

## **CUNY City University of New York**

### **Community Based Research - Spring 2016**

PSC 31051; [B]74665

Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:30-10:45am, location TBD

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Office hours: Mondays, 11am-noon and by appointment, location TBD

## **I. GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Course Description**

*This class will be an introduction to the methods and theory of community-based research. It will cover how and why research in partnership with community-based organizing differs from more standard approaches to social science research. It will cover several approaches to community-based and participatory-action research, helping students to understand their differences, similarities, and stakes. The course will be taught in conjunction with actual community organizing efforts and give students practice in designing, co-designing, and carrying out community-based research projects with direct policy relevance. It is one of 2 required courses for the new "Social Change Practice" minor at City College but is open to others as well.*

### **Learning Objectives**

In this seminar, students will:

- Develop an understanding of how social science research can support and strengthen community organizing by reviewing examples of historically significant community-based research projects.
- Learn how to craft and navigate community-based research by planning and conducting a project in conjunction with a local community-organizing campaign.
- Gain experience and build skills in collaborating with fellow students and community partners to create and use research products, including research reports, policy proposals, and popular education materials.

### **Key Texts**

- [Research for Organizing Toolkit](#)
- [Community Toolkits](#) - #2: Assessing Community Needs and Resources and #3: Analyzing Problems and Goals

### **Grading Breakdown**

Class participation: 20%

Reading responses: 20%

Individual components of team project: 20%

Group components of team project: 40%

## II. COURSE POLICIES

**Respectful participation:** People come to this class with different kinds of academic expertise, life experiences, and customs (both individual and cultural). These differences can, and hopefully will, contribute positively to the substance and quality of class discussion. However, because these differences are often related to social inequalities, they can also be a source of misunderstanding and frustration. It is thus important to keep in mind that active, respectful class participation is as much about listening to and engaging the ideas of others as it is about speaking one's own mind.

**Attendance and tardiness:** While students may have 2 "no questions asked" absences from this class; unexcused absences on assignment due dates will result in a deduction of 5 points from the assignment grade. At times tardiness is unavoidable; however excessive tardiness (i.e. showing up more than 5-10 minutes late) and habitual tardiness will result in a lower participation grade. If you know you will miss class due to a conflict with another course, an appointment, illness, etc. tell me in advance.

**Reading:** All readings must be completed before the date they are listed on the syllabus—meaning you have read the text before coming to class. The readings can be found on our course website.

**Technology:** You are permitted to use your cell phones, laptops, and other devices in class, but only for purposes that are directly relevant to what is going on in class. Please do not violate this policy. And, if you do use electronic equipment, please do so in a way that is not distracting to your fellow classmates or to your instructor.

**Late assignments:** Proper documentation is required when submitting late assignments; otherwise, points may be deducted at my discretion. After-the-fact requests for extensions and incompletes will not be considered.

**Grade Changes (for all assignments):** Students wanting clarification on a particular grade must submit a request in writing explaining their question/dispute and documenting evidence or alternative explanations.

**Email Policy:** If you are using email to contact me, please use formal etiquette. This means that you should observe the following guidelines when sending messages: a) include a meaningful subject line [e.g., Seminar 4: help with paper]; b) format the message as if it were a letter (with a salutation [Dear Professor], body [I am contacting you because...], and closing [Sincerely,]); and c) end the email with your full name and telephone number. Please do not send a message from an unprofessionally or obscenely named email account (best to use an address such as: [first-name.last-name@wherever.edu](mailto:first-name.last-name@wherever.edu)). We will use email extensively for communication in this course—it is your responsibility to check your email daily and respond to messages in a timely fashion (usually within 24 hours). I will usually

acknowledge email communications from you within a day, although at times resolving inquiries will take longer.

**Academic dishonesty and plagiarism:** If caught plagiarizing or cheating you may fail the assignment, the course, and/or be subject to the college's disciplinary procedures. You may not copy work done by others: do not take the words or ideas of another person without acknowledging the original author. Examples of plagiarism include copying from another student's homework assignment or taking phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or statistical findings from a variety of sources and piecing them together without citing them. Taking phrases, paragraphs or papers from course readings, the Internet or other students and representing them as your own falls under this category.

Be mindful of "inadvertent" plagiarism: Careless or disorganized writing practices sometimes students to commit plagiarism without malicious intent to do so. For example, including a bibliography at the end of your paper is not sufficient. To avoid plagiarism you must provide citations for each and every source you use within the body of your paper, both for direct quotes and for information. This allows the reader to see how you are putting together your argument and evaluate your supporting evidence. Also remember if you are using multiple quotes or pieces of information from a source, you must provide a citation for every quote/piece of information you use from that source; it is not enough to cite it once.

