Course Objectives

The central questions guiding this course concern the challenges, theoretical models and best practices of academic research and advocacy relationships. The goal of this course is to help students who expect to make careers either as academics or nonprofit policy/research staff to navigate the challenges of bridging the gap between the academy and community-based organizations so that a true co-creation of knowledge can occur. The course familiarizes students with theoretical and practical models for academic/community partnerships. Students accrue experience forging partnerships that address the questions of knowledge and power inherent in the process.

To accomplish these goals
(a) the course instructors join extensive experience in both academic research and the non-profit sector;
(b) course readings draw from the growing literature on how to establish researcher/activist partnerships along with exemplary successes and failures
(c) course sessions will often include other experts who are actively joining research and advocacy in various non-profit sectors (e.g., environment, health disparities, economic justice, immigration);
(d) students develop a working relationship by mutual agreement with a non-profit organization; and
(e) a portion of each course session is devoted to trouble-shooting with regard to student projects.

Our goal is to equip students with the experience and knowledge they need to successfully bridge the academic/community divide in a way that benefits both the career development of the student and affiliated non-profit organizations.

Course Eligibility
This course requires that students have basic research skills that they can bring to bear in a researcher/advocacy organization partnership. Doctoral students in and beyond the Annenberg School for Communication are welcome. Masters level students are also welcome, but need to acquire permission from the instructors.

Academic Integrity is Important!

The Annenberg School for Communication is committed to upholding the University’s Academic Integrity code as detailed in the campus guide. It is the policy of the School of Communication to report all violations of the code. Any serious violations or pattern of violations of the Academic Integrity Code will result in the student’s expulsion from the Communication program.

**Statement for Students with Disabilities**

Any student requesting academic accommodation based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to your instructor (or TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is 213-740-0776.

Office Hours: Because the required fieldwork is time sensitive, faculty guidance should be sought by email or phone in between class sessions. On campus meetings may be set by appointment.

**Conduct of Class Sessions**

Students are expected to play an active role in shaping class discussion. To that end, students will be asked to take responsibility to lead discussions of the week’s readings and will be asked to develop précis of many of the readings. Assignments will be made week to week.

**Components of Course Evaluation**

- Seminar Participation: 15
- Discussion Facilitation: 10
- Course Project Research Work Plan: 20
- Course Project Presentation (20 minutes): 25
- Course Project Final Paper: 30

**Community Research Project**

Students will conduct, either alone or in a small group, a community-based research project using a model of community-based participatory research. Students are expected
to engage in a systematic inquiry, making use of whatever methodological approaches seem appropriate to the research and that they have the knowledge to apply.

Course projects draw on applications solicited by Liberty Hill Foundation from its grassroots social justice grantees. Students may also propose a project developed from their own contacts and resources, though such projects must be approved by the instructors. The first class session includes a ‘meet and greet’ period in which students and partnering organizations discuss prospective projects.

Among the types of research that could be conducted within the semester timeframe might be:

- A small population study, e.g., a study of the demographic and spatial characteristics of a specific geo-ethnic community.
- A community needs/resource assessment or asset mapping
- An evaluation of a program which may include development of survey instruments or development of a focus group protocol

Doctoral candidates may, with instructors’ approval, design a related research project that will support the progress of their dissertation.

The student, working with the partnering organization, will develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that specifies the nature of the research, the tasks the researcher will be responsible for, identify supervision of the project on behalf of the community partner, agreements for regular meetings, and a clear time line for the conduct of the project. These MOUs are due no later than the fourth week of the semester.

Although it’s desirable to develop and complete a research project, given the constraints of the semester, it’s understood that with some fieldwork projects the process is the product. Therefore, keeping detailed notes of the process as it unfolds is recommended.

The final course paper has two components:

(1) The final fieldwork paper should be prepared in a way so that it is of optimal value to the collaborating community organization, even if this means departing from academic conventions. It is strongly encouraged that reports to community organizations begin with an Executive Summary unless such a summary is inappropriate to the findings or audience. The length of the fieldwork paper will vary according to the nature of the project and the mutually-agreed-to expectations about the report’s purposes.

(2) A “reflection epilogue” that is not intended for the community organization, and that details your challenges, encounters with power differentials, cultural differences, and otherwise illustrates your hands-on engagement with the central questions of the course. It is strongly recommended you keep weekly notes to enrich your end-of-semester reflections. Please consider the lessons you would draw from this experience and how they would inform your approach in future community based research projects.
You are strongly encouraged to attend an URBAN meeting sometime during the semester. URBAN is an emerging national network of academics, independent scholars and community leaders who are engaged in community-based research. Meetings are generally held on Saturday mornings 10 am – 12:30 pm at the Downtown Labor Center near MacArthur Park. Upcoming meetings can be found on their website. http://urbanresearchnetwork.org/local-nodes/los-angeles-node/#.Uq-BftJUeSo

Seminar Topics & Readings

Each week several students will be asked to prepare précis of the readings for the following week and to make sufficient copies for instructors and students. These précis should summarize salient points from the reading. All readings will be available via Dropbox unless a hyperlink is included in the syllabus.

Class 1/January 14: Course Overview and Initial Partner Meetings

Instructors’ overview of the course and discussion of the student partnerships. Introduction to community organization staff and projects. An MOU between students and an organization will be due no later than mid-February.

