SYLLABUS

Purpose of Course: Community Psychology attempts to understand people in their social contexts. It integrates social action and psychological research in culturally diverse contexts. The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the breadth of topics, social issues, and research approaches that characterize community psychology. The course has a strong "hands-on" component in which you will carry out various projects to help you understand social settings. In keeping with the field's values of "person-environment fit," you may choose the assignments (learning environments) that work best for you.

Text: Dalton, J. H., Elias, M. J., & Wandersman, A. (2001). *Community psychology: Linking individuals and communities*. Stamford, CT: Wadsworth.

Reader: Revenson, T.A. et al. (2002). *A quarter century of community psychology: Readings from the American Journal of Community Psychology*. New York: Kluwer Academic/ Plenum Publishers.

The text and the reader containing the articles marked with an asterisk are on reserve at Bobst.

SECTION I: INTRODUCING COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY

9/7   Introduction and Course Overview   **DEFINING PROBLEMS EXERCISE**

9/12   Values and Perspectives

          Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 1

          Rappaport, J. (1977). *Community psychology: Values, research, action*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, pp. 160-166.

9/14   History

          Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 2

SECTION II: UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITIES

9/19   Understanding Ecology I   **VIDEO: ZIMBARDO PRISON EXPERIMENT**

          Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 5

9/21   Understanding Ecology II   **SOCIAL CLIMATE ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

          Moos, R.H. (1973). Conceptualizations of human environments. *American Psychologist, 28*, 652-665.

9/26   Understanding Ecology III   **SOCIAL CLIMATE FEEDBACK**

          Sarason, S. B. (1996). *Revisiting "The culture of school and the problem of change."* New York: Teachers College Press, pp. 95-117. (Chapter 6: Programmatic and behavioral regularities.)

          *Seidman, E. (1988). Back to the future, community psychology: Unfolding a theory of social intervention. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 16*, 3-24.

9/28   Aims of Research

Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 3

10/3   Diversity I   **VIDEO: FREEDOM ON MY MIND**

Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 6

10/5   Diversity II

Hughes, D., & Seidman, E. (2002). In pursuit of culturally anchored methodology. In T.A. Revenson, A.
      D'Augelli, S.E. French, D.H. Hughes, D. Livert, E. Seidman, M. Shinn, & H. Yoshikawa (Eds.) *Ecological
      research to promote social change: Methodological advances from community psychology* (pp. 243-255).
      New York: Plenum/Kluwer.

10/10   **No classes**

10/12   Methods of Research

Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 4

10/17   Sense of Community   **VIEWPOINTS DISCUSSION EXERCISE**

Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 7

10/19   Assessing Neighborhoods

Warren, R. B., & Warren, D. I. (1977). *The neighborhood organizer's handbook.* Notre Dame: University of
      Notre Dame Press, 7-32, 93-124.

10/24   Stress, Coping, Social Support   **LIFE EVENTS ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 8

10/26   Multiple Levels of Influence   **VIDEO: SURVIVING THE GOOD TIMES**

*Gonzales, N. A., Cauce, A. M., Friedman, R. J., & Mason, C. A. (1996). Family, peer, and neighborhood
      influences on academic achievement among African-American adolescents. *American Journal of
      Community Psychology, 24*, 365-387

10/31   Supportive Settings

*Maton, K. I. (1989) Community settings as buffers of life stress: Highly supportive churches, mutual help
      groups, and senior centers. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 17*, 203-232.

11/2   **MIDTERM**: You must take this if you have not already submitted at least three units of work.

SECTION III: PREVENTION AND PROMOTION

11/7   Overview of Prevention and Promotion

Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 9; Chapter 10 section on person-centered prevention

11/8   **ELECTION DAY: VOTE**

11/9   Prevention Intervention Research Cycle   **NOMINAL GROUP NEEDS ASSESSMENT EXERCISE**

Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Remainder of Chapter 10, Chapter 14

11/14   Individual and Small Group Approaches   **VIDEO: AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION**

Yoshikawa, H. (1995). Long-term effects of early childhood programs on social outcomes and delinquency. *The Future of Children, 5*(3), 51-75. Available on the Web at:
    http://www.futureofchildren.org/information2826/information_show.htm?doc_id=77676

11/16   Changing Settings

*Felner,R. D., Ginter, M., & Primavera, J. (1982).   Primary prevention during school transitions: social support and environmental structure. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 10*, 277-290.

