Overview
Service learning has the unique ability to bridge writing pedagogy and social sciences. In this class we will focus on children and poverty. What are the unique needs of this population? How, and in what way, are those needs different from the needs of other children and how are they the same? What are some of the primary issues to be addressed so that these children can be successful in school? How does the agency involved respond to these needs? What is the agency’s history and goals for the future? How can this class be of service? Students will write for a variety of rhetorical situations and be encouraged to research topics regarding children and poverty. My goal is to create an awareness of the long-range impact poverty has on children and open a dialogue about the issues, utilizing my previous graduate work in social issues, my professional work in media and the ongoing work in English composition and rhetoric.

Role of Service-Learning in the Course
Students will be expected to volunteer at their agency for up to 20 hours in the quarter. Class discussions will include individual accounts of student experiences at their agency, keeping in mind the legally required privacy of the minors. Service-learning gives students first-hand experience with a vulnerable population and service providers in a personal way. When augmented with research and reading on the topic, I believe the experience will give students a deeper understanding of issues related to poverty. As a result, they will become citizens capable of making informed choices, whether in the voting booth, the classroom or the work place.

Assignments Related to Service-Learning
Students will be encouraged to develop critical-thinking skills and demonstrate them in their writing and discussion. Students will be required to analyze various reading assignments on the topic. Two short assignments and one main research paper will be required. Potential topics may include: Why is poverty rising faster in the suburbs? What are the long-lasting implications of poverty on children? Are their programs in the U.S. that have been successful in bringing homeless children up to grade level? How are the homeless portrayed in the media? How is poverty portrayed? The required research paper should be focused on topics related to the volunteer activity and must illustrate good academic writing. Four short papers will be required. One may be a reflection concerning the students’ service activity. Writing assignments may include writing done for the agency, whether it is providing content for a brochure, a grant or the agency’s Facebook page.