

Community Development, Organizations, and Policies
HOD 2610-01
Syllabus

Spring Semester 2009

TR 11:00-12:15

105 Mayborn

Instructor

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Course Description

This course aims to introduce students to concepts of community development in the context of urban change in the United States. In this context, the course helps students understand the context in which community development work operates (i.e., public policy, structures of disadvantage, and economics). Theory around the nature of urban development, neighborhood change and community organizing/development will be discussed as they pertain to the practical knowledge and skills needed to operate effectively in the broad field of urban community development.

Course Goals

By the end of this course, we hope you will be able to do the following:

1. Define, in multiple ways, the process of urban redevelopment and neighborhood change in all their complexity, contradictions, and paradoxes
2. Understand in some detail the forces and organizations that are both driving and resisting these processes
3. Understand the impact that urban public policy is having on communities and development in urban areas across the United States, surveying a range of domains (i.e., human-environment relations, social welfare, ability to claim home space in the city)
4. Produce policy briefs demonstrating an in-depth understanding of and producing potential solutions for community problems

Course Expectations

Attendance

Attendance at all class sessions is mandatory. If a student is unable to attend, he or she should communicate the reason for the absence well in advance of the start of class; in such cases, the absence may be excused. Absences justified after the fact will not be excused without appropriate documentation from the Office of the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs. Unexcused absences will be grounds for reducing your final grade (see attendance and participation in the grading and assessment section).

Participation

This course will not proceed well without significant student input and involvement.

Participation in course activities, and especially class discussions, is essential.

- a) Students need to come to class prepared. Such preparation will be accomplished through thorough reading of the class material in advance of the class session. Students can expect to read between 40 and 60 pages of material for each session.
- b) Throughout the term, we will be asking students to come prepared with questions to facilitate discussion of the readings. From time to time, we will ask students to hand in these questions, which will be used in part to determine the participation grade.
- c) Effective participation also means not distracting yourself or others. Please devote your full attention to the class. Use of computers, phones, or other material not related to course work is not permitted. Playing video games, checking e-mail, surfing the web, texting, and other such activities during class time will result in reductions in your final grade consistent with the participation grading policy.

Assignments

- a) Students are required to keep copies of all assignments turned in for the class, especially those submitted electronically. Retain copies of e-mail communication where you submit assignments. OAK and e-mail messages sometimes fail to arrive, computers fail, documents get deleted. Protect yourself by maintaining separate copies of your submissions.
- b) Late assignments will be penalized at a rate of 5 percent per day late, not including Saturdays or Sundays. If a student has difficulty meeting course deadlines, please contact an instructor well in advance of the due date to make arrangements.
- c) Students are expected to abide by the tenets of the Honor Code for all assignments in this course.
- d) Students that require accommodations for reasons of disability or other reasons are encouraged to speak with both the instructors and the Opportunity Development Center to make satisfactory arrangements.

Readings

In addition to these core books, additional readings will be provided on OAK.

Required Book Purchases

Chaskin, Robert J., Brown, Prudence, Venkatesh, Sudhir, & Vidal, A. (2001). *Building community capacity*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

DeFilippis, James & Saegert, Susan. (2007). *The community development reader*. New York: Routledge. [\$53.95 on Amazon]

INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence. (2007). *The revolution will not be funded: Beyond the non-profit industrial complex*. Southend Press. [\$13.14 on Amazon]

O'Connor, Alice. (2001). *Poverty knowledge: Social science, social policy, and the poor in 20th century American History*. Princeton University Press. [\$25.15 on Amazon]

Patillo, Mary. (2007). *Black on the block: The politics of race and class in the city*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [\$19.14 on Amazon]

Assignments and Assessment**Quizzes** (4@15% each = 60%)

Over the course of the semester, there will be four quizzes on course material. The quizzes will focus primarily on verifying your knowledge and comprehension of the readings and will contain a combination of multiple choice, true/false, and/or fill in the blank type questions in addition to several short answer questions.

Policy Briefs (2@20% each = 40%)

See page four for assignment description.