*Weinstein, R.S., Soule, C. R., Collins, F. Cone, J., Mehlhorn, M., & Simontacchi, K. (1991) Expectations and high school change: teacher-researcher collaboration to prevent school failure. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 19*, 333-364.

11/21   Implementing and Adapting Programs   **SHORT VIDEO: JEMMOTT PROGRAM**

Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 11

11/23   Promotion
Please read article and complete reading log; however class is canceled due to Thanksgiving

Tseng, V., Chesir-Teran, D., Becker-Klein, R., Chan, M. L., Duran, V., Roberts, A., & Bardoliwalla, N. (2002). Promotion of social change: A conceptual framework. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 30*, 401-427.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

SECTION IV: COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

11/28   Citizen Participation and Empowerment   **SHORT VIDEO: PATHWAYS TO HOUSING**

Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 12

11/30   Empowerment

*Rappaport, J. (1981). In praise of paradox: A social policy of empowerment over prevention. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 9*, 1-25.

*Riger, S. (1993). What's wrong with empowerment? *American Journal of Community Psychology, 21*, 279-292.

12/5   Organizing for Community and Social Change   **VIDEO: SAUL ALINSKY**

Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 13

12/7   Social Policy

*Shinn, M. (1992). Homelessness: What is a psychologist to do? *American Journal of Community Psychology, 20*, 1-24.

| 12/12 | Summing Up | **Come with questions for the final exam.** |

Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, Chapter 15

| 12/14 | **IN CLASS FINAL EXAM** |

Requirements & Grading

Students are required to:
- Keep a daily reading log and participate in class discussions (20% of grade)
- Complete the psychology department research requirement, or substitute (ungraded)
- Do the final exam on the last day of class (20% of grade)
- Do 6 additional units of work, chosen from the list below (60% of grade). If you do more than 6, only the top 6 will count. You get these options because community psychology places value on diversity and on accentuating people's strengths rather than weaknesses. This grading system allows you to choose the learning experiences you think will benefit you the most. If you do poorly on a particular assignment, you may also hand in extra units to "wipe out" the poor grade.

Examples: Joe hates to write papers. He chooses the midterm (2 units) and three group assessment projects with a friend (2 units each) for eight units. Because he has more than six units, his lowest two units do not count towards his final grade. Sue hates exams, and her schedule makes it difficult for her to work in groups. She chooses the four 1-unit papers (problem definition, seminar critique, service learning, invent a project), and does one assessment project by herself (2 units). Both students keep a reading log, take the final, and fulfill the psychology department's requirement for research participation.

WARNING: This system allows a lot of freedom, but unfortunately, some students get behind and fail to hand in enough units. Don't let this happen to you. **Late work will not be accepted, and I reserve the right to grade any missing units with an F. Incompletes will be granted only in true emergencies.**

INFORMATION FOR ALL ASSIGNMENTS

Working alone and together. One-unit projects, reading logs, and exams should be your individual work. Two-unit assessment and intervention projects may be done alone, but we encourage you to do them in **groups of two to five students**. Groups should submit one paper listing all authors, and include an additional paragraph (outside of the page limits) specifying how each member contributed to the final project. We may follow up with individual e-mails to group members to clarify contributions. Normally all group members will receive the same grade, but if contributions are uneven, grades may vary.

Where to do projects: Assessment and intervention projects may, but need not, refer to the same environment or neighborhood. Settings allowed for observation are public places (streets, shops, restaurants, parks) or settings that you ordinarily enter on a regular basis (e.g., NYU building). Settings NOT allowed include any setting with an age limit (e.g. bars – yes, this applies to those of you over 21), any setting where people expect privacy (e.g. dorm room, locker room), or any setting you would not ordinarily enter (e.g., another student's workplace). The university committee on the use of human subjects notes that data gathered as part of class projects cannot be used for any other purpose. You should not record any information that identifies individuals. If you are observing an organized event that is not ordinarily open to the public (e.g. classroom, athletic team practice, or club), you should get permission from the teacher, the coach or the club president.

