

## Community Psychology and Public Health

<b>Instructor:</b>	<b>Jaine Strauss</b> <b>Olin 326</b> <b>651.696.6114</b>	<b>Psychology 380</b> <b>Fall 2018</b>
<b>Office Hours:</b>	<b>Tuesdays, 8:15 - 9:15 am</b> <b>Thursdays, 3:00 - 4:00 pm</b> <b>Fridays, 11:00 – 11:50 am</b> <b>By appointment</b>	

### **Course overview:**

This course will examine the inter-related fields of community psychology and public health, disciplines that share a commitment to the promotion of well-being in a social and cultural context. We will explore theory, research, and praxis related to ecological analyses, empowerment models, prevention and health promotion, social networks, community organizing, and social policy in an effort to identify pathways to improve population health. To deepen your understanding of these topics, you will participate in a weekly civic engagement experience.

### *Course objectives:*

- 1) to introduce you to key topics within the fields of community psychology and public health psychology
- 2) to sharpen your critical thinking skills by exploring the assumptions, implications, and limitations associated with common approaches to alleviating distress and promoting wellbeing
- 3) to help you apply what you learn in this course to community settings and to help advance the work of a nonprofit organization

### **Requirements:**

- Attendance, participation, and in-class activities (15%)
- Civic engagement experience (15%)
- Class facilitation (20%)
- Midterm essay (including peer review)(25%)
- Final project (25%)

### *Attendance, participation, and in-class activities*

The material in this course is most effectively mastered through careful reading, critical thinking, and lively discussion. The success of this course depends on our

ability to have high-level conversations about the readings. Your informed participation is the most important requirement for this class. Although I know that you all have many commitments (I really do hope you have time to have a life outside of your schoolwork), I will expect you to read the assigned articles in depth before each class meeting.

Participation grades are based on how engaged you are in class discussion, and engagement can be demonstrated in different ways. Making well-informed comments in class is important, but so are other contributions, like asking questions that draw out the views of others or seek clarification about confusing concepts as well as listening attentively and respectfully. *Multiple unexcused absences from class will result in a failing grade in participation and may also impact your final grade for the class beyond the 15% associated specifically with attendance and participation.* Of course, this is a class about public health, and coming to class with a contagious illness is not consistent with good public health practice. If you've contracted a serious illness, please let me know; stay home and get better as quickly as you can. We'll figure out how best to make up the material you've missed. More details about my expectations for class participation can be found in the rubric I've posted to Moodle.

I will also periodically ask you to do some in-class writing to help structure our class discussion and also to confirm you're prepared for class. At random intervals, we'll take a few minutes of classtime for you to summarize in writing the key arguments or issues raised by the readings. Thoughtful and accurate summaries will receive a check, whereas summaries that are superficial, inaccurate, or vague will receive a zero.

### Civic engagement placement

You will each spend a *minimum* of 20 hours during the term (ideally two hours each week) volunteering at a setting that reflects one of the central aims of community psychology or public health psychology. The objectives of this course require that you **provide a service** to your setting; although observational learning and shadowing can be quite instructive, they will not suffice for this assignment. Because the agency and, more importantly, its clients/consumers/residents will be counting on you, you will need to attend your placement each week. If you cannot attend because of some insurmountable obstacle, you must give the agency appropriate notice. I also expect you to make up the time.

I've been working closely with Paul Schadewald at the Civic Engagement Center to identify excellent community partners based on the information you provided on your interest sheets, and he remains a great resource. I am also happy to meet with you to help you figure out the best option for you. Once you've secured your site, you will lay out your goals for your civic engagement experience. These goals may change as the semester unfolds, but you will find it useful to have specific objectives in mind. This will help you continue to learn even when you're stuck doing tedious or repetitive tasks. A copy of the civic engagement contract is in the top box on Moodle.

