NEW YORK UNIVERSITY-ACCRA
COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY
COURSE SYLLABUS, Spring 2011

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Course Description and Objectives: This course provides an introduction to the field of community psychology. Community psychology is concerned with person-environment interactions and the ways society impacts on individuals and community functioning. It focuses on social issues, social institutions, and other settings that influence individuals, groups and organizations. Emphasis will be placed on experiential learning and resources and competencies of students in the class and resource persons. At the end of the course, students should:

- Acquire an understanding of the values and methods of community psychology and how it differs from other subfields of psychology
- Develop an understanding of the effects of societal, cultural and environmental influences on psychological and community well-being
- Explore the relationship between people and their environments and consider ways of improving this relationship
- Become familiar with innovative programs and practices geared towards prevention and empowerment of disenfranchised groups

Format: This course will combine lectures, discussions, and class presentations as the form of teaching. We will be having one or two guest lecturers during the semester to give lectures on specific topics related to their area of specialization. There will also be at least one field trip to enable you practically experience what we have learnt in class.


Course Outline

Defining Community Psychology

Week 1: What is Community Psychology?  Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 1


Conducting Community Research

Week 2: Methods of Research:  Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 4


Understanding Communities

Week 3: Understanding Ecology:  Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 5


Week 4: Sense of Community:  Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 6

Week 5: Human Diversity:  Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 7

Prevention and Health Promotion

Week 6: Overview of Prevention and Health Promotion:  Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 9

Week 7: Field Trip

Week 8 Implementing Preventing Interventions:  Dalton et al. Chapter 11 (CLASS TEST)


Week 9  
Spring Break

Community Mental Health

Week 10:  
**Stress, Coping, Social Support:**  
Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 8


Week 11  
**Guest Lecturer 1**

Citizen Participation and Empowerment  
Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 12

Community and Social Change

Week 12  
**Organizing for Community and Social Change:**  
Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 13


(Submit Community Experience Paper)

Week 13  
**Guest Lecturer 2**


Week 14  
**Program Evaluation:**  
Dalton et al. (2007). Chapter 14 (pp. 466-503).


Week 15  
**Overview of course: Way forward for Community Psychology**

Week 16  
**Submission and Presentation of Problem Definition Paper**
Course Requirements and Grading

Attendance and class participation: Attendance, preparation and class participation are required. Students should be prepared to discuss topics in the readings and to answer and ask questions. They should also expect to relate what they learn in class to everyday life experiences, i.e. to discuss how the readings are related to their community experiences and personal experiences. This will constitute 10% of your grade.

Community Experience: In order to provide an experiential based learning, students will be required to engage in some community volunteer experience during the semester. This experience can include activities such as attending community events, volunteering at a community service agency, interviewing individuals who are community service program recipients, service providers/administrators, and/or policy makers. You could keep a journal of your community experience where you write down your thoughts, experiences, time spent with community, etc.

Written Assignments

Issue/Thought Papers (10% of your grade)
Each student is expected to write a two-three page (typed, double spaced) thought paper on ideas stimulated by assigned readings for a particular week. Be very precise in your discussion or argument. Note that the best papers will be those that integrate ideas from the new readings and previous readings or discuss the relationship between the new readings and previous readings, lectures, and personal experiences. Your presentation should include comments about how the article could be improved and what you basically like about it.

Chapter Presentation and Review (20% of your grade)
You will select one chapter from the course outline and present in class. This will be in two parts. Firstly, you will be expected to provide a clear and concise summary of the chapter and secondly, you will prepare a hand-out to the class on the day of presentation. Presentation will be verbal. You will also be expected to facilitate a discussion of the chapter. Prepare questions to facilitate the discussion. In the hand out, review the content of the chapter and end with your own critical comments and evaluation (e.g. how could it be improved, etc)

Community Experience Paper (10% of your grade)
A two to three-page paper on your community experience and what you learned will be expected of you. Your paper should describe how your experience relates to community psychology and what you have learned in class. Papers will be presented verbally in class.

Problem Definition Intervention Paper (40% of your grade; 8 - 10 pages)
Each student is expected to write a paper on a social/community problem chosen by the student and relevant to community psychology. In this paper, you should define and/or redefine a problem that you have identified in your “community”. You will be expected to discuss the problem making use of community psychology concepts, issues and philosophies learned in this course and provide a critique of the various efforts and interventions that have been designed to address the problem.
Outline of the problem include: statement of the problem, with the various social, community and individual effects of the problem (e.g. who is affected and how are they affected, why is it a problem, etc), possible causes of the problem (not just on the individual level but also social and community responsibility). In other words, discuss the potential causes and address the ‘ecology’ of the problem (those individual, social and community factors that drive the problem and those that inhibit solutions).

Lastly, you should focus on innovative solutions to the problem taking into account the ecological nature of the problem. Emphasis should be placed on prevention and empowerment oriented efforts. Your paper should end with suggestions for intervention and research that arise from your critical analysis of the current situation. You should do a thorough review of the literature dealing with this social/community problem as well as knowledge gained from community agencies and members working to address this problem.

**Written examination (20% of your grade)**
There will be one class test which will make up 20% of your grade. The format will be announced in class but will be mainly short answers.

**Important Notice:**

**Citations:** When you use another person's work in your papers, it is important to give credit to the source. If you paraphrase the work or refer to its conceptual framework or conclusions, use a parenthetical citation (e.g., Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, 2001). If you use actual words from the work, enclose them in quotation marks, and include a page number in your citation. Use APA style (modeled on this syllabus). Proper use and acknowledgement of others' work makes your own work more scholarly, and in this class, is a component of the grade you get on your papers. However, use of another's work without proper citation is the academic sin of plagiarism, and can incur penalties.

**Grading:**
Papers will be graded on the basis of 1) thoroughness and quality of response to specific requirements of project 2) integration of appropriate readings and community psychology terminologies from the course into discussions 3) clarity, organization, and style.

*January 2011*