Citations: When you use another person's work in your papers, it is important to give credit to the source. If you paraphrase the work or refer to its conceptual framework or conclusions, use a parenthetical citation (e.g., Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, 2001). If you use actual words from the work, enclose them in quotation marks, and include a page number in your citation. If the work is not on our syllabus, include it in a reference list at the end of the paper as well. Use APA style (modeled on this syllabus). **Readings on our syllabus do not have to be included in reference lists at the end.** Proper use and acknowledgement of

others's work makes your own work more scholarly, and in this class, is a component of the grade you get on your papers. But use of another's work without proper citation is the academic sin of plagiarism, and can incur penalties up to and including expulsion from NYU. Don't let it happen to you.

Grading: Reading logs will be graded check, check plus, check minus, or missing. Papers, including assessment projects, will be graded on a ten-point scale on the basis of : 1) thoroughness and quality of response to specific requirements of project (with consideration to the size of the group) (5 points), 2) integration of appropriate readings from the course into discussions (3 points) 3) clarity, organization, and style (2 points). For the reading component, doing well means showing your knowledge of course concepts and specific readings, and applying them in new situations. It will be obvious that some readings should be cited for some projects, but take some time to go beyond the obvious, and think how the particular project relates to articles or the text for other parts of the course.

Instructions for projects: All requirements and projects are described in detail on the course web-site. The instructor or TA will post responses to questions about each assignment that are submitted to the class web site (communication/discussion board) by 5 p.m. the day before each assignment is due. Please ask your questions here or in class, rather than by e-mail, so that all students can see the answers.

Required of everyone: Reading logs, class participation, final exam, psychology department research requirement.			
Options: Choose 6 additional units from the list below.	**Groups Encouraged?**	**Due in Class**	**Units**
Seminar critique (one only allowed)		Monday after seminar	1
Problem definition		9/19	1
Environmental assessment	Yes	10/3	2
Diversity assessment	Yes	10/17	2
Neighborhood assessment	Yes	10/31	2
Midterm exam **Required unless you have submitted 3 units**		11/2	2
Invent a project		11/14	1
Needs assessment (start earlier)	Yes	11/21	2
Service learning report (see requirements)		11/28	1
Intervention proposal	Yes	12/12	2

The Final Exam will be given in class on 12/14.

Descriptions of Projects

Reading log and Participation. (suggested length 1 page per class. May be handwritten.) This is required of everyone.

The reading log and participation are 20% of your grade. For the reading log, see p. 281, item # 4 of the text. Each day, before arriving in class, write down 6 revelations, 3 emotional reactions, and 4 questions (as defined in the text) raised for you by the reading due that day. That way, I hope that everyone will be prepared to talk about the readings, even if participation in large groups is sometimes uncomfortable. In class or in section, we may call on you to share a revelation, reaction, or question. I will also collect a random set of reading logs on most days, to see what students are thinking. The reading log and participation grade will be based on the randomly collected logs, your comments in class and section, whether based on your logs or not, and any participation on the discussion board on the web site. You can't participate or hand in your log if you aren't in class. Quality counts more than quantity.

Psychology Department Research Participation Requirement.

All students in Statistics and Core A and Core B courses in Psychology (Community Psychology is a Core B course) are required to do two hours of participation in research for each class they are in, up to a maximum of 8

hours per semester. Students who wish may submit one extra unit of work instead of participating in the experiments. If you chose this option, please note on the paper that it should be counted for research participation at the time that you hand it in. This unit will be graded pass/fail, and will not count towards the six required for the course, nor will the "pass" substitute for a low grade on another unit.

Students may NOT receive extra credit for participating in extra experiments in this course. If you want to improve your grade, submit extra units of work, not extra experiments. Only your top six units count.

Seminar Critique (Suggested Length: 2-3 pages)

Attend a community psychology seminar, and write a critique. Briefly summarize the speaker's main thesis (1-2 paragraphs). To what extent did the talk reflect principles of community psychology, as reflected in course readings? (1-2 paragraphs). Evaluate good and bad aspects of the research or ideas presented (1-2 paragraphs).

Problem Definitions (Suggested length: 2-3 pages)

Find a newspaper article that describes a social problem. (One on the web is fine too.) What level of analysis does the article focus on? Offer an explanation of the same problem from a different level of analysis. Discuss how each method of defining the problem leads to different solutions. Submit a copy of the article with your analysis. Underline or highlight any specifics that you cite.