We will periodically devote portions of class to conversations about your placement experiences. These discussions are intended both to inform you about what your fellow classmates are experiencing and also to help people learn from each other (e.g., link theory to praxis in the context of your placements; problem-solve around sticky issues; recommend resources; provide support; combat burnout).

You will maintain a **weekly journal** detailing your reactions to both the course material and your placement site. **Do not use identifying information in your journal!** We will all be bound by the strictest ethical guidelines in our dealings this term, and you must protect the confidentiality of those with whom you will work this term. I've posted additional information about journaling to Moodle. You will also complete a **Neighborhood and Community Observation** worksheet. This will allow you to reflect on important contextual factors associated with your agency and its physical and social location.

At the end of the term, you will fill out an evaluation form about your civic engagement experience and write a brief (3-5 page) paper that relates your experience at your site to key course concepts. **Please let me know as soon as possible if you are experiencing problems at your site;** the sooner we identify the challenges, the sooner we can work toward solutions.

### Class facilitation

The goal of the class facilitation is to put you in charge of your education. The experience of leading class is intended to enhance your engagement with and learning from the course, to build your sense of connection as a community of scholars, and to offer a wider variety of classroom experiences. Here's how the class facilitation will work: each of you will sign up for a 30-minute block of time in which you will facilitate class. I will ask you to choose a topic within the next week, and then I will assign you to a date. My hope is that most of you will facilitate class

with two other partners so that we can dig more deeply into your topics (you and your partners would share ~85 minutes of class time). Your responsibilities for this experience include:

- Undertaking a thorough research process to learn about your topic (starting early will be critical to your success, as you will likely need to order some articles through interlibrary loan). This research process may involve web resources but must involve substantial, peer-reviewed journal-based scholarship. You will turn in an **annotated bibliography** of the *six best peer-reviewed sources* you used to prepare for your class facilitation. The annotations will typically be about a paragraph long and will emphasize the features of the article that you found most useful for your class facilitation.
- Choosing a reading or two to edify and engage your classmates. To identify the best reading(s) for your class facilitation, you will share several options with me at least two weeks before your class facilitation, and I'll help you narrow down your selection.
- Leading the class for ~85 minutes with two partners, 60 minutes with one other partner, or, in very rare cases, 30 minutes by yourself. Typically, you will spend this time using a combination of pedagogic techniques: leading discussion, providing new material using a slideshow (PowerPoint; Prezi), offering an engaging activity, showing a video clip, staging a debate, etc. The best class facilitations show a high degree of organization and creativity. Less successful class facilitations reflect inadequate preparation with regard to the topic as well as the presentation of that topic.

I recognize that this is a welcome assignment for some and an unforgivable curse for others; some of you will relish the chance to lead the class, while others would rather endure an eternal polar vortex without mittens. *We all share the responsibility for creating a classroom climate where all students feel comfortable engaging in this experience.* For what it's worth, the vast majority of course alumni report that they enjoyed the experience of leading class, and many wish they'd had more and longer opportunities to do so. *I will meet with you at least twice to help you with this assignment – once right after you begin your research on your topic, and another time closer to when you are scheduled to lead class so that we can review and fine-tune your game plan.* I am happy to meet with you as often as you wish to ensure that the class facilitation is a great experience for you and for your classmates. **A more detailed overview of the expectations for your class facilitation experience is in the top box on Moodle.**

### Midterm Essays

The course requirements also include a midterm essay. You will have just over a week to write your exam, and you are welcome to use any resources you like; no outside research is necessary or expected. You will swap papers with a classmate so that each of you can have a peer review of your work before you submit a final version of your essay.

### Final project

The final project will be on a topic of your choosing, and you will organize a brief presentation of your work for the last class meeting. Ideally, your final project will tie in with your civic engagement site, either through a relevant library research investigation or through an actual or proposed community intervention project. I would be happy to help you design your final project and urge you to contact me early in the semester to begin thinking about possible plans. Guidelines for the final project are posted to Moodle.

