

# UNIVERSITY OF DENVER — COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

## CUI 4036: Community-Based Research

Winter Quarter, Wesley Hall, Room 302, Tuesday: 6:30-9:00 PM. In addition we will hold meetings with community partners and/or research teams at times to be arranged.

Instructor: Nick Cutforth (ncutfort@du.edu; Tel: 303/871-2477; fax: 303/871.3422)

Course Consultant: Gary Lichtenstein ([garyl@stanfordalumni.org](mailto:garyl@stanfordalumni.org); Tel: 720/570.4145)

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### Purpose and Goals:

Community-based research (CBR) combines new paradigms in research methods with an orientation to democratic processes of social and organizational change. During the course of the quarter we will undertake to:

- Explain the principles of CBR, including research design, sampling, and data collection and analysis;
- Examine examples of CBR in different contexts;
- Compare it with other research methods;
- Conduct a CBR project by working collaboratively with other students and with members of a group or organization in Denver on a research project that meets some need identified by that community group;
- Write up the research project and share results;
- Help to produce knowledge that might be used to bring about some sort of meaningful social change in the community.

Achieving these goals in a 10-week quarter presents incredible challenges. Consequently this class will be unlike most that you have had. We will function more as a working group than a class. That means that each of you will have responsibility to the group to help us learn about CBR as we do it. Unlike other classes, also, your work in this class will have real stakes for real people. It will require more commitment and responsibility than most classes; it will also be one of your most rewarding educational and life experiences.

There is a textbook and other readings for this class.

- Strand, K., Marullo, S., Cutforth, N., Stoecker, R., & Donohue, P. (2003). *Community-based research and higher education: Principles and practices*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass
- I will also distribute some articles during the class to support our thinking and doing.

In addition, Dr. Gary Lichtenstein, Director of Research and Evaluation for the Colorado Small Schools Initiative and DU adjunct professor, will be available via email, telephone, and, at times, in person to facilitate with both specific and general issues related to data

collection, analysis, ethics, communication, and reporting, as well as any of the myriad other issues that are likely to arise.

### **Organization and Course Outline**

The content of classes will consist of a configuration of lectures, discussions, group process activities, and other activities to be determined. Course topics and dates are presented as a guide. It is reasonable to assume that interests and needs may lead to some variation. Also, please note that the due dates on the syllabus are very dependent on the nature and structure of each project, so they should be considered tentative at this point.

### **Week 1: Introduction to the course, the CBR projects, and each other**

We will make introductions to each other, and examine the syllabus and structure of the course. We will spend time discussing the research projects for the quarter. Ideally, you will make a tentative decision about which research project to undertake by the end of the class, as well as the make-up of your research team. The projects that we are focusing on are provided at the end of this syllabus.

By next Monday you should have contacted the key person from the organization for the topic that interests you. They will be expecting to hear from you. Schedule a meeting with the person to formulate the research plan, and start to gather whatever background information you need for their particular project. Be sure to read the readings for Week 2 before you meet so that you go into the meeting with a working knowledge of CBR.

### **Week 2: An introduction to community-based research**

You have a lot of reading for today but it is the only way to make sure that we get started well and to provide you with a thorough understanding of what we are about. By the end of the class you should have a very clear idea of what CBR entails.

#### Readings:

Textbook: *Foreword, Preface, and Chapter 1*

#### Reflection Paper 1:

Write a one-page paper (single spaced) that addresses the following questions:

- What are the important characteristics and principles of community-based research?
- Who does CBR and why?

Hold the first of weekly meetings/e-mail conversations with members of your research team (with me, Gary, and/or the community partner there some of the time). Complete any/all of the following: visit research site, plan for/complete preliminary data collection, learn data entry procedures, and otherwise begin to work independently and collaboratively on your CBR project.

### **Week 3: Benefits and principles of community-based research partnerships**

Reading: Textbook: *Chapter 2*

### **Week 4: Community-based research partnerships**

Reading: Textbook: *Chapter 3*

#### Reflection Paper 2:

Having read chapters 2 and 3 write a two-page paper that discusses how the issues described in these chapters relate to your CBR project.

