Tufts University Department of Urban & Environmental Policy and Planning

UEP 293-02: Community Practice Theory and Methods
Fall 2016

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Wednesdays 9:00-10:15am @ Brown House classroom (97 Talbot Ave)

Office Hours: Wed’s 1:30-3:30pm and by appointment

Description
This module introduces students to theoretical frameworks and methodologies for community-driven policy and planning practice. Students will be introduced to literature covering citizen participation, democratic practice, community organizing, social movements, and community action research. Case studies will be interwoven throughout to provide practical examples of methodologies at work. Special attention will be paid to the intercultural aspects of community practice, particularly looking at race, class, and gender.

Course Objectives

1) Introduce students to frameworks for understanding what community is, how it is (re)produced, and its role in driving policy and planning.

2) Introduce students to methods for community practice, including community organizing and social movements, community building, action research, and civic engagement/democratic practice.

3) Support students to examine the ways that power operates at community scale (among individuals and families, formal and informal groups, nonprofits, government, and the private sector) and the intercultural aspects of community practice, particularly in terms of race, class, and gender.

4) Create space for students to reflect deeply on their own identity and possible roles that they may play in community practice.

Course Requirements and Assessment

1. Class Preparation and Participation (20%)
All students are expected to read and review the required materials before class and to participate fully in class discussions. All readings will be available through Tufts Trunk, Tisch Library, and web links.

2. Reflective Journal (30%)
This Journal will consist of two postings of 500-1000 words (2-4 pages double spaced):

• Beginning of Course (due Sep 2, class 2): What does community mean to you? What are your learning goals for this course? How do you envision your role(s) in community practice?

• End of Course (due Dec 7): What have you learned in this course about community practice? How have your conceptions of community and your role in community practice changed since the beginning of the course (or not)?
3. **Case Study (50%)**

Students working individually or in small groups will explore and analyze community practice in one current (or recently completed) initiative. Possible cases include: Union United in Somerville, Residents’ Experiences of Gentrification in Somerville (action research project), Boston Youth Participatory Budgeting, Boston Resilience Collaborative, or another case that they already have some familiarity with (and approved by the instructor). The case study should result in a report with each student contributing ~2500 words (or equivalent of 10-pages double-spaced), due December 7. Each case will also be presented at the final class on December 7. The case study should have the following components:

- Profile of initiative – summary of who, what, where, and why.
- Community context – basic background on the demographics, history, and issues relevant to the community.
- Stakeholder analysis and power map – descriptions of the relevant stakeholders and analysis of their relative capacities and resources.
- Interview with stakeholder or community practitioner and/or direct observation of the initiative in action. Note that this component is optional if working as an individual.
- Analysis and Recommendations – use the frameworks and concepts introduced in the course to analyze the dynamics of community practice. What are the ways that community is defined and used? What are the power dynamics among the stakeholders? How is community mobilized and organized? What are the roles of residents, nonprofits, and professionals? How might this initiative improve its community practice?
- References – properly cite all sources (including images).

**Schedule**

**Week 1: Sep 7 Course Overview**

Course overview. What are our experiences, ideas, and ideals of community? Why focus on community in policy and planning practice? Introduce range of ways that community is framed: public participation, civic engagement, community organizing, community building, social capital, etc.

**Week 2: Sep 14 Conceptualizing Community**

What is community? How is it conceptualized in the social sciences, particularly in the community development field? What is social capital and how is it related to community?

**Readings & Resources**


**Week 3: Sep 21 Citizenship, Civic Participation, Democratic Practice**

What is the relationship between democracy and community? What are ways of “deepening democracy”? How do marginalization and precarity (uneven power relations and race/class/citizenship) affect civic participation?

**Readings & Resources**


**Week 4: Sep 28 Case Study: Union United, Somerville**

Case of Union United and development of Union Square Somerville. Guests: Ben Echeverria (Welcome Project), Karen Narefsky (Somerville Community Corporation)

**Readings & Resources**


Union United: Development without Displacement, a community practice case study website: [http://sites.tufts.edu/unionuniteduep/](http://sites.tufts.edu/unionuniteduep/)


**Week 5: Oct 5 Community Organizing and Social Movements 1**

History of modern community organizing. The Alinsky school of organizing and its critics.

**Readings & Resources**


**Week 6: Oct 12 Community Organizing and Social Movements 2**

Popular education, community building, and network models of organizing and social movements.

**Readings & Resources**


**Week 7: Oct 19 Nonprofits and Nonprofit Industrial Complex**

Role of nonprofits in community practice. Implications of nonprofit structure and funding for communities and social change.

**Readings & Resources**


**Week 8: Oct 26 Community Knowledge and Action Research**

What is the role of local knowledge in community practice? Introduce Participatory Action Research and some models of community-university partnerships based on this model.

**Readings & Resources**


Week 9: Nov 2 Policy and Planning Professionals in Community Practice

What roles are played by policy and planning professionals in community practice? What are the challenges and opportunities for professionals in government and intermediary organizations working at the community level? What cultural competencies are important for effective community practice?

Guests: Allentza Michel (Network Coordinator, Fairmount Indigo Corridor) and Marcy Ostberg (Co-Lead, Boston Housing Innovation Lab)

Readings & Resources


Week 10: Nov 9 Regions, Coalitions, and Communities

How are communities situated within regions? What is the role of coalitions in community practice? Introduce concepts of regional equity.

Readings & Resources


Week 11: Nov 16 Community and Technology

How are the internet and social media affecting community practice? How are these new technologies being used for public participation and civic engagement? Digital games and virtual realities for policy and planning.

Readings & Resources


**No Class Nov 23 Thanksgiving Holiday**

**Week 12: Nov 30 Case Study: Boston Ujima Project**

Case study of the Boston Ujima Project, a community finance and new economy initiative. Guest: Sarah Jimenez

**Readings & Resources**


**Week 13: Dec 7 Case Study Presentations**

Student presentations of Community Practice Case Studies.