Environmental Assessment (Suggested length: 6 pages)

Pick **two** of the methods of assessing social environments described by Moos (with the exception of social climate, which we do in class). You may also include behavioral or social regularities as described by Sarason or Seidman. Use both methods to assess a single environment (see hints below). Your report should consist of three parts: First, describe the environment and the roles of people within it (one paragraph). Second, use the techniques to assess the environment and its impact on participants in it. The focus of this section is on assessing the environment (2 pages per technique). Third, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the techniques. Compare and contrast the types of information you can learn from each. What is still missing? (2 pages).

Organizational Structure Draw an organizational chart showing the positions and parts of the organization and their systematic, relatively permanent relationships to one another. Discuss how the elements of organizational structure (size, centralization, horizontal or vertical power structure, span of control, size of organizational sub-units, etc.) affect behavior. How does an individual's place in the organizational hierarchy affect attitudes and behavior?

Physical Environment Describe salient features of the physical environment, including both natural features such as vegetation and physical design features such as arrangement of space, crowding, furnishings. Describe how the physical environment affects behavior. It might help to think how behavior might change in the environment were different.

Behavior Setting Describe your environment (or an appropriate sub-unit) as a behavior setting: What is its locus in space and time? What are the people, behaviors, and processes that compose it? Describe the bounded pattern these components form. Show that the component parts of the setting are arranged logically, not haphazardly. Locate the setting within a nesting structure of smaller and larger units. Is your unit "undermanned" or "overmanned"? What are the implications of this and other aspects of the setting for behavior?

Reinforcement Analysis Describe the implicit "economy" of your environment from the perspective of any two roles (e.g., teacher, student). What are the rewards (intrinsic, extrinsic, interpersonal, material, subtle, overt, immediate, delayed) available to people in each role? Is the implicit economy different from the overt economy? Can you predict behavior on the basis of these rewards?

Collective Characteristics of Milieu Inhabitants Describe the collective personal and behavioral characteristics of members of the environment as they impinge on others. Does the environment created by other people differ depending on one's role in the setting? (Warning, you are not studying personalities here, but

examining personal characteristics as a feature of the environment, e.g., in a pre-med chemistry lab, the competitiveness of other students becomes a part of the environment that may influence one's behavior.) How do these collective characteristics influence people's behavior? It may help to imagine a newcomer to the setting, or a person with very different personal characteristics.

       <u>Behavioral or Social Regularities</u> What are the regular patterns of behavior in the setting? In particular, how do people in different roles relate to one another? (These may be achieved roles in the setting (e.g., student teacher), or ascribed roles in society (e.g., male, female). How do these regularities affect the behavior of people in the setting? How do they affect the setting's effectiveness in carrying out its mission?

<u>Midterm Exam</u>: A mixture of short answers and short essays on topics presented in readings and in class. Study questions are posted on the web site.

<u>Invent a Project</u>: (suggested length: project description, plus 3 pages.)

Invent a one-unit assignment for future community psychology classes, and carry it out. Your assignment should require students to make use of some aspect of course content and readings to advance their understanding of community psychology. You should write up a project description, suitable for inclusion in this syllabus, and then you should actually carry out the project. For grading, the first criterion (thoroughness and quality of response to specific requirements of project) will refer to both the project description (e.g., how will it helps students understand some aspect of the field) and the project you do (how well you execute your assignment). The second criterion (integration of readings) will refer to the project itself. The third criterion (clarity, organization, style) will refer to both parts.

<u>Diversity Assessment:</u> (Suggested length: 6 pages)

This project has several steps. 1. Choose a neighborhood, organization (e.g., NYU), or other environment that has multiple behavior settings within it. Observe the cultural makeup of your environment, across as many settings as you can, on at least *three* of the following dimensions: race/ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, immigration status, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability. Describe the settings with respect to these dimensions. 2. Then pick *one* of the dimensions for more detailed study. Ideally, if you do this in a group, you should pick a dimension along which your group members differ. Observe, in as many settings in your environment as you can, interactions among people who differ on your chosen dimension. Describe these interactions, focusing on any social regularities. Do the interactions you observed reflect differences in power and privilege between the groups? If so, how? Might the patterns you observed also reflect differences on another dimension than the one you picked? 3. Discuss why the degree of diversity (part 1) and/or the regularities you observed (part 2) were similar or different across the settings in which you observed. What features of the environments might have contributed to any differences from setting to setting? 4. Finally, describe how your presence in the environment (including your own races/ethnicities, ages, etc.) affected the interactions you observed and/or influenced how you perceived the interactions. Did your presence affect the pattern of interactions? Were some members of your group permitted to see things that others were not, or did different members perceive the same interaction in different ways?