**The bottom line on plagiarism is that** you must always indicate when you have used an idea from someone else's work; anything else constitutes stealing from others and violates both the ethics of this class and established academic standards. I may use search engines and software programs to evaluate your work for evidence of plagiarism—keep in mind that this can be as simple as copying and pasting a sentence into Google. See the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity, adapted June 28, 2004 for more information: <http://web.cuny.edu/academics/info-central/policies/academic-integrity.pdf>.

### ***Use of Student Work***

All programs in New York State undergo periodic reviews by accreditation agencies. For these purposes, samples of student work are occasionally made available to those professionals conducting the review. Anonymity is assured under these circumstances. If you do not wish to have your work made available for these purposes, please let the professor know before the start of the second class. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

### ***Resources for Students with Disabilities***

The AccessAbility Center for students is in NAC 1/218; the phone number is 212-650-5913.

## **III. ASSIGNMENTS**

### **Class Participation (20% of final grade)**

Your active participation in class meetings is essential to your success in this course.

**Why participate?** Active involvement helps us learn by increasing what we remember, assimilate new knowledge, and use our learning in new contexts.

Participation in discussions, group activities and writing exercises will help you to develop your thinking, articulate your thoughts and receive constructive feedback; listening to others and engaging in learning activities with them exposes you to new ways of interpreting and applying course material, theories and concepts.

***Effective participation happens before, during and after class:***

**Before class:** Complete all required readings, giving yourself ample time to not only read, but to take notes and reflect on the text before class. This will be an enormous help to your ability to retain information and participate meaningfully: that is, it will help you learn. When taking notes, think about important points, key terms, words or sections you do not understand, perspectives with which you disagree or can present an alternative point of view, etc. (This component is built in to our course through the reading responses).

**During class:** In class, we will complete brief writing exercises, small group activities, and large discussions based on the reading—be prepared to participate, listen and respond to others thoughtfully and respectfully. While speaking up in class discussions is not the only way to participate in class, oral communication is a necessary component of participation. To promote oral communication we may often consider a question “round robin” style so that each student answers the same question; we may also hold discussions using the rule “no one speaks twice until everyone has spoken once”.

At minimum, students should be present, actively listening and not disruptive in class discussions. Beyond this, students should try to contribute regular, on-topic comments that demonstrate reading completion AND comprehension. Excellent participation would go further by regularly contributing comments that demonstrate reflection on key themes of the reading, and which move the conversation forward/make connections across readings/ask innovative questions or make insightful observations.

**After class:** Reflect on the key points raised in the discussion, and how you contributed to the discussion. Consider how you might improve the quality of future discussion through your modifying your preparation before class and/or your contributions during class. Communicate with the professor about difficulties with reading or discussion, or sensitive/personal issues that affect your participation.

### **Reading responses (20% of final grade)**

To encourage careful, critical engagement with class readings, and to foster meaningful class discussions, your assignment is to prepare a reading response accompanied by a discussion question and post this to the course site by 8pm the night before class. You can use this as an opportunity to go over something you did not understand, to start a discussion about an important theme of the reading, or to

promote discussion across key texts. To complete this assignment you must do 4 reading responses between Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> and March 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### **Group components of team project: (40% of final grade)**

All students will complete team research projects in collaboration with a local community organizing campaign, and prepare an innovative project deliverable based on your research. *This will involve work outside of class to be scheduled with the community partner.* Teams will present their projects and deliverables to the class and your community partners at the end of the semester.

- **Research Workplan (2-3 pages):** Each team will be responsible for developing a work plan that outlines your group's project goals, strategies, activities, and proposed research products; it should also include a project timeline and specify the responsibilities of each team member.
- **Research Products:** Each team is required to create both of the following:
  - **A Research Report OR White Paper (4-5 pages)** summarizing your research findings for your target audience.
  - **Popular Education/Public Engagement Product:** These should be visually interesting, user-friendly products that your community partners can use to facilitate public dialogue/community organizing around your research findings.
- **Project presentations:** You will present your research for feedback throughout the semester, and your team should incorporate feedback before making your final project presentations to the class and to your community partners.

### **Individual components of team project (20% of final grade)**

The team project for this course constitutes a large part of your grade, but you will also receive individual grades on components of the team project.

- **Project update (10% of final grade):**

Your assignment for the second individual component of the team project is to complete a project update. Each team member will be responsible for one update due on one of the dates listed above. Work out which team member will write each update and post this in your group space on the course e-portfolio site. Project updates should include: an overview of key project activities; an update on progress made, interesting findings, challenges encountered and tasks remaining; and an assessment of the group's process and dynamics (how members are working together). Project updates are a means of keeping the group on track and maintaining open lines of communication, as preparing them will require team check-ins. Your project updates should range from 1000-1500 words, and be posted to your group space on the course site on the due date.

- **Self and peer project evaluation (10% of final grade):**  
Your assignment for the third component is to complete a (confidential) evaluation of your and your teammates' contributions to the team project, as well your group process and project outcomes.