Attendance and Participation (can adjust your grade by up to seven percent in either direction)

Rather than being a portion of your final grade, participation presents an opportunity for the instructor to adjust your grade up or down to reflect the frequency of your attendance and the quality of your participation. Initially, all students have a baseline adjustment of zero, meaning that their grade will be determined solely by performance on the quizzes and assessments of the policy briefs. However, students who make excellent contributions to class discussions, demonstrate consistent evidence of being prepared for class by regularly turning in discussion questions, and otherwise help foster an atmosphere of respectful discussion and learning could receive up to seven bonus points over the grade earned by performance on quizzes and assignments to reflect their efforts. Conversely, students who are absent, demonstrate unpreparedness for class, or inappropriately use technology during class time could receive up to a seven point penalty to the grade earned by quizzes and policy briefs. Rather than a pleasant or unpleasant surprise at the end of the semester, the instructor will communicate reasons for any participation-related grade adjustments as they occur over the course of a semester.

Description of Policy Brief Assignment

Working in groups of three people (group members are your choice), you will choose two community problems and come up with policy briefs addressing the subject. The brief must contain, in a coherent and unified manner, the following sections: (1) your explanation of the nature, causes, and effects of the situation; (2) your assessment of the values and interests at stake; and (3) your recommendations on what should be done (and by whom) to bring about your suggested solution to the problem you have identified. The result should be a coherent and convincing brief that would be useful to an urban policy decision maker faced with a difficult choice in regards to this problem.

One of the briefs should be written from the perspective of a professional staff person in municipal government, trying to make a recommendation to the City Council about a particular program to fund or support. You should survey the range of stakeholders and their positions in regards to the problem you have chosen. Be explicit about how your policy recommendation navigates these potentially contradictory interests, and why you chose the policy you did.

The other brief should be written from the perspective of a particular type organization of your choice, be it a non-profit, a community organization, or a business. In this scenario, you are trying to help a large foundation formulate their grant-making policy, targeted at solving the social problem you have identified, in the city of which you are a part—you need to make a recommendation to the foundation about what kind of programs to fund when making grants. While you need to primarily promote and argue your own interests, you must also address the perspectives of other stakeholders.

The three sections outlined above should contain responses to the following prompts and questions:

Part One: **Problem Analysis**—your explanation of the actors, nature, significance, causes, effects, dynamics, and trends of the situation. That is, basically, “What’s going on here?”

Part Two: **Normative Analysis**—given your problem analysis, now state your assessment of the ethical issues and group interests at stake, the values and interests that you support (and why), and your preferred outcome (and why). A “pro and con” framework is often helpful here to frame the issues, the interest and value positions, and the alternatives most sharply. Take a clear position at the end of this section after you evaluate the various positions. Don’t ignore other perspectives—say, from your perspectives, why your perspective is better.

Part Three: **Policy Suggestions**—based on the previous two sections, state your realistic action plan recommendations on specifically what should be done (and by whom) to bring about your preferred outcome. What obstacles or countercurrents stand in the way of these recommendations? Use some conjectural thinking here.

Whenever using facts or arguments from outside sources, you must make appropriate citations, and you must append a reference list to the end of your document. Use APA format throughout the paper.

Each policy brief should be twelve to fourteen pages long (double spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font or near equivalent, one-inch margins), not including any tables, figures, cover page, appendices or reference list.

Remember that these briefs need to quickly and effectively communicate information people who are overloaded with meetings, e-mails, and other documents. Write succinctly and effectively, with clear and concise prose. Write in the active voice, and avoid the passive voice. Avoid excessive use of jargon. Unlike academic essays, don't assume that readers will go back to your citations to better understand a term or a little-known reference—explain as much as possible, without going into too much detail.

The division of labor between group members is an internal group matter. All members of the group will receive the same grade for the group product turned in. If members of a group have a concern about inadequate contributions by an individual, they are encouraged to address this problem directly, but the instructor will be available to facilitate discussions about and solutions to this problem.