<u>Neighborhood Assessment</u> (Suggested length: 6 pages)

Use the techniques described by Warren and Warren (chapters 1 & 5) and complete the organizer's exercises at the end of each chapter. Classify your neighborhood according to Chart 4 in Chapter 5. Does the classification fit? Cite evidence for all your answers. (It's o.k. if you can't answer all the questions posed by Warren & Warren, but list those you can't answer as well as answering those you can.) Devote the last 1-2 pages of your report to an evaluation of the assessment techniques. What have you learned about your neighborhood? What important aspects of the neighborhood does this sort of assessment miss?

<u>Needs Assessment</u> (Suggested length: 6 pages)

Conduct a needs assessment to obtain information about a problem or social goal of significance to members of some social setting. The setting may be as small as a student club or as large as a neighborhood or social system

(e.g., the welfare system). You may use one or both of the following methods: attendance at public meetings (e.g., school board meeting, block association public meeting, club public meeting) or interviews with multiple key informants (at least 3 for a paper done by one person -- try to pick people with different roles). In addition, you may do an analysis of literature produced in or about the setting (e.g., neighborhood newsletters or flyers, publications of a welfare rights group). It may take some digging to find appropriate meetings and literature, and meetings may not be scheduled in the week before this project is due, so start early. In your paper, first describe your choice of assessment techniques. Next describe the results of your assessment, i.e., the problem or social goal and differences among your informants (or attendants at the meeting) in how they perceive the issue. How important is the issue to the setting members, and how does it affect the setting? Describe factors that may explain differences in their views of the problem or goal (e.g., their role in the setting, their personal characteristics). How do the differing views of the problem or goal imply different solutions or actions? Do the solutions/actions differ in the ecological level of change that they might target? Finally, evaluate your assessment techniques. Were they appropriate to the setting? Did different techniques uncover different information? What other sorts of assessment might have been useful?

Service Learning Report (Suggested length: 2-3 pages)

Prerequisite: You must have been involved in some community service activity in the past year.

Briefly describe the community service activity you are involved in and classify it in terms of its level of analysis (e.g., microsystem) and approach to the problem (e.g., selective, milestone prevention). Compare your current approach to a hypothetical alternative that attacks the same problem (or a redefinition of the problem) but that differs in level of analysis and/or approach. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches? Do your readings from this course lead you to think differently about the problem and/or solution?

Intervention Proposal (Suggested length: 6 pages)

Choose an organization, neighborhood, or a non-geographic community with which you are familiar, and propose an intervention to prevent some problem or promote some goal. The intervention may grow out of your needs assessment project, or may be entirely different. Your planned intervention must involve at least one of the following levels: organizational, community/locality, or macrosystem; it may involve other levels as well. Describe 1) Why is your intervention is needed? (one paragraph) 2) Describe your intervention: a) its goals and desired outcomes (for whom?), b) its causal theory, c) its intervention strategies, who would carry them out, and the settings in which they would occur, d) its ecological level(s) (if more than one is involved, how does each strategy tie to each level), and e) kind of targeting employed (universal, selected, indicated) (2 pages) 3) How does your intervention build on scientific knowledge? How does your approach differ from those we have read about? (It should not be an exact duplicate). Why is yours the most appropriate strategy for meeting your goals with your target population? (1 -2 pages) 4) How will you evaluate a) whether your program was adequately implemented, and b) how well the program worked? Outline your research design. Your measures should be closely tied to your objectives. (1-2 pages) 5) If the intervention is successful, how will you institutionalize it? (one paragraph).

A possible resource is the Community Toolbox: http://ctb.ukans.edu/

Final Exam: similar to midterm in format. The final will cover material from the second half of the course. Study questions are posted on the web site. This is required of everyone.