## Important Policies

- ◆ **I am committed to the success of all students, and I am eager to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Please consult with the Disability Services staff (651.696.6874; [disabilityservices@macalester.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@macalester.edu)) soon as possible. They will send me a confidential letter detailing the appropriate accommodations for this course, and then you and I can meet to determine how those accommodations apply to this course.**
  
- ◆ **Late assignments will be accepted, but with a penalty. Your grade will drop by a grade interval for each day between the official due date and the date I receive your paper. I define "day" as a 24-hour interval. For instance, if a paper is due on Friday at 4:30 pm and you turn it in on Sunday at 10:30 am, your grade would drop from, for example, a B+ to a B-. *I recognize that sometimes life interferes with academic work. If you believe mitigating circumstances precluded your completing your work by the due date, please come talk to me and we will discuss whether a grade penalty is warranted.***

- ◆ **Any evidence of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism on papers) will, in accordance with college guidelines, be reported to the Director of Academic Programs and Advising and will result in a grade of "0" on the assignment. Under certain circumstances, it may result in your failing the course. If you have a question about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please consult with me.**
  
- ◆ **Incompletes will be granted only under extraordinary circumstances. Being busy at the end of the term is not an extraordinary circumstance.**

### Important Dates

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| ASAP  | Contact civic engagement sites   |
| 10/2  | Civic engagement learning contract and Neighborhood and Community Observation (NCO) worksheet due  |
| 10/4  | Site visit to Higher Ground/St. Paul and Listening House (leave Macalester at 9:35 am and return by 1:00 pm)   |
| 10/24 | Midterm essays due at 6:00 (with peer review)  |
| 11/2  | Site visit to Science Museum (leave Macalester at 4:45 pm and return by 7:00 pm) – PLEASE NOTE: The civic engagement center will provide transportation, but students are responsible for the \$6 admission fee. Please confer with me if you anticipate that paying this fee will be difficult for you. |
| 11/8  | Prospectus for final project due   |
| 12/10 | Final projects due at 6:00 pm  |
| 12/11 | Brief presentation of final projects to class  |
| 12/17 | Civic engagement materials (journals, evaluations, and papers) due at 6:00 pm  |

## **Principles of Community Psychology**

(adapted from Orford, 1992)

1. What causes problems?
  - *An interaction over time between persons, social settings, and systems including the structure of social support and distribution of power*
2. How should problems be understood?
  - *All levels of analysis, from micro to macro, are used, although focus on macro (e.g., community; neighborhood) is most distinctive of the field*
3. How should services be planned?
  - *Collaboration with community stakeholders*
  - *Proactive and strengths-based: revealing and assessing strengths, resources, needs and risks in a community*
4. Where should interventions occur?
  - *As near as possible to the relevant, everyday social contexts*
5. What types of interventions should occur?
  - *Any that help promote strength and relieve distress, with particular attention to prevention, collaboration, and consultation*
  - *Self-help, involvement of community members, and development of sustainable and indigenous help agents*
6. How should psychology be shared with the "lay" community?
  - *Information should be shared both formally and informally with a minimum of emphasis on hierarchy and professional prestige.*

**Course topics**

Introduction
Community + Psychology: How can the behavioral sciences inform our understanding and enhancement of wellbeing?
Person-in-context: Ecological perspectives
Sense of community
Social support
Partnerships across social structural identities
Power and empowerment
Risk and resilience
Behavior change and public policy
Prevention/health promotion and health communications/social marketing
Neighborhoods, affordable housing, and homelessness
Serious and persistent mental illness
Community organizing
Poverty, economic inequality, and wellbeing
Other topics determined by class interest (e.g., behavioral health [nutrition, exercise, obesity, chemical health, sleep]; sexual health and reproductive justice; the criminal justice system; domestic violence; sexual violence; politics and community engagement; wellbeing and the arts; spirituality and religion; technology and wellbeing; sustainability, ecopsychology, and health).