Community Psychology explores the fit between groups and their wider community, attempting to understand where and why problems may be occurring. More importantly, Community Psychology examines the ways in which these problems may be alleviated, or even prevented.

Community Psychology has its foundations in community mental health as well as in applied social, organisational, environmental and ecological psychology. Its unique identity is defined through its focus on communities as the primary unit for understanding and action, and its recognition that the psychological well being of individuals cannot be understood in isolation from broader social contexts.

For many, Community Psychology is an explicitly political approach to Psychology. It looks at power structures within communities and how these serve some groups and exclude others. Community Psychology looks at the practice of Psychology and examines how the definition of problems may lead to looking for causes within each individual who presents, rather than finding out if there are broader causes at work. In this way, Community Psychology challenges some of the ideas of the 'professional' as the distributor of knowledge and favours collaborative partnership approaches.
Readings:

Text book:


Recommended (for those who have not had Community Psychology previously)


Reserve, e-reserve, e-journals.

While the text and recommended book provide a lot of foundation information, there will be additional readings required each week. These will be available in one of three ways:

**RESERVE:** Some books may be placed on physical reserve in the Footscray Park Library

**E-RESERVE:** Much material will be available electronically (both on and off campus) through the library’s e-reserve system

**E-JOURNALS:** The most recent journal articles will usually be available electronically through the Library’s e-journal service.

URLs

Some readings are available on the internet without having to go through the Library. Where I have printed URLs in the reading list, you can access those articles directly.
**Subject Organisation:**

The subject is organised around a 3 hour lecture/seminar each week. The first week will set the scene for the rest of the semester.

For each week there will be specified readings to be completed before class. These will be the basis for discussion, even if they are not individually addressed in class.

Some weeks, I will do some lecturing to provide necessary background information, developments in the field, etc.

However, the best way that these classes to work is for students to bring their own

**Assessment:**

Paper: Community Psychology for a lay audience ....... 40%

   In this paper, the student will demonstrate their understanding of Community Psychology. The main idea is to identify an audience you wish to address (non-psychologists) and explain to that audience what this Community Psychology thing is.
   DUE: 11 April 2005

Paper: Theory Comparison on a Social Issue ....... 60%

   In this paper, the student will take a social issue, psychological problem, etc., and will explore the topic from a traditional psychological perspective and from one of the Community Psychology perspectives. In so doing, the will be one focus (e.g., aetiology, treatment, intervention) and an assessment of which is the better approach to use.
   DUE: 1 July 2005
Course contents and readings

Week 1: 28.2.05

Introductions. Course outline, requirements and expectations. Exercises. Background stuff.

This is where we get to know each other, why we are in the course, what we plan to do with it, etc. Also, all those things about the work you have to do, and when work is due.

History and development of Community Psychology - USA, Australia and New Zealand

2005 represents the 40th anniversary year of a key event in the foundation and development of community psychology – The Swampscott Conference. This was a special conference designed to examine new ways of training psychologists to meet community demands. I have given you the Introduction to read.


Week 2: 7.3.05

Philosophies underlying Community Psychology.

Much of psychology claims to be a value neutral science. That is, the work of psychologists and the research that they undertake is separate from politics, religion, or any other non-objective influence. In this class, we will discuss the place of values and philosophy in both community psychology and in psychology more generally.

Nelson & Prilleltensky: Chs. 2, 3.
Week 3: 14.3.05

Critiques of psychology and psychological practice.


Week 4: 21.03.05

Issues in Community Research – including levels of analysis

If community psychology claims values have an impact on all of our work, what implications does this have for research. In this class we will explore issues related to values, framing research questions, use of information, interpretation of findings, etc.

Nelson & Prilleltensky: Chs. 11, 12


**MID-SEMESTER BREAK**


**Week 5: 11.4.05**

**Psychological sense of community.**

One key area of research that we undertake at Victoria University is in psychological sense of community. In this session, we will explore issues relating to definitions and applications of the ideas.


**Week 6: 18.4.05**

**Sense of Community and Social Capital.**


**Week 7: 25.4.05**
Week 8: 2.5. 05

Social support and self-help groups in health

While much of medicine and psychology emphasises the role of the professional in the delivery of services, there are many functions served by people who share a common problem coming together to provide support and information to each other.

Rudkin, pages: 228 – 236.


Week 9: 9.5. 05

Prevention and wellness in Community Psychology

Nelson and Prilleltensky: Chapter 4.


Week 10: 16.5.05

Empowerment philosophy and political nature

Nelson and Prilleltensky: Chapter 5


Week 11: 23.5.05

Resilience


Following this article is a number of commentary papers that you may read.


Fuller, A. (ND). *Programs that promote resilience in communities at key developmental stages.*


Fuller, A. (nd). *A blueprint for the development of social competencies in schools.*


Week 12: 30.5.05

Community Psychology and the environment

Nelson and Prilleltensky: Ch 23.


http://www.people.vanderbilt.edu/~douglas.d.perkins/newsfear.htm