



ELON
UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR
Engaged
Learning

Call for Applications
2025-2027 Research Seminar on
Learning on Location: Place-Based Pedagogies in Higher Education

Deadline to Apply: February 17, 2025

The [Center for Engaged Learning at Elon University](#) is pleased to announce the 2025 – 2027 Research Seminar on Learning on Location: Place-Based Pedagogies in Higher Education. This three-summer research seminar facilitates multi-institutional research on pedagogies that leverage critical engagement with place and space to deepen teaching and learning in higher education. Place-based learning emphasizes hands-on learning experiences that connect students to a local community and environment, whether on- or off-campus.

We invite interested scholars and practitioners, regardless of discipline, to apply to join a multi-institutional cohort of researchers collaborating to investigate:

- Student perspectives on and experiences with learning on location;
- Multi-disciplinary, evidence-informed strategies for teaching with place-based pedagogies;
- Partnership and stewardship with local parks, museums, community groups, and businesses for learning on location; and
- Institutional level policies and practices that enable learning on location.

Overview of Current Research

Learning on location “centers place-making and leverages critical engagement with locations to deepen teaching and learning in higher education” (Holmes 2023, 3). It often is site-specific, mapping the site terrain with the goal of understanding the site, who it’s created for, and what happens there. Learning on location can occur in physical spaces or via carefully constructed digital immersion, and it may be a component of experiential pedagogies like study away, community-based learning, work-integrated learning, and other types of immersive learning. Place-based learning works by asking students to incorporate their lived experiences into the learning process.

When learners enter spaces, their thinking “is deeply shaped by... physical experiences” (Hrach 2021, 13). Learning on location acknowledges the social construction of place and often requires both spatial proficiency, an awareness of how constraints of the place might shape activity, and spatial empathy, an

attentiveness to the reactions among humans and other actors with/within the space. Attention to the interrelation between environment and learning acknowledges an understanding of human thinking as “4E”: embodied, embedded, enactive, and extended.

Given the interconnectedness of everyone and everything within learning on location spaces, place-based pedagogies should be developed in partnership and with “ethical stewardship of lands and communities” (Holmes 2023, 30).

Just as qualities of immersive learning – reflection and metacognition, autonomy and agency, cognitive dissonance, situated and authentic learning, time and focus, and teacher as facilitator – can have varying ranges of intensity for *specific* immersive learning practices ([Motley, “Immersive Learning”](#)), individual cases of learning on location reflect variation in characteristics like:

- Degree of movement,
- Integration of tasks,
- Level of disruption from preconceived notions of learning spaces,
- Spatial shifts,
- Lived experiences of community members in the space, and
- Scaffolding of learning.

Research Seminar on Learning on Location: Place-Based Pedagogies in Higher Education

To examine learning on location in higher education, accepted research participants will join teams focusing on one of the following topics:

- Student perspectives on and experiences with learning on location. Research questions could include:
 - How do students understand and interact with the “classroom” space in learning on location?
 - How do variations in degree of movement, integration of tasks, level of disruption from preconceived notions of learning spaces, spatial shifts, and other characteristics of place-based pedagogies inform students’ experiences and learning outcomes?
 - How does learning on location enact the key practices for fostering engaged learning (e.g., acknowledging prior experience, facilitating relationships, framing connections to broader contexts, fostering reflection, etc.; Moore 2023)?
- Multi-disciplinary, evidence-informed strategies for teaching with place-based pedagogies. Research questions could include:
 - How do educators attend to diversity, inclusion, and equity in learning on location?
 - How might educators adapt place-based pedagogical practices for different disciplines and different institutional contexts?
 - How can educators scaffold learning on location to support student learning across place-based experiences and throughout students’ learning journeys, ensuring students

have prior knowledge and experience to enhance the likelihood of their success in subsequent experiences?

- Partnership and stewardship in learning on location. Research questions could include:
 - How can educators co-design for reciprocity with partners (academic, community, artistic, planned or unintentional audiences, place/non-human, etc.) in learning on location, with an eye toward equity?
 - How can educators and students minimize environmental impact in place-based pedagogies?
 - How can all partners in learning on location mitigate potential / unintentional harms?
- Institutional level policies and practices to enable learning on location. Research questions could include:
 - How can institutions support high-quality teaching and learning in place-based pedagogies?
 - How do institutional structures (e.g., class times, semester schedules) enable or constrain learning on location?
 - How can educational developers most effectively support faculty/staff and their partners in implementing high-quality learning on location?

Research Cohorts and Seminar Logistics

The Center for Engaged Learning Seminar will support multi-institutional research addressing and surrounding this theme over a three-year period, and research teams will use a mixed-methods approach to conduct qualitative and quantitative research. Selected applicants will meet on Elon's campus during the following weeks:

- **Year 1: July 13-18, 2025:** Participants will meet to collaboratively develop and plan multi-institutional research projects to be conducted throughout the following year at the participants' own institutions. These research cohorts will enable larger scale studies and explorations of the impact of different institutional contexts.
- **Year 2: July 12-17, 2026:** Participants will meet to share their initial multi-institutional results and to plan a more sharply focused research agenda for the research cohort for year two.
- **Year 3: July 11-16, 2027:** Participants will reconvene to share their year-two results, to plan continuations of their work, and to participate in the Conference on Engaged Learning (July 12-13, 2027), with a conference strand on the seminar theme.

Participants will produce significant, concrete outcomes. [Past Center for Engaged Learning research seminars](#) have generated [edited volumes, journal articles and book chapters, white papers, and conference presentations](#) – as well as local initiatives on participants' home campuses. Participants will

be well-positioned to use evidence-based assessments of student learning conducted as part of the research seminar to inform learning on location at their institutions.

