

Title: Concepts and Techniques of Community Participation
Course Number: SW 654
Term: Fall 2015
Credit Hours: 3
Instructor: Bonnie Dockham, LMSW
Contact Details: bonnie@cancersupportannarbor.org, 734-277-5911 (c)
Time/Place: Friday, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm, Room TBD
Office Hours: By appointment

Please feel free to make appointments or ask questions via e-mail. Please allow 24 hours for email responses. Emails may not be returned over the weekend. In the subject line please put "SW654." For brief questions, I will often be available during class breaks and following class.

If you have a disability or condition that may interfere with your participation in this course, please schedule a private appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations for your specific needs. This information will be kept strictly confidential. Please also contact the Services for Students with Disabilities office at G-664 Haven Hall, 734-763-3000 to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

This course utilizes the new M Canvas Pilot as a resource for all course readings outside of the required text as well as for the submission of assignments. Assignment descriptions/postings, readings for each class and grading can be found on the site. Please review the site carefully.

Course Description

The course examines community participation as a process of assessment and involving people in policy formation, organizational development, and program planning. Advanced theoretical frameworks and skills for organizational and community-based social work practice are the foundation of this course. The empowering benefits of participation for personal development, organizational capacity-building and creating community change are highlighted. Special emphasis is placed on models for organizing in diverse communities and with underrepresented groups.

Course Content

This course will present the basic knowledge and skills required for community organizing. The course will include exercises that aid developing the skills to assess, engage and manage a community organizing project from start to finish.

Students will learn to understand the multi-dimensional process of community organizing and how to use oneself to create positive change. The pros and cons of using various types of engagement and assessment techniques will be compared including asset-based and needs based approaches.

The course is organized across the semester to reflect the typical exposure and experience of social work interns. Students will be introduced to the people involved with various aspects of

community organizing ranging from engagement to fundraising.

Ethical issues arising in community participation will be assessed in conjunction with course objectives. In particular, emphasis will be placed on the social worker's responsibility to clients and to promote the general welfare of society, e.g. primacy of clients' interests; rights and prerogatives of clients; prevention and elimination of discrimination; equal access to resources, services, and opportunities; respect for the diversity of cultures; and informed participation by the public.

Course Objectives

1. Understand the changing context of community participation in a diverse democracy.
2. Analyze major models and methods of community participation practice, e.g., mono-cultural, pluralist, multicultural.
3. Apply advanced skills to promote participation e.g., assessing community conditions, making participatory plans, representing diverse interests, understanding politics of participation, increasing intergroup dialogue, building collaborative alliances, and finding common ground.
4. Describe organized efforts at participation, and the forces that facilitate and limit these efforts.
5. Use group skills needed for increasing intercultural interaction and cross-cultural collaboration at the community level.
6. Identify problems and issues of underrepresented groups in economically disinvested, racially segregated, and/or culturally diverse communities.
7. Address issues of ethics and values arising in the field.

Course Design

This course will be conducted mainly in the classroom using lectures, discussions, self-assessment activities, case studies, small group exercises, and guest presenters to convey relevant content. Students will also participate in field visits to community-based organizations. Course assignments will include readings, papers, group work, case studies, and action projects that involve these methods.

Relationship to the School's Curricular Themes

Theme Relation to Social Justice and Social Change:	Program examples from social justice and social change organizations and the challenges they often face around organizing are identified and discussed. Strategies that seek to redress past discrimination and oppression through community development are discussed. Organizational policies to promote social justice and social change are discussed.
Theme Relation to Behavioral and Social Science	Current theories and conceptual models of the incorporation of agencies and the resource environment facing human service organizations and their programs are presented. Results of empirical research on effective of human service and related organizations are included.
Theme Relation to Multiculturalism and Diversity	Program examples used in class come from organizations serving diverse populations. Challenges with engaging with such organizations are addressed. Students will develop the capacity to identify ways in which dimensions of diversity (ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender [including gender identity and

Theme Relation
to Promotion,
Prevention,
Treatment and
Rehabilitation

gender expression], marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation) influence evaluation processes and outcomes. While the course presumes activities in organizations in the United States, selected issues affecting of international or collaborative programs are discussed.

Students will develop the capacity to create and evaluate prevention and promotion as well as rehabilitation programs that are designed to reduce the onset risk of problems and promote healthy development.

Learning Philosophy and Environment

Accepting and respecting diversity within the classroom is fundamental in order to set the stage for learning and optimal growth. Attention will be given to how people learn, their interests, and communication styles to facilitate learning. A core concept is valuing each individual experience and encouraging sharing of these perspectives to deepen individual and group learning. Students are expected to share their insights with the class throughout the semester while recognizing the impact of race, religion, gender and other influences in each discussion. As such, students should try to maintain a reflexive stance, carefully considering their thoughts and those of others. Everyone benefits if one thinks of the class as a collaborative effort, and the classroom as a space in which our learning can be enhanced by the contributions of others. Lastly, this course will be guided by the principles empowerment. This means all participants in an educational endeavor are active, self-directed learners. Each student will receive educational benefit equivalent to his or her effort.

Course Materials

Readings in this course will be a combination of articles and chapters from selected text. A listing of the weekly readings will listed on Canvas – the University online course management system. Information and instruction on how to use this site is already provided by the university, therefore no class time will be devoted to instruction on how to use this system.

Readings for each week will be found on the “Assignments” link on Canvas, in the “Readings” section. Readings may be changed by the instructor up to two weeks before they are due. Students are expected to have completed all assigned readings prior to class, as these will serve as the basis for class discussion, activities, and assignments.

