Planning for Community and Organizational Change

SW651, Section 001
Winter, 2003
Monday, 6 - 9 P.M.
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Course Description:

This course will examine social planning as a systematic process of developing and implementing plans and programs that promote social justice and well being at the community level. A range of analytic and interactional tools will be reviewed, including those that assess community strengths and needs, set goals and priorities, formulate action plans, develop organizational structures, build support for implementation, and monitor and evaluate results. This course will also analyze major models of planning practice, the sociopolitical context within which practice takes place and strategies for expanding institutional relationships and collaborative partnerships aimed at a more equitable distribution of goods, services, and resources.

Course Content:

This course will focus on social planning with regard to problems affecting the most disadvantaged and disenfranchised groups, as well as the interests of potential resource suppliers, legitimators, and competitors for both resources and legitimacy. Emphasis will be placed on the design of interventions leading to the improvement of social services. Areas to be examined will include:

- service availability and accessibility at the community level in addition to accountability, effectiveness, and efficiency;
- service provision in a manner that is both comprehensive and continuous; and
- service appropriateness to various consumer populations.

Students will study the range of analytic and interactional tasks performed by planners at all stages of the planning process (i.e., problem definition and needs assessment, structure building, strategy and goal formulation, plan-making and implementation, monitoring and evaluation). Several analytic and interactional tools will be reviewed.
Since social planners are not free agents who create their own agendas, students will examine the various community structures through which, or under whose auspices, planning is conducted. These community structures include: 1) community-based organizations, 2) public bodies like Area Agencies on Aging, 3) voluntary federations like United Ways and its alternatives (e.g., women’s funds, sectarian and ethnic federations), 4) direct service agencies (e.g., health funds, family service agencies, Y’s and settlement houses), 5) coalitions, and 6) complex social and economic partnerships.

Emphasis will be placed on planning within the context of Social Work's commitment to serving the disadvantaged and with a focus on the diversity and plurality of interests in society. The ethical and moral implications of various planning related action strategies and probable outcomes will be examined using the NASW Code of Ethics as well as other relevant documents.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Distinguish between major approaches to social planning.
2. Apply interactive assessment tools to planning problems.
3. Describe the opportunities and constraints under which social planners work in one or more occupational settings.
4. Conduct a strategic social planning analysis.
5. Identify the ethical and moral implications of alternative courses of action.
6. Design a plan for creating, expanding, or improving a service program that is shared with or dependent on a number of institutions at the community level.

Course Design:

Class sessions will include lectures and presentations, small group discussions, and experiential exercises. Students will have the opportunity to work on a planning project aimed at expanding or improving services. The students will choose the planning project during week #2.

Relationship of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:

- **Multiculturalism and Diversity.** Students will learn that inter-ethnic communication and other forms of intergroup relationships are central to the success of planning efforts, which often must accommodate to the interests of an increasingly diverse public. In addition, planning is often dependent on the ability to secure the commitments of populations that may differ on demographic, geographic, and psychographic characteristics, and on the ability to balance these against larger institutional and organizational interests.

- **Social Justice and Social Change.** Equity is a major theme in contemporary social planning, and this course will focus on how planner’s can assure that the interests of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups are represented.
Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation. Students will learn that planning methods can be used to correct social problems, the conditions that lead to them, and their consequences.

Behavioral and Social Science Research. This course will emphasize research since planning is anchored in research and scientific knowledge, and many of the assessment and evaluative tools are derived from research methodology. For example, Delphi method was originally designed as an interactive survey method for predictive purposes, but is currently more likely to be used to examine the implications of alternative strategies. Likewise, empirical analysis or the systematic application of social theory often informs the selection of intervention strategies. For instance, force field analysis is derived from field theory and draws on existing and emerging knowledge of which forces are likely to promote or restrain change.

Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values:

The ethical and moral implications of various planning related action strategies and probable outcomes will be examined. Relevant insights will be drawn from the NASW Code of Ethics and contrasted with those of other occupational groups (e.g., Association of Black Social Workers, American Institute of Certified Planners, American Institute of Planners, American Society for Public Administration, and others). Since planning is an attempt to influence who, gets what, where, when, and how, this course will focus on the ethical implications of planning decisions. In particular, concerns related to gender equality, discrimination, censorship, and economic justice will be covered.

Required Readings:

All required readings are to be completed prior to the class session for which they are assigned. Required readings will be found in the textbook, coursepack and handouts. The reading assignments are outlined in this syllabus. The textbook for this course, available at Ulrich's, Michigan Book and Supply, and Michigan Union Bookstore are:

Note: Once the class planning project is determined, a small coursepack will be assembled and available at Excel. Additional materials will also be handed out in class.

Grading Criteria for Written Assignments:

All written work will be graded on the basis of:

a) The quality of the analysis and depth of understanding of the concepts, ideas, and information presented. I will be looking for objective documentation in support of stated opinions or conclusions.

b) The clarity of expression and organization of the paper - is there a logical order to the presentation of your thoughts.

c) The appropriate use of references and resources, and the variety of resources referenced.
d) The use of proper grammar and the over-all professional presentation of the paper.

