

Sociology 475
Spring 2019

MWF 9-9:50am
Monroe 213

Public Sociology

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Office: Monroe 413, 540/654-1498
Office hrs: MWF 10-11:30, Tues 1-2:30
and by appointment

Course Overview:

In this course, students will be trained in community-based action research and will conduct community-engaged action research projects. Community partners have identified some issues and needs to be addressed. You will collaborate with them (and me) to identify what data you will need to gather (interviews, focus groups, participant observation, documents, records, reports, and surveys), and how you could best analyze this data. You will draw on sociological methods, perspectives and insights to make sense of what you've learned. Importantly, your final project should be an action plan: in other words, we are aiming to create a project that community partners can use to create change and address the issue they have identified.

Course objectives:

By the end of the course, students will:

- *be familiar with the distinctions between public sociology and more traditional academic sociology;
- *be familiar with key methodological and ethical concerns involved in public sociology projects;
- *experience the process of designing and implementing public sociology projects;
- *reflect on the challenges of this approach to knowledge production and dissemination, and of working closely with community partners

This course is also designated as Experiential Learning (EL) and Community Engaged (CE), so the following learning outcomes are also intended objectives of the course:

- Analysis of Knowledge: Connects and extends knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from one's own academic study/ field/ discipline to community engagement and to one's own participation in community life, politics, and government.
- Identity/Commitment: Provides evidence of experience in community-engagement activities and describes what she/he has learned about her or himself as it relates to a reinforced or clarified commitment to public action.
- Action and Reflection: Demonstrates independent experience, accompanied by reflective insights or analysis about the aims and accomplishments of one's actions.
- Communication: Tailors communication strategies to effectively express, listen, and adapt to others to establish relationships to further community action
- Contexts/Structures: Demonstrates ability and commitment to collaboratively work across and within community contexts and structures to achieve a community aim.
- Academic impact: Uses community engagement experience to inform one's academic study/field/discipline.
- Students will be able to clarify and refine their understanding of their strengths and weaknesses in content of relevant disciplines and in skills such as time management, organization, professionalism, and so forth
- Students will be able to recognize their knowledge and lack of knowledge
- Students will be able to connect their undergraduate experiences and their postgraduation lives

Course Assignments:

Class participation: 10%.** You must come to class prepared to participate actively in our discussions. That means you need to do the readings ahead of time, and give thought to questions and ideas that you have from the readings. You will also frequently be talking about/reporting on/brainstorming in regards to your group project. ***You need to be actively engaged in these discussions. Please do not assume that attendance is enough to earn your grade for this element.

***Case study quizzes: 15%.** Early in the semester we will be exploring what public sociology is, how sociologists do this work, and examining examples of public sociology. As part of this process, I will give you a series of short, in-class quizzes on the readings. We will do the first couple together, with books open. As we progress, and your understanding of the concepts increases, the quizzes will be done individually, and closed-book. You will be expected to discuss: the problem addressed by the case study project, the type of public sociology project, the research methods used (if any), key outcomes, and the contribution made by the project. Expect quizzes every day we read case studies.

Public Sociology Project: 75%.** You will work with a group to flesh out and conduct an action research project to address a need identified by one of our community partners. Your work on this project will occupy the entire semester, and you will need to be regularly moving the process forward. We will take time in class to work on this project – collaborating, brain-storming, trouble-shooting – but ***you will also do work outside of class on this project. In fact, for much of the semester, this research will be your homework and your reading. University students are generally expected to do 2-3 hours of work outside of class for each hour they spend inside the class. That is absolutely my expectation for the amount of effort you need to put into this project. Graded elements will occur throughout the semester. Most assignment deadlines are listed on the syllabus; your weekly progress reports will be due every Wednesday. They will be the following elements:

1. *Short introductory-stage essay.* An individual summary of ideas that you've gathered from your preliminary reading, field work, volunteering (if possible) on the project. *5% of total.*
2. *Group plan.* Group write-up of initial plans for the project: identify methods, data sources, goals, possible end-product. *5% of total.*
3. *Completed IRB application for project,* even if not submitted. *5% of total.*
4. *Mid-semester report on project.* Your group needs to show the data gathered, the current conclusions, the next steps. This will require some narrative (text), but also show the actual data: field notes, annotations on reports read, surveys and responses – whatever you have. This report will also outline next steps and current barriers. *15% of total.*
5. *Weekly progress reports to me.* We will discuss these in class. Some will be individual reports, some will be group reports. They are not very formal writing assignments: I don't expect revised drafts. (They **MUST** be typed, proofread, spell/grammar checked.) *15% of total.*

5. *Final report findings and developed plan of action.* Needs to be appropriate for the community partner(s), and to flow appropriately from the data gathered. *25% of total.*

6. *Individual reflection on this process.* *5% of total.*

Grading Scale:

A: 93-100 A-: 90-92

B+: 87-89 B: 83-86 B-: 80-82

C+: 77-79 C: 73-76 C-: 70-72

D+: 67-69 D: 60-66

Anything below 60 is a failing grade. Those selecting the Pass/Fail option must average a 60. Grades of D or below will be reported as Unsatisfactory on midterm grades.