### **Week 5: Methodological principles of community-based research**

Reading: Textbook: *Chapter 4*

### **Week 6: Research practices in community-based research**

Reading: Textbook: *Chapter 5*

Reflection Paper 3:

Having read chapters 4 & 5 write a two-page paper on one of the following:

- a) Describe what you learned from what you read, including the kinds and range of purposes to which CBR can be applied and your progress in your CBR project.
- b) Describe the challenges and difficulties that you are facing in your CBR project. Consider any connections between the challenges of your project and those described in these chapters.
- c) Consider the extent to which you are utilizing the methods outlined in these chapters and their strengths and limitations.

### **Week 7: Examples of community-based research (1)**

Readings: Squires & Willet: *The fair lending coalition: Organizing access to capital in Milwaukee.*

Nyden & Adams: *Creating and sustaining racially and ethnically diverse communities.*

Textbook: *Chapters 6 & 7* (optional reading)

By the seventh week each group will have produced a detailed description of the research plan, as well as the data collection instruments themselves. These will form the basis for this class session.

### **Week 8: Examples of community-based research (2)**

Readings:

Gottlieb: Janitors and dry cleaners: *Constructing a collaborative model for environmental research*

DeJesus, et al., *Urban students tackle research on inequality.*

Textbook: *Chapter 8 & 9* (optional reading).

### **Week 9: Reflections on Community-Based Research**

Textbook: *Chapter 10.*

Reflection Paper 4:

Write a two-page paper that addresses the following questions:

- What are the important methodological and philosophical differences between community-based research and conventional academic research?
- What are some similarities and differences across different approaches to Community-Based Research?

We will discuss how you are going to present what you have learned in your CBR project.

## **Week 10: Research Reports/Celebration**

Each group will turn in their research report and make a presentation with their DU researcher/community partners, if possible. If extra time needs to be spent on polishing the final product we can negotiate the matter.

### **Course Requirements and Grading**

Your grade will be based on the quality and quantity of your contributions to your team's research project as well as the learning that you demonstrate as a result of that work. Your final grade in the course will be based on a combination of the following:

**Journal** (30%) You will keep a journal for the class in a notebook that you can carry with you. Record everything connected with this class: what is discussed and decided on during class and other meetings, all the work that you do on the research project outside of class, notes on readings your thoughts about questions that I might raise and have you think about for discussion, and reflections on your experiences with the CBR project—questions, concerns, experiences, and anything else that reflects your thinking and learning. I will collect journals twice during the quarter: at the end and at some point about mid-way through the quarter (date to be determined).

**Written Assignments** (30%) You will submit 4 reflection papers on the dates specified above. You will have an opportunity to resubmit them at the end of the course to incorporate instructor comments and new insights.

**Attendance and Participation in Class and in CBR Project** (40%) You are expected to attend every class meeting and to contribute your share, both in and outside of class, to the ongoing work of the group. Your attendance and participation will influence your final grade. On the final class session, you will submit your research report (we will determine how this might look as your CBR project unfolds).

**Assessment of Group Members** Because much of your work for this course is collaborative and done for a purpose other than just getting a grade from the professor, I may end up with somewhat limited knowledge of each student's contribution to the group's research project. For that reason, I may ask you to share with me your assessment of the quality and quantity of both your own and others' contributions to your group's work.

**Office Hours** My office is in Wesley Hall, Room 212. I don't keep formal office hours but can usually meet at students' convenience. I intend to make myself available to students in this class on Monday and Wednesday mornings, for individual, group, and/or community meetings. If you need to contact me at other times, however, you should feel free to do so. Email is best: ([ncutfort@du.edu](mailto:ncutfort@du.edu)).

Gary Lichtenstein can be reached via email ([garyL@stanfordalumni.org](mailto:garyL@stanfordalumni.org)) and telephone (720/570.4145) almost any time (if you call and receive his voice mail, leave a brief message, including a phone number).

Please feel free to talk with me at any time during the quarter about what is happening in this course and any problems or concerns that you have, personally or in regard to your group's projects.

