CRP 531: Foundations of Community Development
This graduate seminar explores the theories and methods of community development. Our course has three aims. First, the discipline and practice of planning is centrally concerned with transforming particular places. As such, this course introduces students to a critical understanding of space and the built environment. Understanding how space functions, and the distinctiveness of different spatial formations – the sunbelt suburb, rustbelt ghetto, or mesa colonia to name a few – is a prerequisite for effective, justice-oriented planning interventions.

Secondly, we carefully consider how power works. We operate through an asset-based model of community development which foregrounds the agency and capacities of historically-marginalized social groups, resisting trends that define these communities through frames of lack or dysfunction. We consider how power works through race, gender and other axes of difference, while also questioning how power sets the boundaries of community itself, defining who is in and who is cast out, and valorizing some forms of knowing over others. Questions of power are inseparable from the ethics of community development, especially in contexts where planners are working with communities which are not their own.
Finally, this course trains students to contextualize contemporary planning problems and community struggle in historical context, that is, to use history as a method of community action. We consider the history of community development as a contested response to situated social problems, like deplorable slum conditions for immigrants in the Progressive era, the ghetto uprisings of the 1960s, and today’s landscapes of persistent poverty alongside extreme wealth. Community development also draws from a much longer legacy of ideas about social development, many with roots outside the US. Thus we are alert to transnational connections as theories of community change travel.

Learning Objectives

Students can expect to accomplish the following learning objectives in this class:

1. Gain a critical understanding of community development and change, as well as the social, political and economic forces shaping communities operating at multiple scales
2. Understand multiple frameworks of community development, organizing and action
3. Develop familiarity with how gender, race, and other forms of difference structure communities and inform community development practice
4. Understand the history of community development in the US
5. Develop the analytic skills to situate a community in historical, political, and economic context as part of planning or organizing work.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS + GRADING

Response papers

Students are expected to read, reflect on, and write about weekly readings before arriving to class. Each week, you will prepare a 600 to 1000 word response paper on the weekly readings. Post your response to Learn (Journals Tab). In these papers, you will do two things: summarize key arguments and critically engage with the readings. This critical engagement can include 1) making connections between readings and key ideas 2) evaluating the success with which the authors substantiate their claims 3) discussing limitations or challenges you, or other authors, might raise and 4) explore how a particular concept from the readings relates to your own research and/or life experience. The intention of this assignment for you to engage with the readings in a way that is useful for your own program of research and practice, as well as to exercise your writing muscles. These response papers can be useful resources for comprehensive exams or literature reviews for projects like a master thesis or dissertation. They are worth investing in.

Positionality Paper

We are all influenced by where we come from and how we are situated in relationship to different power structures. Our “positionality” reflects many things, like race, class, gender expression, sexual orientation, country of origin, immigration status, family history and connection to place. In this assignment, you will reflect on your positionality and how it shapes your worldview.

Case-Based Writing Assignments

Students will select a case study of a real-world community development issue to serve as the basis of three writing assignments. You will get the most out of these assignments if you work on the same issue for all three assignments.

1) **Persuasive Essay**: an extended blog post or opinion editorial engaging with a real-world community development issue. The essay will make & defend an argument, situate the issue in historical context and explain the stakes of the case for a relevant community.

2) **Literature Review**: In this assignment, you will identify a subfield of scholarship that engages with your real-world issues. Reviewing the relevant scholarship, you will identify, synthesize and analyze the debates within this field of research.

3) **Final Project**: The final paper will be a short analytic reflection in which you apply a theoretical framework to a topic or issue of your choice. The topical area can derive from your research, planning practice or social justice commitments. Your topic should be a real-world place, problem or possibility, like the UNM Sanctuary campus movement, policing protest in Brazil or decoloniality in the Zapatista
struggle. Drawing from at least four course readings, construct a relevant conceptual framework that helps us understand the dynamics of your issue more clearly. The paper is an exploration and analysis of your topic in relationship to the conceptual framework. You can also choose to write a longer research paper, if that is helpful for your course of study. If you opt-in to a research paper, I will need to OK your paper topic.

