pull examples directly from the journal.

This reflection assignment has three main goals. It should (1) document what you learned and gained from the practicum, (2) discuss how the practicum allowed you to put into practice knowledge and/or theories you learned in the classroom and how the practicum influenced your views on classroom book learning, and (3) explain how the practicum helped you shape or re-shape your understanding of your future profession and career goals. An introduction section should provide a brief summary of your practicum experience (where it took place, what title you held, your supervisor's name and position, when you worked, etc.). You do not necessarily have to complete these tasks in strict order. You may weave your responses throughout the assignment in whatever way you wish, as long as you ultimately are working toward all three assignment goals.

Please bear in mind that this assignment factors into your grade for HONR 3380. Importantly, please recognize that it is by no means a pro forma assignment that automatically leads to an "A" for the course. This is a formal writing assignment that should

be written clearly, thoroughly, and correctly. You may divide it into sections if you wish. It will be assessed on the following criteria:

1. How thoroughly and deeply does the reflection assignment address the three goals listed above?
2. How well does the reflection assignment rely on specific examples from the practicum experience to support its points?
3. Is the reflection assignment written clearly and correctly (free of grammatical, spelling, and mechanical errors)?

Please note the following guidelines that you should follow when submitting this reflection assignment at the end of the semester:

1. The reflection assignment should fall between 1000-1250 words.
2. The reflection assignment should be submitted as a pdf to Dr. R. Vega at rosalynn.vega@utrgv.edu by 5:00 PM on Thursday of exam week. Your practicum supervisor will need to fill out and submit an evaluation form by the same deadline.