### **Community-based research projects**

#### **(1) Manual High School**

Manual High School has recently undergone a reform process from a large, traditional high school into three smaller high schools, all on the same campus in northeast Denver. Historically, the connections between the school and the surrounding community have been strong. Two teachers, Carla Carino (Social Studies) and Matt Brown (English), work as a team to expose students to the connections between significant issues in their community and the curriculum.

#### **Research Project:**

At Manual Leadership High School, the tenth grade students will be working on a research based project on social issues in their communities. This is a combined effort on the part of the English and Social Studies teachers. Besides improving basic skills of research and writing, we want students to identify issues in their community, define the issue, and create real life solutions to these issues. Further, they would have to present their projects to fellow students and community members. Hopefully by the end of the project, they feel more connected to their communities, less hopeless, and empowered to make change. In this project you will assist Carla Carino and her colleague Matt Brown in developing and implementing this project with the high school students.

#### **Contact Persons:**

Carla Carino: [carla\\_carino@dpsk12.org](mailto:carla_carino@dpsk12.org); Phone: 303.391.6451

Matt Brown: [matt\\_brown@dpsk12.org](mailto:matt_brown@dpsk12.org); Phone: 303.391.6350 x2013

#### **Address:**

Manual Leadership High School, 1700 E. 28th Ave., Denver, CO 80205.

#### **(2) Metro Organizations for People**

Many people are concerned about the rise in community isolation, lack of involvement in the democratic process, decline of trust among neighbors, and the decline in civic engagement in our society. The members and staff of Metro Organizations for People feel we have a critical contribution to make toward reversing these trends. In association with the PICO network we have developed, through our 23 year history, an organizing model that engages large numbers of church, school, and community members in work that builds community, develops new community leaders, creates hope, and teaches people ways to powerfully engage the civic and democratic process. Acting from a foundation of democratic Judeo-Christian values, we are building a regional community organization capable of impacting issues from the local neighborhood to city, regional and statewide arenas.

**Research Project:**

Commerce City is a community that has expanded considerably during the past decade. However, its large Hispanic population has little political and economic power. MOP is interested in identifying the barriers that hinder Hispanic representation in both the growing section and older parts of Commerce City. In this project you will assist Mateos Alvarez in the task of enhancing the capacity of the Hispanic population to participate in political and economic life of Commerce City.

How to understand how to engage L in community, issues off economic power  
Inequities of political/economic power, in both the growing section and old sections of old Commerce City. Need this information to help build organizing in CC

**Contact Person:**

Mateos Alvarez. Email: [Mateos53@hotmail.com](mailto:Mateos53@hotmail.com); Phone: 720.244-5855; 303-399-2425

**Address:**

Metropolitan Organization for People, 1980 Dahlia Street, Denver, CO 80220.

**(3) Making Connections—Denver**

Making Connections—Denver and the Community Learning Network (CLN) have been working to strengthen families and children by building capacity in many of the residents of Cole, Baker, La Alma/Lincoln Park, and Sun Valley. The Transforming Schools Initiative (TSI) formerly known as the Northeast Denver Parent Organizing in Education (NEDPOE) is one of the initiatives that have adopted the CLN's mission. TSI works with the Metropolitan Organization for People (MOP) to organize and build leadership and community in the parents of Manual High School Complex and its entire feeder system.

**Research Project:**

The research team comprised of MCD staff, CLN members, Resident Research Assistants, DU and Regis University Student Research Assistants, Regis and DU professors, is charged with the task of bringing the “theory of change” to life by documenting the process of TSI (as well as three other initiatives.). The theory of change was developed by the CLN and illustrates how change can happen in these communities. In this project you will use document analysis, interviews, focus groups, and observations to describe the history and current dynamics and undertakings of these initiatives. You will also be involved in co-constructing the stories of how powerless people in often dire circumstances work for the power and ability to make meaningful change for themselves and their children. These stories will check the validity of the theory of change, and adjustments to the theory will be made accordingly. Additionally, challenges, lessons, learned, and vulnerabilities will also be highlighted through this analysis.

**Contact Person:**

Amy Engelman. Student Research Assistant, Making Connections Evaluation. Email: [aengelma@du.edu](mailto:aengelma@du.edu).