

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL

Psychology 47.255
Community Psychology

Spring, 2005
Dr. Berkowitz

Course Guide

An Introduction...

Each one of you lives in a community. And each of you knows something about psychology. Community psychology puts the two together. The basic goal is simple: to apply principles of psychology so that we can understand community life more fully – and, often, try to make it better.

As in any other field, community psychology has guiding principles of its own. To understand these principles, and to apply them in practice, can be challenging, insightful, helpful to others, and personally enjoyable as well. If you work at it, you may see these results for yourself as the course progresses.

Are you ready to give it a try?

What Are the Course Objectives?

The general objective of this course is to help you understand and apply psychological principles and ideas to community life. More specifically, this involves:

- * Learning some basic principles about community life
- * Learning some of the methods through which those principles have been discovered
- * Learning about the values most community psychologists use to guide their work – and considering whether or not you agree with them
- * Understanding how communities tend to function – and how they can function most effectively
- * Expanding your awareness and knowledge about communities in general, including the community you yourself live in

In addition, you may have your own personal objectives for this course. What do you want to learn? It will help if you think about what your own objectives might be, and how you might best go about achieving them.

If you can achieve these objectives by mid-May -- and you can achieve them -- you will have learned valuable lessons that may stay with you for long after this class ends.

How can you achieve these course goals? Basically, through classwork, reading, observation, writing, and community study outside of class. Here are some details:

What Will Be the Class Format?

Classes will consist of two basic parts. During part of our class time together, I will present some material based upon our class topic of the week. Your thoughtful questions and comments will always be encouraged and valued.

Another part of the class – at least as important – will emphasize discussion of course material. As part of this discussion, questions relating to the main topic of the week will be distributed in advance. Students will be divided into small groups. In class, students will discuss these questions within their small group; each group will come to specific conclusions, and report its conclusions (as well as the reasoning behind them) to the rest of us.

Toward the end of class, we will see what general conclusions and lessons we might draw from our combined comments. These discussions will generally take place on Thursdays.

What Will I Be Reading?

There are four required books. In the approximate order we'll study them, they are:

1. Karen Grover Duffy and Frank Y. Wong, Community Psychology (3rd edn.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2003. This is the main text.

2. M. P. Baumgartner, The Moral Order of a Suburb. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. A book about suburban communities, the type of community where many Americans live. What can we learn from this book's analysis?; and how might it relate to our own lives?

3. Jonathan Kozol, Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation. New York: HarperPerennial, 1996. A story about a very different kind of community, in one of the poorest city neighborhoods of the country. Can this community be changed? And if so, what would it take to make that happen?

4. Robert D. Putnam and Lewis D. Feldstein, Better Together: Restoring the American Community. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003. A collection of stories about community-building efforts across America. What principles are involved in their success?; can they be replicated elsewhere?; could you use them in your own community?

Additional short readings may be assigned as the course progresses.

There is also a large literature in the many different areas and subfields of community psychology; please don't hesitate to explore it, or to ask for help in finding specific source materials.

→ To get yourself off to a good start, please make sure that you purchase your books during the first week of class.

What Are the Course Requirements?

1. Completion of the required reading

2. Three classroom quizzes. These quizzes will draw upon both your course books, any other assigned readings, and classroom material. They will be largely objective, and also cumulative, with an emphasis on material more recently covered. They will take up approximately half an hour of the class period on **February 15, March 29, and April 26**. All quiz dates are on Tuesdays.

3. Active participation in class and in discussion group assignments

4. A term paper about your own neighborhood or community. The purpose of this paper is for you to study a community in depth, in ways that you have not done so before. In this way, you will get out of the classroom and into the community directly. Your paper will be **based upon your own original investigation**. It will involve research, but research in the community itself, rather than in a library.

For most of you, this paper will be about your own neighborhood, in your own hometown. This because a neighborhood is of smaller and manageable size, and also because you know something about your own neighborhood already. But for this paper, you will study the neighborhood in a different way, using some of the methods of community psychology; these might include structured observation, interview, survey, or perhaps intervention. In this way, you should come to know and appreciate more about community life than you have had a chance to do before.

Your paper will be preceded by a required written proposal, due **February 24**. [Please note that no paper will be accepted without a prior approved written proposal.]

The minimum length guideline for your paper itself is about ten double-spaced pages. Details for writing your proposal and your paper will follow.

5. A final examination

What about Grading?

Grade weights are:

Class quizzes	(combined)	--	30%
---------------	------------	----	-----

Class participation, including	--	25%
(a) attendance		
(b) the extent and quality of your participation in class		
(c) classroom initiative		
Term paper (your community investigation)	--	25%
Final exam	--	20%

→ Ready for a Challenge...?

