

Department: URBN

Course No.: 1300/W

Credits: 3

Title: Exploring Your Community

Contact: Stephen Ross

Content Area: CA2 Social Sciences and CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism

Diversity: CA4 Non-International

W-Version Information:

WQ: W

Catalog Copy: URBN 140W. Exploring Your Community. Either semester. Three credits. Various aspects of urban and community life emphasizing the interplay of social justice, diversity, individual and social well being. Explores theories, concepts, and methods in community studies. Includes a service learning component.

Course Information: 1 a. Course Description

The goal of URBN 140W– Exploring Your Community is to introduce students to vital aspects of urban and community life, with a specific emphasis on the interplay of social justice, diversity and multiculturalism, and individual and social well being. Students will learn theories, concepts, and methods from the interdisciplinary social science field of community studies, including anthropology, community psychology, economics, political science, and sociology. The required community-based service learning project provides students a structured opportunity to apply theories, concepts, and methods.

1 b. Course Requirements

URBN 140W– Exploring Your Community is designed as a 3-credit, writing intensive, community-based service learning experience. Assignments include the following:

- 1) regular weekly reading (homework) evidenced by written outline (required text, internet, and handouts);
- 2) in-class activities: standard lectures, Community Guest Lectures, and paired, small group, and whole class activities such as critical reflection in the form of dialog and writing;
- 3) service learning (eg. 3 to 4 field trips, with minimum of 15 hours of community-based service) during which students apply theory, concepts, and methods learned in class and for which students are required to submit data worksheets and reflection papers; and
- 4) the final, an Exploring Your Community-Service Learning Portfolio, which culminates in a modified APA style paper (15 pages minimum with extensive guided revisions) and a class-wide presentation.

1 c. Major Themes, Issues, Topics

URBN 140W– Exploring Your Community is based on theories and concepts from the field of community research and action. It studies the complexities of human interaction and community development through social science theory and analysis, including ecological models. Factors affecting human interaction across individual, family, community, institutional, and societal levels will be explored and brought to life through the Exploring Your Community service learning experience, particularly as they relate to issues of social justice, diversity and multiculturalism, and individual and social well being at the local level.

A core concept in the field of community research and action is the relationship between individual and social well being. The very idea of social wellbeing roots the idea of community to issues of social justice, the meanings of individual and social well being and concepts of social justice are diverse and vary across and within cultures. The juxtaposition of diversity and multiculturalism as fundamental components of individual and social wellbeing will be explored in class. Issues of gender, race, class, political and economic power, (dis)ability, and age will be considered as the class co-constructs these connections. The Exploring Your Community service learning experience is designed to engage students in this process. As participants in on-going community activities, students will become co-constructors, evaluators, and validators of healthy community-quality of life in terms of social justice and diversity by using the social science theories and methods learned in class.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed.: Goal 1: Become articulate. Students become more articulate through this course. As a service learning course, significant guided reflection is inherent in the teaching-learning process. Significant guided reflection includes paired, small group, and whole class dialog as well as various modes of writing. This is designed to improve the students' ability to articulate and use theories, concepts, and methods for exploring their communities.

Goal 2: Acquire intellectual breadth and versatility. A broad ecological model for understanding the complexities of human interaction within and across multiple levels of analysis is used to frame teaching-learning. Students demonstrate intellectual versatility by applying what they are learning in class to their individualized community-based service learning project.

Goal 3: Acquire critical judgment. Students acquire critical judgment through extensive opportunities for guided reflection (dialog and writing) and action (community-based service learning experience). Students will become critically conscious of their own perceptions of and behaviors related to key issues in this course: social justice, diversity and multiculturalism, and individual and social wellbeing. Students will be able to use this skill in assessing urban and community life through the service learning experience.

Goal 6: Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience. Students will become critically conscious of the diversity of human culture and experience. Gender, race, class, political and economic power, (dis)ability, and age will be considered as the class co-constructs its concept(s) of social justice, diversity and multiculturalism, and individual and social wellbeing. Students will have ample opportunity to reflect on their personal experience of culture, and to compare and contrast this with

their classmates' experiences and with community experiences through the Exploring Your Community service learning design of this course.

Goal 7: Acquire a working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge.

Service learning requires significant guided reflection in the form of dialog and writing, because authentically constructed public knowledge is dynamically shaped and reshaped over time. This point is made explicit in the course, such that students acquire a working understanding of the role of reflection-action as a means to continuously seek, form, and use knowledge for personal and public good. This is a particularly relevant skill in Urban and Community Studies, where public and community service is essential.

