

HBHE 810/SOC 595-1: Community-Based Participatory Action Research

Fall Term 2002
Tuesdays 1:00-4:00 p.m.

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Purpose of the Seminar:

The involvement of community and organizational members in research and scholarship has emerged in a variety of fields independently. Although each field may represent different traditions and methods for collaboration, there are questions and issues that are common across fields. This interdisciplinary doctoral student seminar focuses on the ways in which social scientists and citizens collaborate to conduct research that leads to organizational or community change, and improvement in health and quality of life. Such efforts often call for clarifications and/or redefinitions of: scientists' roles and methods, the knowledge development roles of participating community members, and the varying meanings of "community." Attention will be paid to both scholarly debates and practical/logistical issues in the conduct of community-based participatory action research.

This seminar will attempt to address the major issues and methods involved in conducting community-based participatory action research across different disciplines. It provides the opportunity for graduate students and faculty from several schools and departments to come together to share perspectives, develop new skills and explore how they can apply this learning to community-based projects. The seminar is structured to meet the following objectives.

- To prepare graduate students and faculty for research, scholarship and teaching that are responsive to community needs.
- To provide an arena where people interested in this approach can share and learn from each other.
- To enable graduate students and faculty members to meet together and build the necessary skills and support for community-based participatory work for change.
- To increase interaction of students and faculty from different units in scholarly exchange on issues of community-based participatory action research that go beyond the domain of any one discipline.

- To strengthen the diversity of research and scholarly paradigms at the university.
- To encourage the development of community/university partnerships in the development of knowledge.
- To use interdisciplinary interaction to develop, strengthen and broaden our understanding of community-responsive scholarship.

Course Structure:

This faculty/student seminar is a partnership of two faculty members representing different schools, departments, and research methods. In addition, faculty from other units may be invited to participate and share their work. Students will also be encouraged to share and reflect on their backgrounds and prior experiences. This participatory and interdisciplinary process also creates a mechanism for developing our knowledge of such methods.

The course is organized around themes central to the conceptualization and practice of community-based participatory action research. These themes reflect contrasting and sometimes conflicting ways of thinking about scholarship, collaboration and research methodology. The focus of the seminar is around dialogue across and between disciplines about how these themes can be translated into the creation of community-responsive research. Central themes include the following:

- What are the approaches to community-based participatory action research? How does community-based participatory action research differ from other approaches in defining problems, gathering information and using results?
- How do scholars and organizational and community members collaborate in the process of knowledge development? What are the research methods (quantitative and qualitative) and steps in the process? What issues or problems arise from this type of work?
- How can community-based participatory action research be an empowering process for scholars and communities? What difference does it make and for whom?
- How is community-based participatory action research perceived by the academy, the University and its departments? How do scholars negotiate the conflicts and stresses inherent in this type of work?
- How have different academic researchers approached community-based participatory action research? How have these different traditions contributed to the development of knowledge?

Each of these themes is covered over the course of the semester. Themes incorporate perspectives from different fields. Exploration of each theme will include lecture, group exercises and class discussions focused on comparing, contrasting, and integrating the issues raised by the presenters and readings that represent different disciplines and voices.

Course Expectations:

- Regular attendance and active participation are expected.
- Occasional brief reflection and writing exercises will be assigned.
- A required final paper will ask you to create a proposal that applies community-based participatory methods to research on a community/organizational topic/issue of concern. In this proposal, you will discuss how you are defining a unit to work with and how this articulates with the issue; how you define the roles for the researcher and community or organizational members and how they can work together; how you would structure this research in order to work in a collaborative way; and how you would design this project to maximize participation. Due December 10, 2002.

Grading:

Grades will be assigned on a two tier basis. Everyone regularly attending and actively participating in the class, and completing the written assignments will receive a B+. A higher grade is dependent upon outstanding performance on the final paper.

Readings:

A set of readings are required for the course. They are available to copy at EXCEL Test Preparation, 1117 S. University, 996-1500.