To increase your learning, your response to class discussion questions each Thursday may be written up and handed in as an informal short challenge exercise. Suggested length: 300-500 words.

These optional papers will not be graded, but they will be recorded. Each question you write up and hand in, of satisfactory quality or better, will add 1% to your final grade, up to a maximum of ten questions (one per week), or 10%. In order to count for credit, these papers must be handed in by no later than Tuesday of the following week. (Hard copy, please, rather than e-mail.)

Take advantage of this challenge opportunity if you like, both to improve your grade and to learn more about community psychology as well.

Additional Course Policies

→ Please read these course policies carefully, **especially the box on the next page:**

- * Late work will be penalized.
- * Documented medical reasons will ordinarily be the only acceptable reasons for missing a class quiz.
- * I do not plan to assign make-up work or to issue course grades of “Incomplete.”
- * Cell phones must be turned off and stowed during class time.
- * Extra-credit work on course-related topics is welcome and encouraged, and may be handed in at any time before the final exam. If this interests you, please consult with me before beginning such work.

As you can see, there is a strong emphasis on class participation in this course. Please also note that **your attendance is expected at all class meetings**. In addition, **your active**

participation, comments, and questions are both expected and strongly encouraged. They are an important part of the class, and **they will be an important part of your grade.**

→ If you cannot commit to attending class meetings regularly, to meeting the course requirements, to being an active learner, and to making a sincere and wholehearted effort to learn about community life, you are advised not to take this course.

☺ Tips for Doing Well

Every student in this course is capable of doing well. Here are some thoughts to help you do so:

- Stay on top of your assignments. Block out the time to do them. Try not to fall behind.
- Read for the bigger ideas (the ones that will stay with you), rather than for tiny facts.
- Come to class; and speak up when you have a question, a comment, or an idea. Even if you are not normally an active class participator, take this opportunity to try something different. Your voice counts!
- Finally, and perhaps most important: **Think** about how the principles and ideas you encounter in this course might relate to actual community life, and to your own life outside the classroom – both during and after the course.

Topical Outline

A tentative outline of class topics, related reading, assignments, and due dates is given on the following pages.

(Note: Please be sure to complete reading assignments, and to have thought about the discussion questions prior to due dates and discussion in class.)

Topical Outline

A tentative outline of course topics, readings, and due dates is found below. More specific assignments may be made as the course continues.

Please note: Readings should be completed before each assigned topic is discussed in class.

<u>Week Number</u>	<u>Week of (Tuesday)</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignments, and Due Dates</u>
I. Key Concepts and Methods in Community Psychology			
1	Jan. 25	Introduction: What is Community Psychology? Goals: Origins: Values: Examples	Duffy & Wong, 1
2	Feb. 1	Methods for Studying Communities and Community Change: Strengths and Challenges	Duffy & Wong, 2
II. Some Key Components of the Community			
3	Feb. 8	Getting Started: Knowing the Community: Community Structure and Dynamics <i>(The Community Tool Box is on-line at http://ctb.ku.edu)</i>	Community Tool Box Chapter 3, Section 2
4	Feb. 15	Social and Human Services in the Community Their Nature: Criteria: Possible Improvements	Duffy & Wong, 7 QUIZ #1, FEB. 15
5	Feb. 22	Mental Health: Stress and Well-Being <i>(No class on February 22)</i>	Duffy & Wong, 5-6 PROPOSALS DUE, FEB. 24
6	Mar. 1	Health, and Health Care Settings: Treatment, Prevention, and Promotion	Duffy & Wong, 10-11
7	Mar. 8	Education, and Educational Settings	Duffy & Wong, 8
	<i>(Mar. 15)</i>	*** <u><i>No Classes This Week -- Spring Break</i></u> ***	
8	Mar. 22	Laws, Norms, and Criminal Justice Settings	Duffy & Wong, 9

III. Applications to Different Community Types

(including your own neighborhoods)

9	Mar. 29	The Suburbs (1)	Baumgartner QUIZ #2, MAR. 29
10	Apr. 5	The Suburbs (2)	Baumgartner
11	Apr. 12	The City (1)	Kozol
12	Apr. 19	The City (2)	Kozol

IV. Strengthening Community Life

13	Apr. 26	Making Communities Better (1): Some Principles of Community Change	Putnam & Feldstein Duffy & Wong, 3 QUIZ #3, APR. 26
14	May 3	Making Communities Better (2): The Ideal Community: Making that Ideal a Reality	Putnam & Feldstein Duffy & Wong, 4
15	May 10	Future Prospects Review and Summary	Duffy & Wong, 13

TERM PAPER DUE
FINAL EXAM