Readings


In beginning to develop your research partnership, it is strongly recommended that you familiarize yourself with DataCenter’s “Starting Your Research Project” which is available in the USC-Liberty Hill Dropbox. Two additional documents provide an introduction to the community based research partnership process from different points of view: “An Introduction to Research Justice” is available from DataCenter and is written from a social justice perspective with a popular education approach. Quite different but thoughtfully considered is the Community-Campus Partnerships for Health curriculum is an interesting counterpoint. Throughout the partnership-building process, you may find these documents useful references. They include discussion and activities concerning many aspects of the relationship-building process as well as dissemination of results and sustaining partnerships.

Class 2/January 21: Challenges in Advocacy/Academic Partnerships from a Community-Based, Participatory or Collaborative Research Perspective.
Guest Speakers: Carmen Gonzalez, Ph.D. candidate, USC Annenberg. Mobile Voices is one of several CBPR projects Carmen has been involved in. This class session will focus on what to expect in the partnership, how to develop a trusting relationship, and navigate initial challenges.

**Readings**


**Class 3/Jan. 28: Challenges & Solutions in Community-University Partnerships**

Guest Speakers: Saba Waheed, UCLA Downtown Labor Center. Imelda S. Plascencia Dream Resource Center. Saba was previously staff at The Data Center in Oakland. This class session will focus on how to assist nonprofits new to research in the process of developing strategic research questions, gathering data, and reporting out findings in a way that will be meaningful to the nonprofit’s intended audience. Imelda has been
involved in community research with undocumented immigrant students (aka “The Dreamers.”)

**Readings**


In advance of class, please also review Data Center’s Research Toolkit available for download at: [http://www.datacenter.org/new-toolkit-an-introduction-to-research-justice/](http://www.datacenter.org/new-toolkit-an-introduction-to-research-justice/)

**Class 4/Feb 4: The Metamorphosis Project: A Communication Infrastructure Approach to Social Change through Partnership with Grassroots Organizations**

Guest Speakers; TBD. This class session will focus on some of the community-based research projects that are currently being led by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and graduate students through the Metamorphosis and other projects.

**Readings**


Chen, N. N.-T, Dong, F., Huang, J., Ball-Rokeach, S., Parks, M., & Huang, J. Building a new media platform for local storytelling and civic engagement in ethically diverse neighborhoods. *New Media & Society*.

Class 5/Feb 11: Community Research Models: USC’s PERE

Guest Speaker: Jennifer Ito, Project Manager, USC’s Program for Environmental and Regional Equity.

Class 6/Feb 18 Community Research Models: NELA Riverfront

Guest Speaker: George Villanueva. George’s dissertation examines the communication and civic engagement dynamics that affect the spatial re-imagination of South L.A. as a place. He also is program, research, and civic engagement lead of the HUD-DOT-EPA Partnership for Sustainable Communities Northeast Los Angeles (NELA) Riverfront Collaborative--an initiative intended to create sustainable economic development and civic engagement in the NELA river study area and communities.

Readings

Please review these web pages in advance of class:
http://www.kcet.org/socal/departures/nela/partners/george-villanueva.html (Please search Departures for additional coverage) as well as the news section of www.mylariver.org.

“NELA Riverfront Collaborative.” (PDF)

Class 7/Feb 25 Models for Community Research and Community Research Access: The Advancement Project

Guest speaker: Janice Burns, Community Research Lab, Advancement Project. This class session is one of several that will focus on different ways in which community nonprofits have built community research and research-access into their operations.

Readings

Please review this web page in advance of class: http://v5.healthycity.org/cbpar

Class 8/March 4 Foundations and Thinktanks
Readings


Class 9/March 11 Models for Community Research and Community Research Access: SSG

Guest speaker: Eric Wat, Special Services for Groups. In this class session, we will discuss models for community-based assessments and evaluation.

Readings


Please review this web page prior to class: http://www.ssg.org/programs-and-services/research/

Optional: Kellogg Foundation has developed an “evaluation handbook” for grantee project directors if you are particularly interested in this work.

Spring Break

Class 11/March 25 Entertainment-Education

Guest speaker: Guest speaker: Lourdes Baezconde-Garbanati, Advisory Board, USC’s Hollywood Health & Society program. Associate Professor in Preventive Medicine and Sociology, USC Keck School of Medicine. (Lourdes will join us at 6:30.)
Readings

“Narrative versus Nonnarrative: The Role of Identification, Transportation, and Emotion in Reducing Health Disparities.” Sheila T. Murphy, Lauren B. Frank, Joyee S. Chatterjee, & Lourdes Baezconde-Garbanati. (trying to access through ResearchGate)


Class 12/April 1 Community Research in a Non-US Context

Guest Speaker: Doe Mayer, Chair of Film and Television Production at USC's School of Cinematic Arts and Professor in the Annenberg School for Communication

Mayer will discuss the challenges of conducting research outside the U. S. context and the role of documentary film in such projects. Doe will show excerpts from her film Women Connect! (Doe will join us at 6:30.)

Readings


Class 13/April 8 Student Presentations

In this class session, two research teams will present an overview of their research partnership, including a discussion of the process, their findings, and the way in which the research will be shared with the community research partner’s target audience.

Class 14/April 15 Student Presentations
In this class session, two research teams will present an overview of their research partnership, including a discussion of the process, their findings, and the way in which the research will be shared with the community research partner’s target audience.

**Class 15/April 22 - The Future of University-Community Partnerships**

In this session, we will discuss challenges and strategies for developing courses of this kind within the university and beyond. Recommended reading for that discussion:

**Readings**

Whelan, James. “Are academics irrelevant? Case studies of university collaboration with community-based environmental advocates.”


Please also visit the URBAN Research Network website. http://urbanresearchnetwork.org/