CA2 Criteria: URBN 140W– Exploring Your Community enables students to analyze and understand interactions of numerous social factors that influence behavior across multiple levels.

a. Students are introduced to theories, concepts, and content from the interdisciplinary field of community research and action. Content on the broad array of social issues and problems affecting communities are a critical part of this course. Among other theories introduced, an ecological model for understanding the complexities of human interaction and community development will be used. Students learn to identify and analyze factors operating at the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chrono-levels, with specific emphasis on concepts of social justice, diversity and multiculturalism, and individual and social wellbeing.

b. Students will learn and apply basic methods commonly used in community research and action. These include methods for organizing, analyzing, and interpreting data collected during participant observation, various interviewing techniques, surveying, and archiving. Ethical considerations will be discussed: issues of confidentiality, mandated reporting, and the researcher-expert dilemma.

c. Students will learn ways in which individuals, families, groups and organizations, communities, and institutions behave and influence one another and the natural and built environment. This course specifically focuses on urban and community problems and solutions, opportunities and challenges, and the ways in which people access resources designed to enhance individual and social wellbeing.

d. This course emphasizes the role of self (the student) as community researcher and co-creator of public knowledge. In this role the student is the tool for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data about urban and community life related to social justice, diversity and multiculturalism, and individual and social wellbeing. The service learning design of this course enables students to understand the personal responsibility inherent in this role, because critical reflection (dialog and writing) is a major teaching-learning activity.

CA4 Criteria: URBN 140 (W)– Exploring Your Community leads students to appreciate differences and commonalities among people in the following ways.

- a. Students will learn about and gain an appreciation for the diversity of human experiences, perceptions, thoughts, values, beliefs, and practices in urban and community life. Students will be introduced to essential content on issues of race, ethnicity, immigration, and so forth, as they relate to the social problems and communities being studied. This content will be taught through class activities, including the Community Guest Lectures, as well as community-based service learning activities, enabling students to gain first hand knowledge and experience of multiculturalism in diverse community settings.
- c. Students will consider both similarities and unique aspects of urban and community life within and across diverse groups. The core concepts of this course are social justice and individual and social wellbeing, and will form the foundation for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting similarities and differences in urban and community problems & solutions, challenges & opportunities.
- d. Students will understand and become sensitive to human rights and migration issues specific to ethno-cultural groups residing in their local communities. For example, the South East Asian population in Connecticut has been increasing, yet public resources are not on par with their needs in health and education. Significant reflection on social justice and social wellbeing related to diversity, and an opportunity to gain first hand experience through the Exploring Your Community service learning project will be available to students each semester.
- e. Students will develop an awareness of the dynamics of social, political, economic, and legal power in terms of social justice and access to resources designed to improve community health and quality of life within and across the micro- and meso-levels of urban and community contexts.

W Criteria: URBN 140 (W)– Exploring Your Community satisfies the stated criteria for the “W” designation.

- a. Writing assignments enable and enhance learning the course content. Reflection, in the form of dialog and writing, is an important part of the teaching-learning process for this course. Students are introduced to theories, concepts, and methods for exploring urban and community life through assigned readings, class activities, and Community Guest Lectures. These activities form the foundation for the reflective process: map/outline of reading as homework; brief in-class individualized reflection paper on specified theory, concept, or method related to social justice, diversity and multiculturalism, and/or individual and social wellbeing; followed by class discussion and related activity (pairs, small group, and whole class). Students' informal writing and dialog represent active co-construction of knowledge. This type of guided reflection and knowledge construction leads students to the more formalized writing required for the course: modified APA style paper on their service learning experience. This paper includes an introduction to specified theory and concepts, a methods section for exploring the specified aspect of community life, the findings, and implications for social justice, diversity and multiculturalism, and individual and social wellbeing.
- b. various forms of writing will be required for this course.

c. Modes of writing instruction are as follows. As outlined above, there are various forms of writing required in this course. Each form of writing serves a purpose in shaping the final course products, the APA style paper and presentation. Students are provided formal instructions (written handouts and oral reviews) with examples of expected formats and content for each writing activity. Students work individually, in pairs, and in small groups during class, at which time informal instruction on format and content is available.

Formal instruction on the service learning project components occurs in class, and students are encouraged to participate in individualized consultations during office hours, particularly for students with demonstrated need. A Service Learning Guide is provided to each student, and whole class discussions on content and format occur as each component is assigned. Each section of the paper is assigned with explicit instructions on content and format, but with sufficient flexibility to allow creativity. Each student's paper is evaluated, and written feedback is provided. In addition, to facilitate the revisions, general comments about the overall class performance on each section are presented as formal instruction in class. Students are required to edit and revise each section.

Students are assigned reading for homework, and complete a written outline or mindmap as evidence of having read the selection. The purpose of these readings (which are on theory, concepts, and methods) is to help students draft the introduction to the APA paper and to select methods appropriate for the topic. Students are able to refer to their written homework while completing the in-class reflections. In-class reflections are on topics relevant to the Exploring Your Community service learning activities, and also serve to shape the APA paper.

d. Opportunities for revision are an important part of how this course is structured. This is made explicit to students on the syllabus, and students are clearly informed that passing the course is contingent upon satisfactorily fulfilling the writing component. Students are required to draft and revise each component of the APA style paper. Student revision is based on further reflection, in addition to written feedback, informal and formal instruction in-class, and optional consultations during office hours.