#### **IV. SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS**

##### **Part 1: What is Community-Based Research?**

**Monday, Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>** Introductions to the course and each other

- [Activity: Breaking down stereotypes of researchers](#)

**Wednesday, Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>**

- Discuss: "The nature and process of Social Science Research" by Bryman (p. 3-16)
- "Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research" by Guba and Lincoln (p. 105-117)

**Monday, Feb. 8<sup>th</sup>**

- Discuss: "[Critical PAR as Public Science](#)" by Torre et al.

**Wednesday Feb. 10<sup>th</sup>**

- Discuss: "A Wrinkle in Time: Tracing a Legacy of Public Science through Community Self-Surveys and Participatory Action Research" by Torre and Fine

**Monday, Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>:** NO Class, Presidents Day

**Wednesday, Feb. 17<sup>th</sup>**

- Review inspiring examples of Community-Based Research projects:
  - [Banking on Vacancy](#)
  - [Morris Justice Project](#)

Guest speaker from Morris Justice or Picture the Homeless

##### **Part 2: Why Community Matters**

**Monday, Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup>**

- Discuss: [Young I. M., "Five faces of oppression," from The Community Development Reader, p. 328-337.](#)

### **Wednesday, Feb. 24<sup>th</sup>**

- Discuss: [DeFilippis, J. and Saegert, S. \(2012\) "Communities Develop: The Question is, How?" from The Community Development Reader, p. 1-7.](#) and
- [DeFilippis, J. "Community Control and Development: The Long View," from The Community Development Reader, p. 30-37.](#)

### **Monday, February 29<sup>th</sup>**

- Discuss: [DeRienzo, H. \(2012\). "Community Organizing for Power and Democracy: Lessons Learned from a Life in the Trenches," from The Community Development Reader p. 244-248.](#)
- [Angotti, T. \(2008\) "Community Planning without Displacement: Strategies for Progressive Planning," from New York for Sale: Community Planning Confronts Global Real Estate, p. 1-34.](#)

### **Wednesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>**

- Introduction to Group Projects
  - Guest speakers from the New York City Community Land Initiative and Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA)
  - Background readings TBA

### **Part 3: The Craft of Community-Based Research**

### **Monday, March 7<sup>th</sup>**

- Activity: [Components of Participatory Action Research \(PAR\)](#)

### **Wednesday, March 9<sup>th</sup>**

- Discuss: [Principles of PAR](#) and if PAR is right for your community/issue

### **Monday March 14<sup>th</sup>**

- Activity: [Developing Research Goals and Questions](#)

### **Wednesday March 16<sup>th</sup>**

- Activity: [Choosing a Research Method](#)

**Monday, March 21<sup>st</sup>**

- Activity: [Developing a Research Timeline](#)

**Wednesday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>**

- Present and Discuss: [Research Workplans](#)

**Monday, March 28<sup>th</sup>**

- Activity: Develop Research Instruments

**Part 4: Fieldwork**

**Wednesday, March 30<sup>th</sup>:**

- Work on [getting your data!](#)
- Meet with Community Group Liaison

**Monday, April 4<sup>th</sup>**

- Activity: [Entering your data into a database](#)

**Wednesday, April 6<sup>th</sup>**

- Continue with data collection

**Monday April 11<sup>th</sup>**

- Activity: [From Data to “Research Findings”](#)

**Wednesday April 13<sup>th</sup>**

- Activity: [Understanding Policy Recommendations and Targets](#)

**Part 5: Research in Action: Advocacy, Activisms and Alternatives**

**Monday, April 18<sup>th</sup>**

- Discuss: Berg, B. (2007). [Introduction to New York City Politics: Governing Gotham](#) and

- The Public Advocate (archive). [Institutions that Impact our Lives](#). (All 3 sections: How the New York City Government Works, Other Local Institutions and Centers of Power, and Making Your Voice Heard)

**Wednesday, April 20<sup>th</sup>**

- Activity: [Creating Effective Policy Recommendations](#)

**Monday, April 25<sup>th</sup> and Wednesday, April 27<sup>th</sup>: NO CLASS- SPRING BREAK☺**

**Monday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>**

- Activity: Make a plan for [Presenting and Reporting your Research](#)

**Wednesday, May 4<sup>th</sup>**

- Develop Research Reports/Products

**Monday, May 9<sup>th</sup>**

- **DUE:** DRAFT Research Reports/Products
- Meet with Community Group Liaisons

**Wednesday, May 11<sup>th</sup>**

- Activity: [Releasing your Research Products](#)

**Monday, May 16<sup>th</sup>**

- Present research products to class and community partners for feedback
- Self and Peer Project Evaluation

**Wednesday, May 18<sup>th</sup> (last class!)**

- Present research products to class and community partners for feedback
- Course Evaluations and Feedback

**Monday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>**

- **DUE:** FINAL Research Products