**Grading Criteria for the Course:**

Each written assignment will be given a letter grade. The criteria I use are as follows:

- **A or A-** Mastery of subject content, demonstration of critical analysis, creativity and/or complexity in completion of assignment. The difference between A and A- is based on the degree to which these skills is demonstrated.
- **B+** Mastery of subject content beyond expected competency, but has not demonstrated additional critical analysis, creativity or complexity in the completion of the assignment.
- **B** Mastery of subject content at level of expected competency – meets course expectations
- **B-** Less than adequate competency, but demonstrates student learning and potential for mastery of subject content.
- **C or C-** Demonstrates a minimal understanding of subject content. Significant areas needing improvement to meet course requirements.
- **E** Student has failed to demonstrate minimal understanding of subject content.

Please understand that grading is a subjective process. I use these criteria to read and evaluate your papers. If, after you read my feedback, you have further questions, please see me about them.

All written assignments submitted by students should be double-spaced in 12-pt. font. Students should use the Student Guide to the Master’s in Social Work Degree Program or other style manuals to assist them in writing their papers. Students are strongly encouraged to make and keep a copy of their papers.

**Course Assignments**

**Class Participation:** Each week we will engage in group activities and discussion; therefore, attendance is very important. Students can receive up to 15 points for class participation. Each student will complete a self-assessment of class participation that will assist me in assigning these points. Missing a class may affect this grade.

**Written Assignments**

1. **MLK Assignment** (25 points). The Civil Rights Movement was arguably the most successful social movement of the 20th C and has served as a model for many other group movements. Using Resource Mobilization Theory (described on pp. 55 – 57 of the Hardina text) discuss the reasons for this success.

   **Due:** January 27, 2003
2. **Individual Planning Project.** Your project will include the following two assignments:

A. **Assessing your community and defining the issue** (25 points): Planning practice requires the ability to work toward set goals and objectives. This process is dependent on understanding your community or organization and identifying issues and possible outcomes.

1. This paper should identify and describe a particular community or organization which will be the focus of your intervention. Briefly describe the community or organization: its composition, goals, formal and informal structures, norms or rules, resource base, and sources of power.
2. What different formal and informal roles, if any, do members of groups based on gender, race, ethnicity or sexual preference play in the organization?
3. Identify and describe the problem, issue or situation that is the focus of your project. You must include a review of relevant literature about the problem in general and current efforts to address it.
4. Based on the information you have gathered, present a vision for change that reflects community, organizational and individual levels.

**Due:** March 3, 2003

B. **The Strategic Plan** (35 points). Effective planning practice requires skills in analyzing larger social systems and using that information to select appropriate strategies to achieve your vision for your community or organization. The result of your analysis is a plan for change. This paper will use the information you have assembled in Part A in combination with your responses to the following questions to present this plan.

1. What do you now see as the major strengths and weaknesses of the community or organization? What is working? What could be improved?
2. To what extent does the community or organization help or hinder the interests and needs of different groups within it?
3. Use the information gathered for this paper and in your first paper to identify strategies and tactics that can achieve your vision.
4. Describe your intervention plan, identifying participants, timelines and resources.
5. Identify ways in which the effectiveness of the plan will be evaluated.

Note: Both the intervention and evaluation plan must indicate ways in which the needs and strengths of women, people of color and gay men and lesbians will be addressed.

**Due:** April 15, 2003
Course Syllabus

Overview

January 6, 2003
Introductions
Student skills/interest survey

Review & Basics
- Definitions of communities
- Review social planning and social work practice models with communities
- Roles of organizational and community planners
- Ethical issues in planning

January 13, 2003
Basic Skills
Defining Communities
Reading Assignment: Hardina, Chapters 1 & 5

January 20, 2003
No Class due to King Holiday Activities

January 27, 2003
Theoretical Frameworks for Practice
Linking Theory to Action
Reading Assignment: Hardina, Chapters 3 & 4

MLK Assignment is due at the beginning of class on January 27th.

Assessment and Problem Identification
- Methods for identifying needs, issues and problems in organizations and communities
- Methods for eliciting multiple views of organizational and community conditions
- Participatory methodology

February 3, 2003
Identifying Issues, Problems, and Change Opportunities
Reading Assignment: Hardina, Chapters 6

February 10, 2003
Power and Politics – both the big “P”s and little “p”s

Reading Assignment: Hardina, Chapters 7, 8 & 9

The Planning Process
• Value conflicts in planning
• Building effective teams
• Developing and assessing vision, mission and goals

February 17, 2003
Values and Ethics
Reading Assignment: Hardina, Chapter 2

February 24, 2003
No class due to Spring Break

March 3, 2003
Preparing for Change - Strategies and Tactics
Reading Assignment: Hardina, Chapter 10

Planning Project (Part A) is due at the beginning of class on March 3rd

March 10, 2003
Planning Programs and Services
Reading Assignment: Hardina, Chapter 11

Implementation

March 17, 2003
Management and Administration
Developing Leadership Skills
Reading Assignment: Coursepack

March 31, 2003
Fiscal Analysis and Resource Development
Reading Assignment: Hardina, Chapters 12 & 13

Evaluation
• Methods for evaluating community or organization plans
• Roles of constituencies, stakeholders and auspices in evaluation
• Empowerment evaluation principles

April 8, 2003
Outcome and Process Evaluation
Reading Assignment: Hardina, Chapters 14 & 15
Catch Up, Wrap Up and Wind Down

April 15, 2003
Evaluation of our process and any final questions

Planning Project (Part B) is due at the beginning of class on April 15th