**Grading**

1) Attendance & Participation 15%
2) Reading Responses (or quizzes) 15%
3) Positionality Paper 10% (DUE: 1/30)
4) Persuasive Essay 15% (DUE: 2/13)
5) Literature Review 15% (DUE: 3/27)
6) Final Project 30% (DUE: 5/7)

**Optional: Develop a daily writing practice**

I encourage you to develop a daily writing practice, regularly writing in short sessions a minimum of five times per week. Effective, persuasive writing is a lynchpin skill for activists, organizers and planning professionals. In addition, writing is integral to learning. Extensive research shows that regular writing in short sessions develops important skills like critical thinking, creativity, expressive capacity and self-reflection. Further, it produces more writing than last minute cram sessions. Students will choose one form of regular writing to experiment with, and commit to, for the semester (Timed Writing Practice, Morning Pages or Freewrites, more info on Learn). I know writing can be uncomfortable or even scary. However, just about everyone can learn to be a good writer. It’s normal to try to avoid writing. Part of the point of regular writing practice is learn to write anyways, even when your mind throws myriad procrastination strategies your way. The topics of regular writing are at the discretion of students, although I do encourage engagement with course themes.

If you develop a daily writing practice, your final grade will be bumped up by one half letter grade at the end of the term. You will need to demonstrate to me that you have stuck with the daily writing practice, although I will not read what you write. Your daily writing is confidential.

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Attendance Policy**

Attendance is required for this course. You are expected to show up on time. Arriving late is a disruption and a disservice to your fellow classmates. Unexcused absences will be penalized with a deduction of 4% of your participation grade for each class missed. If you do need to miss class for an acceptable reason (team travel, family emergency, illness, immigration related procedures), please let me know ahead of time and provide adequate documentation. Absences will only be excused after the fact in cases of documented illness or emergency.

**Email**

I will respond to emails 48-72 hours after I receive them. Do not expect a response to last minute emails before assignments are due. Substantive questions should be saved for class or office hours.

**Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism is using the ideas or words of another without proper acknowledgment. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please read the Community and Regional Planning Program’s “Ethics Statement.” This course is designed to provoke critical thinking. While I encourage study groups and working together to understand theory and concepts, all written work should be your own. Please do not use other students’ papers or exercises for your assignments. If you cite an author or use her/his ideas, please cite properly. Plagiarized assignments will receive a failing grade. If you have any questions, please ask.

**Grade Disputes**

Students who wish to dispute grades on an assignment must do so in writing. Indicate each issue that you dispute. You must submit grade disputes to me in office hours. Please note that I may lower as well as raise grades after reviewing assignments.
Technology Policy

Please turn off your cell phones before class begins, unless you have urgent family or caretaking responsibilities. **Personal laptop use is not allowed in class.**

Accommodation Policy

If you need disability-related accommodations in this class, if you have emergency medical information you wish to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please inform me immediately. Please see me privately after class or during my office hours.

Campus & classrooms free from discrimination, violence and harassment

Our classroom and our university should always be spaces of mutual respect, kindness, and support, without fear of discrimination, harassment, or violence. Should you ever need assistance or have concerns about incidents that violate this principle, please access the resources available to you on campus, especially the LoboRESPECT Advocacy Center and the support services listed on its website. Please note that, because UNM faculty are considered “responsible employees” by the Department of Education, any disclosure of gender discrimination (including sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, and sexual violence) made to a faculty member must be reported by that faculty member to the university’s Title IX coordinator.

Support for undocumented students

As an educator, I fully support the rights of undocumented students to an education and to live free from the fear of deportation. I pledge confidentiality to any student who wishes to disclose their immigration status, and I will work with students who require immigration-related accommodations. For more information and/or resources, please contact the New Mexico Dream Team at info@nmdreamteam.org.

