Introduction to Community Development  SESP 202
School of Education and Social Policy
Northwestern University
Course Syllabus
Winter 2007

Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00-3:20 PM, Annenberg G02
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SESP Academic Integrity Statement:

Students in this course are expected to comply with the policies found in the booklet, “Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic Guide.” All papers submitted for credit must be sent as email attachments as well as delivered in printed form. Your written work may be electronically tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern, visit: http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/. If you need a copy of the brochure visit the SESP Student Affairs Office.

Accommodations for students with disabilities:

In compliance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Northwestern University is committed to providing equal access to all programming. Students with disabilities seeking accommodations are encouraged to contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 847.467.5530 or ssd@northwestern.edu. SSD is located in the basement of Scott Hall. SSD also has an excellent website which is viewable at http://stuaff.northwestern.edu/ssd.

Course Description:

What is community? What makes neighborhoods strong, safe, healthy, vibrant and inclusive? For more than a century, city-dwellers — and especially Chicagoans — have been tackling these challenges.

This course will examine both historic and contemporary community building efforts, paying special attention to approaches that were shaped by Chicago. This urban center, often described as a “city of neighborhoods,” has long been a seedbed for community-based problem-solving inventions. Jane Addams and her colleagues developed the Settlement House in Chicago. Saul Alinsky gave shape to modern community organizing. Scores of Chicago neighborhoods have developed effective community economic development organizations. Today,
community building continues unabated, both in Chicago and across North America.

During the first half of the quarter, the course will explore three major community development strategies—the Settlement House movement and its legacies, the varieties of community organizing approaches, and the range of community economic development strategies.

The second part of the course will focus on emerging community building work, especially that which involves “asset-based community development;” on public policy perspectives which support local citizens’ involvement and empowerment; on the analyses and controversies regarding the current condition of American communities; and finally, on ways in which Northwestern students might continue to be engaged in community-centered study and activity.

Readings will include both historic and contemporary accounts of community development approaches, and the class will meet with some of the most creative community builders in the Chicago area.

Course Rationale:

“Introduction to Community Development” is designed to provide a common language and set of perspectives for Northwestern students who may choose to pursue both curricular and extracurricular community-focused activity further—as undergraduates, and as active citizens.

Course Format:

Since nearly 100 students will be enrolled in the class, a variety of formats will be employed to enable students to be active participants in the learning process. Some sessions will feature lectures with discussion, others will involve smaller discussion sections. Guest speakers and videos will also provide variety, as will a small group assignment in the community.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course students will:

• have become familiar with the most important community development strategies, their histories and the controversies surrounding each;

• have grown more knowledgeable about urban issues, and particularly about the city of Chicago;

• have examined and communicated their own community building choices and commitments.
Required Books and the Course Packet:

There is no primary textbook for this course. Instead, we will read most of three very different books: two historic classics, by community building pioneers Jane Addams and Saul Alinsky, and a rich contemporary case study of the revival of a Boston neighborhood. The Course Packet contains a wide range of additional readings which fill in some gaps in our inquiry.

Students are required to do all of the readings as they are assigned. Class discussions and exams will assume familiarity with these materials.

Information about how to purchase the Course Packet will be shared during the first class meeting.

Required Books:

Addams, Jane, *Twenty Years at Hull House*, University of Illinois, 1990.


Course Packet

Course Requirements and Grading:

Obviously, class attendance and completion of the readings are students’ obligations. Just as clearly, active participation in both large and small group discussions will make the course come alive for everyone.

Every student will complete either a “community involvement” or a “community exploration” assignment.

In addition, one class will be devoted to a piece of writing—our in-class “exam,” if you will. The questions will reflect the readings, lectures and other materials covered recently, and will be distributed at the time. A third assignment will be an end-of-quarter take-home final exam.

Grades will be determined as follows:

- Active participation in large and small group discussions: 20%
- Community Involvement or Exploration: 20%
- One In-class Exam: 20%
- Final Take-Home Exam: 40%
Class Schedule

Note: Readings are to be completed before the class for which they are assigned.

**Wed., Jan. 3rd:** Introduction to the Course, Overview of Major Themes. What is community?

**Mon., Jan. 8th:** Chicago: A City of Neighborhoods, lecture-discussion. Since Chicago will serve as our primary exemplar for the development of community building strategies, it makes sense to begin with a brief overview of its history, its neighborhoods and its people.

Reading: Addams, Jane, *Twenty Years at Hull House*, Chapters 1-7

**Wed., Jan. 10th:** Jane Addams and the Settlement House Movement, lecture-section discussion. Who was this pioneering community builder? What basic values and strategies inform the idea of a settlement house?