Experiential reflective dialog and writing form an important means to authentically constructed public knowledge. This is an essential skill for public and community service, and is a major reason for designing this course as a community-based service learning experience. Students are required to create an Exploring Your Community Service Learning Portfolio, which culminates in twin assignments. The first is an individually written paper in which the student demonstrates thorough knowledge of theory, concepts, and methods for exploring a selected urban-community topic. The second major work is to participate in the class-wide presentation of their newly acquired public knowledge. Previous presentations have included poster sessions, community forums, and panel discussions.

Service learning requires significant guided reflection in the form of dialog and writing because authentically constructed public knowledge is dynamically shaped and reshaped over time. Reflection and revision go hand-in-hand. Revision signifies re-viewing, or seeing, understanding, and knowing from

another (an “other's”) perspective. In service learning, revision not only serves to improve the mechanics of writing, but also to deepen the thinker's grasp on co-constructed knowledge. In this respect, it is expected that the revision process will enhance the students' ability to achieve learning objectives regarding diversity and multiculturalism: revision is a mechanism for students to gain insight into others' experience in order to transform the “other” to self. Seeing oneself in others is essential for effective and authentic public service. Writing and revision, as designed in this community-based service learning course, fits well with the general education writing competency principles.

Supplementary Information: This course is important for the pursuit of undergraduate majors in Urban and Community Studies at the Tri-campus. The course will provide an interdisciplinary mechanism by which students might explore the content and issues of the major. It is also an excellent vehicle to introduce students interested in another major to urban and community content as well as service learning. This is especially important at the Tri-Campus where urban and community content and experiential learning are critical parts of its developing niche within the University

NON-W Information

One way to explore diversity is by increasing awareness and appreciation of a community's ethnic and immigrant cultural assets. In this course, students will apply critical theory from the fields of ethnic studies and folklore to examine themselves and their own practices as well as those of ethnic ‘others’ within local communities whom they may not have previously considered in any depth. It is hoped that students' work will not only increase their and their classmates' awareness of and appreciation of local ethnic variety and the efforts that are needed to preserve it but also expose other members of the university community to an appreciation of local multicultural resources.

The course has required readings associated with three books on the methods and specific applications of cultural studies and ethnography. This material will be tested via a mid-term. The course also requires weekly reflective writing and participation in set of experiential in class activities. The final requirement is a polished presentation or 10 page essay drawing from readings, research and class experiences to assess a cultural asset of a specific ethnic community.

This course is a non-W version of URBN 1300W, which already exists and is approved for CA 2 and 4. URBN 1300W contains a service learning component, which is not feasible with larger section sizes. The service learning experiences will be replaced in two ways. First, there will be somewhat more emphasis on lecture and testing of the material from the assigned texts. URBN 1300W is typically taught without a mid-term. Second, the class will contain a variety on in-class and on-campus activities designed to explore the cultural and ethnic diversity of the University community itself. Professor Glasser has discussed this strategy with several of her students this semester, and the students believe that this strategy would be both feasible and produce an interesting and challenging course for the students.

40. ALL COURSES PROPOSED FOR A GENERAL EDUCATION CONTENT AREA MUST ANSWER THIS QUESTION.

Goal 1: Become articulate.

Students become more articulate through this course. Significant guided reflection includes paired, small group, and whole class dialog as well as various modes of writing. This is designed to improve the students' ability to articulate and use theories, concepts, and methods for exploring their communities.

Goal 2: Acquire intellectual breadth and versatility.

A broad ecological model for understanding the complexities of human interaction within and across multiple levels of analysis is used to frame teaching-learning. Students demonstrate intellectual versatility by applying what they are learning in class to their individualized community projects.

Goal 3: Acquire critical judgment.

Students acquire critical judgment through extensive opportunities for guided reflection (dialog and writing) and action (small group work and strategically designed outside of class experiences). Students will become critically conscious of their own perceptions of and behaviors related to key issues in this course: social justice, diversity and multiculturalism, and individual and social wellbeing. Students will be able to use this skill in assessing urban and community life through an exploration of their own community.

Goal 6: Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience.

Students will become critically conscious of the diversity of human culture and experience. Gender, race, class, political and economic power, (dis)ability, and age will be considered as the class co-constructs its concept(s) of social justice, diversity and multiculturalism, and individual and social wellbeing. Students will have ample opportunity to reflect on their personal experience of culture, and to compare and contrast this with their classmates' experiences and with community experiences through a comparison of the data gathered for their peers' projects.

Goal 7: Acquire a working understanding of the processes by which they can continue to acquire and use knowledge.

Students will learn how to gather and analyze data and deploy it for the benefit of specific communities. This point is made explicit in the course, such that students acquire a working understanding of the role of reflection-action as a means to continuously seek, form, and use knowledge for personal and public good. This is a particularly relevant skill in Urban and Community Studies, where public and community service is essential.