Resources

CRP Ethics Statement: http://saap.unm.edu/academic-programs/community-regional-planning/index.html

LoboRESPECT: http://loborespect.unm.edu/

For more information on the campus policy regarding sexual misconduct, please see: https://policy.unm.edu/university-policies/2000/2740.html.

Readings

Readings will be available in pdf format on our Learn course website.

SYLLABUS

Course Schedule

**Unit 1: Asset-Based Development**
Week 1. 1/15 - Theory + Practice = Praxis
Week 2. 1/23 - Seeing & Building Community Capacity
Week 3. 1/30 - Histories of Community Development
**DUE 1/30: Positionality Paper**
Week 4. 2/6 - Conceptualizing Poverty

**Unit 2: Transformational Change**
Week 5. 2/13 - Understanding Millennial Capitalism
**DUE 2/13: Persuasive Essay**
Week 6. 2/20 - The Spatial + The Social
Week 7. 2/27 - Race, Space + Difference
Week 8. 3/6 - Settler Colonialism & Indigenous Sovereignty
**Week 9. 3/13 - Spring Break**
Week 10. 3/20 - Gender + The Feminization of Poverty
Unit 3: Building Community Power
Week 11. 3/27 – Organizing
DUE 3/27: Literature Review
Week 12. 4/3 - Group Work
Week 13. 4/10 - Empowerment + Participation
Week 14. 4/17 - Community Development with Immigrant Communities
Week 15. 4/24 - Community Economic Development
Week 16. 5/1 - Class Wrap Up
DUE 5/7: Final Project

Unit 1. Asset-based Development

Week 1. January 15
THEORY + PRACTICE = PRAXIS

This week wrestles with the question: “what is theory good for?” All action in (and on) the world rests on theories of how the world works, on assumptions about the drivers of social change, and on perceptions of what is politically possible. We explore one lineage of thought – popularized by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, that raises up the capacities of the most oppressed to develop a critical consciousness and act as agents of justice. Drawing on Freire, the black feminist bell hooks argues that theory is a social practice, potentially (although not necessarily) liberatory, if it transforms our capacities to understand and act on the world in ways that promote healing and social justice.

Recommended

Week 2. January 23
SEEING & BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY

This we explore the asset-based model of community development which foregrounds the agency and capacities of historically-marginalized social groups. This model explicitly resists trends that define these communities through frames of lack or dysfunction. We also question a romanticized vision of community as coherent monolithic or free from conflict.

Recommended


Week 3. January 30

HISTORIES OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

This week, we study how community development cyclically emerges, in reworked form, in response to social suffering – from the deplorable slum living conditions for immigrant communities in the Progressive Era to the 1960s ghetto uprisings to privatized charity, like George Bush’s one thousand points of light, in response to deindustrialization and wage stagnation from the 1980s onwards. The New Deal bifurcated social supports into two parallel tracks. Means tested, stigmatized programs for the poor exist alongside what Alice O’Conner describes as “invisible, federalized, non-means tested subsidies” for the wealthy. Key community development programs seeking the “maximum feasible participation” of poor communities defined participation in ways that, some argue, overlook the social structures that reproduce poverty.


In Latin America


Recommended

Week 4. February 6

CONCEPTUALIZING POVERTY
Frequently, development is posed as the solution to poverty. But there is considerable debate about what development, and poverty, might mean, as well as the relationship between these two social processes. This week, we look at recent policy responses to poor people as a way to think critically about the implicit understandings of poverty these policies promote.


Recommended

Unit 2: Transformational Change

Week 5. February 13

UNDERSTANDING MILLENNIAL CAPITALISM
Communities are impacted by regional, national and global processes. This week we investigate the crucial shift, inaugurated in the late 1970s, to neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is alternately understood as an elite economic project that exacerbates income inequality, a political rationality promoting market logics in social
spheres (like education or environmental policy), or as a form of governance. As one consequence of neoliberalism’s downsizing of state welfare programs, private sector organizations (NGOs and some community development organizations) are increasingly providing community social supports. This shift of caretaking from the public to the private sector is a hallmark of neoliberalism.


