

Community Organization and Institution Building RPTS 605

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Meeting Time: 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

COURSE OVERVIEW:

Communities are fundamental units of social organization. They are the arenas of social interaction where most important relationships are structured by the presence of informal and formal organizations. We all are, and will continue to be citizens in one or more communities. We are born into, are socialized by and die within the boundaries of our communities. However, neither our communities nor ourselves are unaffected by external forces. Indeed, communities of all sizes and descriptions increasingly are being influenced by outside forces over which they have little or no control. Policy decisions by state and federal agencies and large corporations which are beyond local control have the power to create “boom towns” or “ghost towns.” Study of community organization and their institutions provides an opportunity to examine how these are shaped by our social environment and how our environment changes over time.

Using a multidisciplinary approach the course will examine contemporary manifestations of community (or lack thereof), the forces shaping communities, the social and cultural diversity of communities, how these forces re-structure communities, and community responses to these changes. We will examine the ways in which communities organize and create social institutions that are responsive to the needs of individuals, families, and communities.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

According to Robert Booth Power, author of *The Dance with Community*, the intellectual struggle going on in our universities and communities today is about recognizing that our impoverished neighborhoods and the people that live in them are important to us all, and ignoring them by stereotyping, often results in a loss of our core principles of who we are as a country. Hence, the course is designed to achieve a balanced development of the student and to orient students to do professional work with all types of communities, their residents, and their organizations and institutions regardless of circumstances.

GENERAL COURSE STRUCTURE

The course will be conducted in the traditional seminar format. This means that there will be much more interaction than lecture. As such, the focus of the semester’s work will be on reading, assimilating, writing about, presenting, and discussing material relevant to course issues. It is imperative that students come prepared to be active participants in class. This preparation will require that the assigned materials be read before class. **The**

readings may be amended somewhat as the course proceeds in response to emergent student interests and ongoing projects.

OBJECTIVES

1. To provide a systematic and advanced overview of the different theoretical and applied notions associated with community and community organizations.
2. To develop the student's interest in the political-economic, socio-cultural, and socio-ecological forces that influences the processes of community organization and development and the participants in these processes.
3. To gain a better understanding of the factors promoting change in communities
4. To better understand the consequences of change
5. To develop an understanding of how social organization and local institutions can help mitigate (or worsen) the consequence of change at a local level
6. To develop critical reading and thinking skills necessary to apply theory and knowledge to better understand and support communities around the world.
7. To encourage students to explore the development of a personal philosophy and style of community and advocacy practice consistent with the discipline's philosophy, values, and ethics.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

Upon completion of this course, students are expected to have achieved a basic level of competency to:

1. Define and apply the various concepts and theories of power, community organization and leadership, and social action;
2. Demonstrate ability to analyze a community as a part of an interactive socio-ecosystem and extrapolate its power and decision making structure, and major institutional leadership;
3. Define community issues, assess needs, propose alternative interventions and appropriate courses of action as well as the current research methods in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the collective efforts; and
4. Develop a broad view of systems related to social groups and apply this knowledge in working with other professionals in promoting community organization and development, social planning, social action and institutional change.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Seminar participants will complete various assignments which will determine course grade. These assignments will allow seminar participants to earn 100 course points:

Active Seminar Participation: 25% of grade

Leading discussion: 10% of grade

Reflection paper on discussion day: 10% of grade

Book Review: 15% of grade

Term paper: 40% of grade

This assignment has two required components: (1) written project proposal (10%), and (2) 15-20 page formal written paper (30%).

Seminar absences will affect grade.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal antidiscrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services with Disabilities Room 126 Koldus Building or call 845-1637.

Aggie Honor Code

“An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do.”

Upon accepting admission to Texas A&M University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor System. Students will be required to state their commitment on examinations, research papers, and other academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the Texas A&M University Community from the requirements or the process of the Honor System. For additional information please visit: www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/ .