

COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH TO ANALYZE THE COMMUNITY WHERE YOU'RE WORKING

Learning goals:

Upon completion of this course the student will –

- Deepen his/her understanding of the people, history, culture, issues and social and organizational fabric of the community they live and/or work in
- Be able to demonstrate that he/she has developed the initial research and analytic skills which they need to develop such an understanding
- Be able to demonstrate an initial understanding of how the community is affected by the broader society, social, cultural, economic and political systems; and how Race, Class, Gender, Belief Systems, Bias, Power, Privilege and Opportunity affect communities;
- Have become generally familiar with how social movements, community organizing and other change strategies shape a community and can shape its future;
- Have deepened his/her understanding of his/her own identity in the context of this study of the community and its context.

Each student will make demonstrable progress in developing the following additional skills for community change work:

- Growing interpersonal skills for building relationships that enable him/her to work at the community level and encourage people to think more deeply about their community and participate more actively on issues which concern them
- Skills in participatory research and popular education which help develop people's capacity to participate and develop as informed change agents, organizers and leaders in their communities;
- Skills/tools for critical thinking, strategic planning, and reflective practice

Possible Series of Topics for Course:

Sessions:

1. Intro –

- Why is it important to develop a growing understanding of a community?
- What are the key things you want to know if you're going to work on community issues and be a change agent? What do you expect to find? – economically, socially, racially, culturally, etc.?
- What difficulties are you likely to face as an outsider? As a person who comes from that community?

2. Walking tour –Instructions, role playing, etc.

3. Report back from walking tour –

- What did you observe? What differences were there in their observations? Why were their different observations?
- Major surprises? What and why? Discussion

Prep for next class

4. Looking at a community in the context of the city and region
 - Where is it? How is it seen by residents? By others in the city? By the movers and shakers? What is its role and image?
 - What are the primary links to the city? How strong are they? What barriers are there?
5. Economic audit – reading, discussion, develop skills
6. Economic audit – Report back; discussion to develop shared analysis of the community’s economy and economic actors
7. Cultural and social audit – demographics, needs, assets, service provision
8. Political audit – representation and power, electoral participation, accountability
9. Political audit – current issues, opposing views and forces, process for decisions on those issues
10. Organizational audit – Identification of nonprofit sector in community, “community based organizations”, other membership organizations, noncommunity-based nonprofits, private for profit sector organizations, public agencies, political organizations
11. Organizational audit – Current landscape of community leadership, roles of various community-based organizations, other nonprofits, private for profit sector organizations
12. Organizational audit -- Gaps in organizations; future roles for community organizing, coalition-building, other community action