THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

SW/UP 654
Concepts and Techniques of
Community Participation

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Course Description

This course examines concepts and techniques of involving people in the decisions and institutions that affect their lives. It analyzes the changing context of participation, major models and methods of practice, and practical techniques to involve people in organizations and communities. It assesses the causes and effects of participation at multiple levels, and also its potential for empowerment in democratic societies which value diversity as an asset. Emphasis is placed on promoting participation of socially and economically disadvantaged communities, women, young people, and other groups.

Course Objectives

1. Understand the changing context of community participation;
2. Analyze major models and methods of practice;
3. Demonstrate knowledge of skills to formulate participation strategy, conduct participatory assessment, develop participatory plans, build community support, and promote multicultural participation;
4. Develop in-depth knowledge of organized efforts at participation;
5. Identify problems and issues of socially and economically disadvantaged groups in culturally diverse communities; and
6. Recognize issues of ethics and values arising in the field.

Course Responsibilities

Responsibilities include readings, participation in discussions, written assignments, and individual and group exercises related to course materials. Assignments are due on scheduled dates unless arranged in advance. Guest speakers may be invited to address special topics.
### Course Schedule

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Reading List

Community Studies


Core Concepts


Mass Mobilization


Mandated Participation


Neighborhood Development


**Participatory Planning**


**Learning from the Community**


**Participation with Special Populations I**


**Participation with Special Populations II**


**Intercultural Participation**


**Participatory Evaluation Research**


**Telecommunications Participation**


**Making Democracy Work**


COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

First Assignment

Write a short paper in which you formulate a definition of “community participation.” What does community participation mean to you? What does it mean to a group you care about? 3-4 pages due the week of January 22. (10 percent).

Second Assignment

Assess an organized effort to strengthen community participation in terms of the extent to which it involves a group of your choice. Describe the participation process and group, assess the scope and quality of their participation, summarize your methodology, and draw general conclusions. 5-7 pages due the week of March 19. (25 percent).

Third Assignment

Propose a strategy to strengthen community participation of a group of your choice. Describe the group, propose and justify the strategy, summarize your methodology, and assess some of the issues which might arise in implementation. Assume that few financial resources are available, but that other non-monetary support may be mobilized. 5-7 pages due the week of April 16. (25 percent).
Midterm Exercise

This take-home exercise will involve one or more questions which allow you to apply what you have learned. Part of the exercise is concerned with your ability to use and refer to specific course readings, to organize your knowledge, and to present this in a concise manner. The exercise will be due 24 hours after its availability on February 21. (10 percent).

Final Exercise

The final exercise will be similar to the midterm except for its coverage of all course materials. The exercise will be due 24 hours after its availability on April 4. (10 percent).

Class Participation

Class participation is instrumental for individual and collective learning in the course. (10 percent).

Combined Option

Instead of the second and third assignments, you may choose to prepare a single term paper in which you assess an organized effort to strengthen community participation in terms of the extent to which it involves a group of your choice, and propose how to strengthen participation of the group in the process. Consider the same elements described in the second and third assignments above. 12-15 pages due the week of April 16. (50 percent).

Paper Revision

You may revise and resubmit any paper for reevaluation until the last session. Papers are due on assigned dates unless prearranged with the instructor. Late papers will be penalized.