COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR SOCIAL CHANGE (PSYC 427-002)
Spring 2013

Instructor: Jenna Calton
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Office Hours: T 11am-1pm or by appt
Class Time & Location: TR 3:00-4:15pm, Robinson Hall B205

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Course Description
This class explores influences on social problems and approaches to addressing them by drawing from the perspectives of multiple disciplines. By definition, a social problem is a problem that affects many people, but such issues are often viewed primarily as individual-level problems that require individual-level solutions. In this class, students will learn to understand social problems and approaches to addressing them at both the individual level (typically the focus of fields such as Clinical Psychology) and the social level (typically the focus of fields such as Community Psychology, Sociology, and Public Affairs). Students will learn to develop a logic model, a tool that is employed across fields to describe what programs do and what they hope to achieve by doing it. The class will achieve its goals through a semester-long case example of the social problem of poverty. We will explore this social problem through students’ service to community organizations, readings, class exercises and both written and oral projects.

Goals
In this course, students will:

- Identify and understand the individual, interpersonal, and social levels of a social problem, drawing from the perspectives of multiple disciplines.
- Identify and understand approaches toward targeting different aspects of a social problem.
- Be able to use logic models to analyze how organizations try to affect change, and understand how they might apply this skill in a variety of contexts.
- Apply the above skills (multi-level analysis of social problems and logic modeling) in oral and written products.
- Complete a minimum of 20 hours of service to a community organization coordinated by the instructor and in the context of this service:
  - Deepen understanding of a social problem through contact with both people it affects and people trying to do something about it
  - Provide concrete value to the community organization
  - Connect course concepts to concrete experiences

Requirements

Participation (25%): Students are required to participate in in-class discussions and exercises throughout the semester, including some exercises that require preparation before class (10%). Students are also required to be prepared for class, as evaluated by in-class quizzes (15%). The two lowest scores on these quizzes will be dropped, and there will be no makeups.

Reflection Papers (30%): Students will be required to write a total of 3 three-page double-spaced reflection papers in response to prompts from the instructor throughout the course of the semester. Prompts and papers will be posted on Blackboard. Due dates are: 2/10, 3/10 and 4/7.
**Final project (30%)**: The final project consists of a paper, a logic model, and an in-class presentation. Students will choose a social problem they view as relevant for the population using their service placement, other than poverty. They will write a 4-6 page paper using scholarly sources to conduct a multilevel analysis of the social problem, similar to the one we conducted in class. They will then identify a program or organization that targets that problem. They will create a logic model of the program. Students will give a 5-7 minute presentation in class to persuade their classmates of the importance of the social problem and the strengths and weaknesses of the organization they identified.

**Service (15%)**: A fundamental goal and requirement of this class is to provide concrete value to our partner organizations in exchange for the experience we are gaining. These partnerships have been developed by the instructor, and students will choose from available placements at the outset of the course. The Service Learning Agreement describes the obligations students must fulfill, and must be signed by the student and supervisor at the outset of the placement. **Students who do not complete the hours they agree to in the Service Learning Agreement will receive a failing grade for the course.** Across placements, the minimum number of hours you will total over the course of the semester is 20, plus approximately two hours of orientation. (Placements involving tutoring may require more training, as they involve curriculum.) The academic (readings, exams) workload in this class is relatively light, because the service is meant to be the core of the substance of the course. Your reliable engagement in your service placement is essential. Your grade for this requirement will be assessed at 2 points:

1. At mid-term check-in (March 5), at which time you must have:
   a. Handed in your service learning agreement to your TA.
   b. Completed orientation and/or training at your placement.
   c. Met expectations according to supervisor report.
   d. Entered all hours to date on the spreadsheet provided by the instructor.
2. At final grade submission (May 14th), at which time you must have:
   a. Completed the minimum of 20 hours.
   b. Filled in all hours on the spreadsheet provided by the instructor.
   c. Met expectations according to supervisor report.

**Grading**: I will calculate your final grade on your point total as follows: 93-100 = A; 90-92 = A-; 87-89 = B+; 83-86 = B; 80-82 = B-; 77-79 = C+; 73-76 = C; 70-72 = C-; 65-69 = D; below 65 = F.

**Official Communications via GMU E-mail**: Mason uses only Mason e-mail accounts to communicate with enrolled students. Students must activate their Mason e-mail account, use it to communicate with their department and other administrative units, and check it regularly for important university information including messages related to this class.

**Honor code**: The Honor Code of George Mason University deals specifically with cheating and attempted cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing. Students should be familiar with the code and connected policies, set out at [http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies](http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies). This course will be conducted in accordance with those policies.

**Accommodations for students with disabilities**: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me at the beginning of the semester and contact the Office of Disability Services at 703.993.2474 or ods.gmu.edu. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.
Course Outline and Reading List: All readings are posted on Blackboard. The outline and reading list are tentative and subject to change, at which time students will be notified via email and in class.

Jan 22-24: What is service learning? Launching placements and connections to course content.

Jan 29-31: Who are our partners? Using logic models to understand organizations.

Feb 5-7: Understanding social issues through multi-level analysis

Feb 12-14: Setting the stage for our case study: wealth and power in the US
*Watch this Ted Talk: http://www.ted.com/talks/richard_wilkinson.html

Feb 19-21: Poverty as a case study – what is it?

Feb 26-28: Poverty as a case study – how do we understand the individual-level aspects?

March 5-7: Poverty as a case study- how do we understand the interpersonal aspects?
*Mid Semester Check-in on March 5th (see ‘Service’ section above for details)

March 12-14: SPRING BREAK ©
March 19-21: Poverty as a case study - how do we understand the interpersonal aspects (continued)?

March 26-28: Poverty as a case study – how do we understand the social context?

April 2-4: Poverty as a case study—how do we understand the social context?
Guest Speakers: The National Coalition for the Homeless

April 9-11: Social context (ctd)/ Identifying and addressing multiple aspects of social problems

April 16-18: Identifying and addressing multiple aspects of social problems
Guest Speaker from FACETS (April 16)

April 23: Extending our analysis to other social problems
Work-shopping for final projects

April 25: Final Presentations

April 30-March 2: Final presentations & Wrap-up

* Last day to add classes is January 29, last day to drop is February 22.