Elon University will provide lodging and meals for seminar participants during the seminar's 2025 – 2027 summer meetings. In addition, each participant will be reimbursed up to USD \$500/year (up to USD \$1000/year for international participants) for travel to the seminar's summer meetings at Elon University. Reimbursements are processed as checks, but wire transfers can be arranged if necessary for international participants. All reimbursements are made in U.S. dollars (USD). Full reimbursement policies will be distributed to accepted participants. Other participant expenses, including additional travel costs and any research costs, will be paid by the participants or their home institutions.

Seminar Leaders

The 2025 – 2027 Center for Engaged Learning Seminar will be led by Ashley J. Holmes, Susan Hrach, Lauren Kearns, and Phillip Motley.

- **Ashley J. Holmes** is Associate Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning at Oregon State University. She leads the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) in supporting effective, innovative, and scholarly teaching that engages students in meaningful learning experiences. Ashley's research focuses on place-based learning, high-impact practices, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. She recently published the monograph [*Learning on Location: Place-Based Approaches for Diverse Learners in Higher Education*](#) (Routledge / Elon University Center for Engaged Learning, 2023), which provides a framework for deepening student learning through place-making practices of writing, walking, and civic engagement. She also has published books, articles, and chapters in writing studies.
- **Susan Hrach** is the author of the 2022 Silver Nautilus Award-winning book [*Minding Bodies: How Physical Space, Sensation, and Movement Affect Learning*](#) (WVU Press, 2021). As an undergraduate, she spent a year studying at the Universität Innsbruck, Austria, which shaped her lifelong interests in world literature, translation studies, and global education. Her experiences teaching internationally inform her on-going research and practice. Since 2012 she has served as director of the Faculty Center and professor of English at Columbus State University in Georgia. Recognized by the University System of Georgia with a statewide Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Award, she has also served as 2022-23 Fulbright Canada Distinguished Research Chair in SoTL.
- **Lauren Kearns** is a Professor of Dance, the Interdisciplinary Coordinator of Dance Science, former Department Chairperson, and the Founding Coordinator of the BFA Dance Program and the BS Dance Science Program at Elon University. She is a published scholar, a certified and registered yoga teacher at the E-RYT 500 level, a registered somatic dance educator with ISMETA, and is a Balanced Body comprehensively trained Pilates educator. Kearns has presented her creative and dance science research at national and international dance conferences since

2000 and taught at Dance Ireland in Dublin, Ireland, as part of their Healthier Dancer Days in 2018, 2020, and 2022. She is the author of [*Somatics in Action: A Mindful and Physical Conditioning Tool for Movers*](#), published by Handspring Publishing and released in October of 2017. Her most recent creative project was a residency at Murate Arts District in Florence, Italy, resulting in a site-specific dance piece and dance film, in the summer of 2024.

- **Phillip Motley** is Professor of Communication Design and Director, Graduate Programs for the School of Communications at Elon University. His research interests include pedagogies of design and experiential learning, especially service-learning and social innovation. He is a co-author of [*An Introduction to Visual Theory and Practice in the Visual Age*](#), a co-editor of [*Redesigning Liberal Education: Innovative Design for a Twenty-First-Century Undergraduate Education*](#), and has published his scholarship in peer-reviewed journals including *Communication Teacher*, *Teaching and Learning Inquiry*, *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, and *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*. Professor Motley received his MFA in Industrial Design from North Carolina State University and his BA in Fine Art from Davidson College.

Seminar participants also will work with two [CEL Student Scholars](#) as partners throughout the three years.

How to Apply

To apply, submit a completed application and abbreviated curriculum vita by **February 17, 2025**. The application, available online at <https://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/research-seminars/learning-on-location>, asks for the following information:

- Which research topic above are you *most* interested in examining, and why?
- How does this topic fit with your existing work as a scholar or practitioner? Does it have a larger institutional context at your campus?
- What research methods do you anticipate employing to study this theme? Do you have experience using these methods?
- Are there unique demographic/background variables at your institution that are relevant to this research topic?
- What is the institutional context for your work?
- What kinds of expertise do you bring to the study of learning on location?

More than one person per institution may apply. Although CEL Seminar projects will be multi-institutional, applicants should not form these teams before they apply; CEL seminar leaders will create initial teams based on applicants' information, and accepted participants will have the opportunity to confirm or shift their team placement during the first summer meeting.

A review committee, including the seminar leaders, will review applications, make selections, and notify all applicants by **March 17, 2025**. Questions about the application and selection process should be directed to centerforengagedlearning@elon.edu.

To learn more about the 2025 – 2027 research seminar on Learning on Location: Place-Based Pedagogies in Higher Education, visit: <https://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/research-seminars/learning-on-location/>

To learn more about the Center for Engaged Learning, visit: <http://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/>

References

Holmes, Ashley J. 2023. *Learning on Location: Place-Based Approaches for Diverse Learners in Higher Education*. Routledge.

Hrach, Susan. 2021. *Minding Bodies: How Physical Space, Sensation, and Movement Affect Learning*. West Virginia University Press.

Kearns, Lauren W. 2010. "Somatics in Action: How 'I Feel Three-Dimensional and Real' Improves Dance Education and Training." *Journal of Dance Education* 10 (2): 35–40.
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Motley, Phillip. N.d. "Immersive Learning." Center for Engaged Learning. Elon University.
<https://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/resources/immersive-learning/>