HONOR CODE: All students are expected to follow the policies of UMW with respect to academic conduct. Anyone engaging in plagiarism, cheating, or any other form of academic dishonesty will be referred to the Honors Council. Please write and sign the following pledge on all assignments and exams:

I hereby declare, upon my word of honor, that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work. (Signature)

Disability Services: The Office of Disability Services has been designated by the University as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you receive services through that office and require accommodations for this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodation needs. Bring your accommodation letter with you to the appointment. I will hold any information you share with me in the strictest confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise. If you need accommodations, (note taking assistance, extended time for tests, etc.) I would be happy to refer you to the Office of Disability Services. They will require appropriate documentation of a disability. Their phone number is 540-654-1266.

Class recording policy: In this class, students may not make audio or video recordings of any course activity unless the student has an approved accommodation from the Office of Disability Resources permitting the recording class meetings. In such cases, the accommodation letter must be presented to the instructor in advance of any recording being done and all students in the course will be notified whenever recording will be taking place. Students who are permitted to record classes are not permitted to redistribute audio or video recordings of statements or comments from the course to individuals who are not students in the course without the express permission of the faculty member and of any students who are recorded. Distribution without permission is a violation of educational privacy law. This policy is consistent with UMW's Policy on Recording Class and Distribution of Course Materials.

Required readings (available at the UMW bookstore and many online venues):

Stringer, Ernest T. 2014. *Action Research* (4th edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Nyden, Hossfeld & Nyden. 2012. *Public Sociology: Research, Action & Change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pince Forge Press.

Additional readings will be posted on **Canvas, and are indicated with an "*" on the course schedule.

Canvas: Course documents will be made available on Canvas – including the syllabus, and all other assignment guidelines. I will also post grades on Canvas, and will open discussion areas for students to problem-solve or talk further about the issues we raise in class. Please let me know if you have any trouble accessing the class Canvas site. ***Please recognize that we use Canvas for convenience; where there is disagreement between canvas and the syllabus, always defer to the syllabus.***

Schedule of Classes: *This outline is subject to change, as needed. If we need to speed things up or slow them down – we will.*

Week 1 (Jan 14-18): What is public sociology? What are the projects?

Nyden ch 1 – Public Scholarship, the Sociological Imagination, etc.

*on Canvas: “Of pigs and public sociology;” “The Importance of DACA;” “Study finds declining”

No class Monday Jan 21 – MLK day. I hope you can spend the day in some way honoring his call to justice and equity.

Week 2 (Jan 23-25): How do people do public sociology? And choosing a project

Nyden ch 2 – Crossing Boundaries...

Stringer ch 2 – The Theory Behind...

***No class Fri Jan 25 – required Canvas discussion board post instead.

Week 3 (Jan 28-Feb 1): Getting started, ethics, etc.

Nyden case studies: 1.1, 2.2, 4.1 (read one for each day of class)

Stringer ch 3 – Setting the Stage (have this finished by Friday – may be used all week)

*Canvas: “IRB & Ethnography”

Week 4 (Feb 4-8): Preliminary collaborations on projects

Nyden case studies: 3.4, 4.3, 5.2 (read one for each day of class)

Stringer ch 4 – Look: Gathering Data (have this finished by Friday – may be used all week)

Introductory-stage essay due Feb 6

Week 5 (Feb 11-15): Focus on projects

Nyden: case studies: 7.1, 7.2, 1.3 (read one for each day of class)

Stringer ch 5: Think: Reflection & Analysis (have this finished by Friday – may be used all week)

*on Canvas: “Improving Qualitative research”

Do you need to conduct field work, volunteering in the field? What do you need to create the plan?

Group plan tentatively due (Feb 15 or 18)

Week 6 (Feb 18-22): Continued focus on projects – in-class discussion of plans, barriers, questions

Stringer ch 6: Act: Action Plans

****Progress report due***

Every student must have completed IRB/Human Subjects course online.

<http://provost.umw.edu/irb/irb-training/>

Week 7 (Feb 25-Mar 1)

Readings & Activities TBA, dependent on the needs of the class and of the projects.

Draft Group IRB applications due, if possible, by (Feb 25). Consult with me to determine if an alternate deadline is needed, and is appropriate.

SPRING BREAK MAR 4-8

Week 9: (Mar 11-15)

Stringer ch 9: Action Research & the Internet

**Progress report due*

Week 10: (Mar 18-22)

Stringer ch 8: Reports: Informing Stakeholders

Mid-semester report (group) due to me and to partner (Mar 18)

Week 11: (Mar 25-29) Workshops, Group Meetings, Trouble-shooting

Stringer ch 7: Strategic Planning

**Progress report due*

Week 12: (Apr 1-5) Workshops, Group Meetings, Trouble-shooting

**Progress report due*

Week 13: (Apr 8-12) Workshops, Group Meetings, Trouble-shooting

**Progress report due*

Week 14: (Apr 15-19) Workshops, Group Meetings, Trouble-shooting

**Progress report due*

Week 15: (Apr 22-26) Wrapping-up

**Progress report due*

Each group will present your final project to the class – and/or the public? – in whatever form you decide is most useful, most appropriate.

**Each group can choose:

EITHER turn in *Individual reflections* on (Apr 26), and *final group report* during exam time;

OR

turn in *final group report* (Apr 26), and *individual reflections* during exam time.

Final exam period: Friday May 3, 8:30-11:00am