Also, we will introduce the community involvement and community exploration assignments. For students choosing the community involvement route, there will be a brief post-class meeting with our community partner, Katy Hogan

Reading: Addams, Jane, *Twenty Years at Hull House*, Chapters 8-14.

**Wed., Jan. 17th:** Dr. Martin Luther King Day Observance, videos-discussion. In honor of Dr. Martin Luther King’s day of observance last Monday, we will watch two excerpts from the terrific documentary of the Civil Rights movement, *Eyes on the Prize*. One segment reviews Dr. King’s efforts to change Chicago (!); the second his work, at the end of his life, to expand the movement so that economic justice was at its center.

Readings:

King, Martin Luther, *Strength to Love*, “Pilgrimage to Non-Violence,” Chapter 17, pp. 165-173. Course Packet


**Mon., Jan. 22nd:** Saul Alinsky and the Invention of Modern Community Organizing, lecture-video. This will be our in-class introduction to the irascible, creative inventor of methods to “empower” local communities. Part of the session will be devoted to the recent public television documentary, *The Democratic Promise*, a fascinating look at Alinsky and his legacy.

Readings:


**Weds., Jan. 24th:** *The Basic Principles of “Alinsky-Style” Community Organizing*, lecture-discussion. We will explore some of Alinsky’s central conceptions, e.g., concerning power, self-interest, conflict, and the exercise of democratic will, and discuss how his approach compares with that of Jane Addams and Dr. King.

Readings:


**Mon., Jan. 29th:** *Community Organizing Today*, guest speaker-discussion. Our guest for this session is Madeline Talbot, director of ACORN-Chicago (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now). Ms. Talbot, one of the most skilled community organizers in the country, will talk with us about the variety of organizing strategies present in urban neighborhoods, how ACORN’s particular version of organizing has evolved, and where these efforts are headed in the 21st Century.


**Wed., Jan. 31st:** *Community Building Today: Introduction to Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)*, lecture-discussion. Northwestern’s Asset-Based Community Development Institute has worked with and learned from hundreds of communities across North America—and beyond. Today we introduce some of the central lessons which have shaped the ABCD approach.

Readings:


Mon., Feb. 5th: Holistic Asset-Based Community Development: The Story of Bethel New Life, guest speaker-discussion. For the past twenty years, in one of Chicago’s most devastated West Side neighborhoods, a powerful church-based development organization called Bethel New Life has been making a significant difference in the residents’ lives. Today Bethel’s founder and president, Mary Nelson, Ph.D., will share this nationally prominent case with us.


Readings:


Mon., Feb. 12th: Community Visits, Community Plans: The Case of Dudley Street, video-discussion. As a companion to Streets of Hope, the acclaimed documentary film Holding Ground relates the challenges and triumphs of the people of the Dudley Street neighborhood.

Reading: Medoff, Peter and Sklar, Holly, Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood, Chapters 7-end.

Wed., Feb. 14th: Community Building and Social Capital: The Role of Local Associations, lecture-discussion. Robert Putnam, the ABCD Institute and many other students and practitioners of community development are convinced that strong social relationships are critical to community well being. Why is this the case? How have local “associations” contributed to the community building agenda historically? And what is the state of social capital in the U.S. today?

Readings:

Tocqueville, Alexis de, Democracy in America, Chapter 12, “Political Associations in the United States,” Course Packet.

**Mon., Feb. 19th:** In-class exam


**Wed., Feb. 21st:** Community Development and Institutional Change: Schools, Police, Health Care, lecture-discussion. Current evidence indicates that many of our major institutions—including schools, police, and health care organizations—are more effective when they partner with powerful communities. We will explore these emerging trends today.


**Mon., Feb. 26th:** Section Discussion. Community Organizing, Community Development, Community Building: Comparisons and Contrasts.

**Wed., Feb. 28th:** Public Policies to Support Community Development, lecture-discussion. Federal, state and local governments, along with private philanthropies, play crucial roles in determining the success or failure of community development efforts. Today we will outline a few of the principles involved in effective community-oriented policies.

Readings:


**Mon., March 5th:** NU Alums Tackle the Community Building Challenge, panel discussion. Today we will meet young Northwestern alums who are actively making a difference as community builders. What do they do? Why and how do they do it? Are there future NU alums who might follow in their footsteps?
Readings:

Damon, William, “The Path to a Civil Society Goes Through the University,” Campus Compact Reader, May 2000, pp. 1-10, Course Packet.


Weds., March 7th: Review, final discussions, begin take-home final exam.


Tues., March 13th, 5:00 p.m.—Take-home finals due.