Recommended


Week 6. February 20

THE SPATIAL + THE SOCIAL

DUE: Project Proposal

This week we study how the production of space is a social and political process. Understanding the politics of space means asking “how” questions: how is a given spatial arrangement historically and socially produced? Familiar contemporary landscapes – automobile-centric cities, majority white suburbs, a global map divided between “first-world” and “third-world countries” – were not pre-ordained nor are they unchangeable. Other spatial and social arrangements were, and are, possible. Thus, understanding the social production of space can help projects aimed toward justice, sustainability, racial equity, economic equality, and so on.


In Latin America


Recommended


Week 7. February 2

RACE, SPACE + DIFFERENCE

This week introduces the social construction of race, a crucial concept in today’s political landscape that mixes a “post-race” discourse promoting color-blindness with overtly racist electoral strategies. We consider how community life is formed through encounters across difference and unequal power relationships, themselves shaped by specific racial and ethnic histories. Cultural identities are always formed in relationship to specific places, through practices that also shape urban space. Further racial identities are always in formation; that is, they are not fixed but rather are lawyered, multiple, and changing.


Choose one of the following:


Recommended


**Week 8. March 7**

**SETTLER COLONIALISM & INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY**

Settler colonialism is a historical process of land theft, broken treaties, and unspeakable violence against the Native peoples of the Americas. It is also a present-day process, as made visible by the Standing Rock Sioux’s fight to have their territorial claims recognized in the fight against the Dakota Access Pipeline.


**In Latin America**


**Recommended**


Week 9. March 13  
SPRING BREAK

Week 10. March 20  
GENDER + THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

Statistics like the poverty headcount paint a demographic picture based on household income, but may hide other important dimensions of poverty as a lived experience that unevenly affects different social groups. Feminist scholars have long argued that poverty is gendered. This goes beyond the observation that more women than men have poverty-level incomes. Rather, socially-constructed understandings of valuable work and proper political subjects contain implicit, gendered assumptions. Discourses of poverty are at once gendered and racialized. For instance, proponents of cutting state-funded safety nets in the 1980s mobilized racist sentiments with the figure of the “welfare queen,” implicitly coded as a black woman.


Recommended


Unit 3. Building Community Power

Week 11. March 27  
ORGANIZING

Organizing is a method of building power within a community in order to press for systemic social and policy change. This week we trace the organizing model of Saul Alinsky, the son of Jewish immigrants who
influenced generations of activists and leaders, including Barak Obama, Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta and Hillary Clinton. Envisioning the world as split between the “haves” and the “have nots,” Alinsky argues that principled men are morally obligated to push for a social redistribution of power. Alinsky calls these agents of social change Radicals, titling his first book “Rules for Radicals.” Like many of his era, Alinsky’s language suggests he envisions these empowered actors as men, rather than women. Given this, we also consider the limits of the Alinsky model of organizing.


Cases: Choose One


Week 12. April 4

GROUP WORK

Week 13. April 10

EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Empowerment and broad-based participation are key practices of many modes of community development. This week we explore different ways of cultivating community civic capacities. We also consider critiques that question the ease with which some notions of participation overlook or even exacerbate structures of inequality. The Zapatista spokesperson, Subcomandante Marcos, writes with humor about the difficulties that outsiders might experience when they seek to “consult” with a community that is not their own.


In Latin America


Recommended


Week 14. April 17

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WITH IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

Geographically extensive migrant networks are a key force of globalization and contemporary urban development. This week we consider some dynamics that shape immigrant communities in the US, including strong transnational ties, precarious citizenship status, and unique forms of community organization, like hometown associations.


Recommended


COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This week we consider different perspectives on how communities can increase their capacities for economic sustainability. Is community economic development a process or an outcome? Should it be measured by job growth, per capital income or something else? Feminist geographers J.K. Gibson-Graham (two academics writing under one name) argue for cultivating an economic imagination outside of capitalism.


State-Led Redistribution in Latin America


Recommended


CLASS WRAP UP