Class Schedule

In effort to meet the unique needs of each group of students, topics may be modified throughout the course, but ample notice will be provided. Refer to Canvas for the most updated class schedule.

Assignments

Assignments for this class involve a strong emphasis on group work and working in teams. Community based participatory work and team/group work are essential to successfully completing assignments. The assignments require you to be open to new ways of learning, strive for cultural humility (not merely cultural competence) and real, concrete action instead of hypothetical strategies. The team assignments in this course build on each other and are tightly interwoven. It would be helpful to you if you approach them as a semester long group project. The majority of assignments will be done in small groups, so team work is crucial to your successfully completing the course. A listing of assignments is as follows.

Assignment	Due Date
Tracking personal biases	October 23, midnight
Community Participation Project: Organizational Assessment & Proposal	November 20, midnight
Community Participation Project: Results & Presentation	December 11 in class

Assignment #1: Tracking Personal Biases

Due: October 23, midnight

In order to fully understand an organization and/or community, we must truly understand ourselves. That said, we must be aware of our personal biases and how these may influence our work. Organizations, like individuals, often function under a culture or belief system that has been established from within the organization in addition to outside influence. In this assignment you will monitor your own thoughts and feelings while working with others in this class as well as within the school. For four weeks, track your reactions to the community weekly and submit a summary of the results. Your summary should include:

1. What was surprising about your reflections? If nothing, why do you think that is?
2. How can this information be helpful to you if you were to consider programmatic implementation within the school?
3. How could this information benefit the community or organization?

Assignment #2: Organizational Assessment and Project Proposal

Due: November 20, midnight

This proposal should provide an overview and description of your project. Each proposal should address the following points with enough detail so that I understand how your project relates to the course objectives. However, the proposal should also be concise enough to fit within a 3 - 4 page outline as detailed below.

1. Brief Project Overview - What is the problem you are trying to solve or address and how?
2. Community Background and Target Population – Describe what you already know about the community that you are focusing on and the target population. Think about history, current levels of participation, demographics, etc. Who are the major players? Describe how you will go about assessing the current level of community participation, what data you will rely on, what are the sources for accessing data?
3. Literature Review- What does the scholarly and mainstream literature say about this topic?
4. Cultural Assessment - What are the values of the community or organization? How do these values impact processes? Also, make sure to indicate how you will ensure that cultural humility and ethical principles of community practice will be upheld.
5. Asset-based Assessment – Discuss the strengths of and successes of the organization, area, or effort as far as how they have benefited communities across the U.S. or a specific community that you have focused on. If focusing on an issue, identify one or two exemplar approaches that have been used to address the issue.

6. Barriers or Challenges - What are the major challenges related to your topic, organization, or effort? What are the causes of these challenges? What is being done to address them moving forward?
7. Community Entry - Describe how you are accessing and entering the community. Speak to ethical considerations, whether you are an insider or outsider, who your gatekeepers will be, and what roles they will play in your project.
8. Community Engagement – Describe briefly what considerations you will need to think about in terms of interacting with the community. Are there current or historical socio/economic/political tensions or issues that you must take into account? What is the nature of privilege and social justice in this community that may impact engagement?
9. Community Participation Goal – Describe your goals for this project and your rationale.

Assignment #3: Report & Presentation

Due: December 11, in class

You will assemble quantitative and qualitative data to present as a part of your presentation and a report of your participation project. This will include concise review of the second assignment in addition to specific recommendations for next steps and measureable goals. It should be presented as if you were presenting this project to your board or organization leaders. Meeting minutes and notes are required to be submitted with your report. These minutes should include meetings within your team and key stakeholders in the community. The meeting minutes and notes should be submitted at the end of the term along with the report. Each group will present their report to the class and should include both an asset-based and needs based evaluation. Each group will be allotted 20 minutes for the presentation.

In-Class Assignments and Class Participation

Assignments will be given throughout the class. Class time will be given for their completion, although it may be necessary for some time to be spent on these assignments outside of class. It is expected that students participate actively and equally in class discussion (both large and small group), class assignments and group activities. This participation and in-class assignment section represents 20% of the total grade.

Evaluation

The following scale will be used in assessing your final grade:

Item	% of Total Grade
Class Participation & In Class Assignments	20
Assignment #1: Tracking Personal Biases	15
Assignment #2: Organizational Assessment & Proposal	40
Assignment #3: Results and Presentation	25
Total	100

Final grades will be determined on the basis of performance. Letter grades will be allocated as follows:

97-100 = A+

93-96 = A

90-92 = A-

87-89 = B+

83-86 = B

80-82 = B-

77-79 = C+

73-76 = C

70-72 = C-

67-69 = D+

63-66 = D

60-62 = D-

Extensions

Requests for extensions will be considered for a valid reason (e.g. funerals, illness). These are to be made at least 48 hours in advance of the assignment due date. A rationale for the request is to be provided by email so there is a communication trail.

Attendance Policy

Students are able to miss two classes for any reason (e.g., personal, sick, religious holidays). There is no need to email the instructor with your reason for missing the class(es). Students who miss three classes will receive a 10 point reduction. Four or more missed classes will result in a larger point deduction. Students who will miss more than two classes due to religious holidays must make arrangements with the instructor at the beginning of the course to avoid a grade penalization. *Please note that the student is responsible for all of the content missed during your absences. There will be no opportunity for in-class assignments to be made up.*