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 Nov 4, 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 9): 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 Memo (50%)**

Students working individually or in small groups will explore and analyze community practice in one current (or recently completed) community initiative. Students should choose either the Union United case in Somerville, the Boston Youth Participatory Budgeting process, or another case that they already have some familiarity with (and approved by the instructor). The case memo is an 8-10 page paper (double spaced) and is due December 9. It consists of 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 [optional if working as an individual]
- Analysis – 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?
- References – properly cite all sources.

**Schedule**

**Week 1: Oct 28 Course Overview -- Conceptualizing Community**

Course overview. What are your experiences, ideas, and ideals of community? Introduce range of ways that community is framed: public participation, civic engagement, community organizing, community building, social capital, etc.

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 (58 pgs)


**Week 2: Nov 4 Democracy and Community -- Case: Union United Somerville**

What is 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?

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

*Due: Reflective Journal 1*
Readings (76 pgs)


Union United website: http://www.unionunitedsomerville.com/ -- read About Us page and browse rest of site.


Week 3: Nov 10 (TUESDAY) Community Organizing and Social Movements

History and models of modern community organizing. The Alinsky school of organizing and its critics. Popular education, community building, and network models of organizing and social movements.

Readings (93 pgs)


Week 4: Nov 19 (THURSDAY) Nonprofits and Community – Regions and Coalitions


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

Readings (73 pgs)


**Week 5: Dec 2 Community Knowledge -- Professionals in Community Practice**

Community Knowledge. 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.

Professionals in community practice. What roles do professionals play? 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?

Guest: Wilnelia Rivera, Project Director, Roxbury Massachusetts Advanced Polytechnic Pathways

Readings (95 pgs)


**Week 6: Dec 9 Community Technology -- Case Study: Boston Youth Participatory Budgeting**

Community 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.
Case study of the 2014 Youth Participatory Budget process in Boston. Guests: Aaron Tanaka, UEP Visiting Practitioner & Center for Economic Democracy, and Abi Vladeck, City of Boston

Due: Reflective Journal 2 and Case Memo

Readings (68 pgs)


Browse Engagement Lab at http://engagementgamelab.org/


Boston “Youth Lead the Change” website for the participatory budgeting project: http://www.cityofboston.gov/youthzone/youthleadthechange/. Watch both short videos on the About page and browse the rest.