



Uncovering the Social Community Spring 2007

Kefalonia, Greece

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Purpose of the course and Course Description

The purpose of this course is to explore sustainable development, with a special focus on the social aspect of community making. When planning communities, we often think about housing, transportation, or land use needs, but how does ‘community’ get created, sustained, or limited? What are the different ways of understanding, measuring, and planning for the social community? Why should we care? We’ll explore these ideas through a combination of lecture, discussion, site visits, and interaction with the local community.

This class requires that you do most of the work – through your thinking, synthesizing of ideas, researching, observing, participating, and writing. I teach this class as though there are six of us, observing the community through site visits, then sitting around a table and exploring new ideas by our back and forth conversations. That we may have more than six students in class does not mean that the opportunity for deep thought, exploration of ideas, testing of opinions, and sharing of insights cannot be done. We will work together in large groups, small groups, and individually to explore notions of the social community and community change. And we will be exploring our stereotypes, preconceived notions, and our American biases by talking with local residents in order to understand the gap between what could be and what is.

What this means for you is that information will not be handed to you through dense lectures of numerous facts. Class time will present just enough information to get the discussions going. Readings and assignments will provide additional opportunities for depth of learning. This means that to get something out of this class, you’ll have to put something in. The work in this course is part of a larger effort to bring back a community that was lost in a 1953 earthquake, so although we will be discussing ideas about the social community, through our actions in this class we will also be facilitating local change. We will talk about community based research, social change, and related ideas to help us be effective in both understanding notions of the social community and in working to improve Blue Village.

Student Assessment

Short papers	45%
Midterm exam	15%
Final Paper	35%
Participation	15%

Short Papers

The short papers are designed to force you to articulate your understanding of certain concepts or issues. They are to be handed in at the end of class on the assigned days and will be considered late if not turned in then. These papers will be used for in-class discussions so it is important to put a lot of thought and effort into them. *Please turn in hard copies of your papers.*

Grading on these papers will be almost entirely from a writing-quality perspective. I am less concerned with your opinions on these written assignments than your capacity to communicate your opinions in an intelligent, coherent, articulate, and confident manner. (I do care greatly about your opinions and class



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time will be the forum for us to have a good dialog.) When grading short thought papers, I look for: clear topic sentences, use of examples to support your main points, consistency of your arguments, and the utilization of appropriate language (e.g. no jargon or slang). Although I am asking for your opinion (of what makes an ideal social community for example), I expect that you will write the essay as though you are presenting it to a professional audience. Please do not use the 1st person in your writing – I want the essay to focus on the ideas you are presenting, not the person presenting them. For example, you might start a paragraph like, “An ideal social community is one where neighbors could comfortably share or borrow an egg with one another if in a pinch” instead of “I think an ideal community is where neighbors can just chill and share eggs and stuff.”

To help you critique your own work, *on an extra page, I want you to include an additional paragraph that is made up entirely of the first sentence of each of the preceding paragraphs* – this will give you a good clue as to what your paper is arguing and how well it is articulated. **Failure to include this final paragraph will result in an immediate deduction of 15 points.**

Short Paper #1: What is a social community?

In this paper I want you to think about the type of place you want to live and what makes it a nice place. Is it close friends near by, views of the ocean, the ability to walk to get groceries, a system of inclusive governance, diversity, or what? This paper should be two double spaced pages in length. **Due at the end of week 1.**

Short Paper #2: Individual Field Report

Each student will visit the site and evaluate the current occurrence and potential of social activity and interaction. Pay attention to how the physical form, land use, weather, etc. of the area impacts how and where social interaction occurs or could occur. This paper should be three double spaced pages in length (not including images) and should include observations and reflections about the site itself, the surrounding area, assets and challenges of the site. **Due at the end of week 2.**

Short Paper #3: Action Plan for Change

Imagine you were in charge to rebuild the social community of Blue Village. What are five things you would do? Please describe, place them in chronological order, and give a brief description of what might need to be done to realize the goals. Use up to 4 pages, but less if you can do it. **Due at the end of week 3.**

Midterm Exam

The Midterm Exam will test your understanding of concepts discussed in the readings. The exam may include a variety of types of questions, including multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

Final Paper

The final paper will be a re-examination of the three short papers, but based on the readings, discussions, site visits, and conversations with residents that have occurred over the course of the term. The final paper should be no longer than 10 double spaced pages and include at least three main headings (you can change the title): Current Situation, Opportunities for Change, & Strategies for Change. You do not need



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to include the final synthesis paragraph, but may want to do it as a check on your writing. Photos, renderings, drawings, and other images are encouraged. With images, the final report should not exceed 15 pages.

Participation

Obviously, a class like this in a setting like this requires active engagement. Remember that when participating in discussions and debates, when you would like to critique something you hear, address your critiques to the ideas being presented, not to the person presenting the ideas. Critiques and discussions are important parts of learning and we should all be expected (me included) to be challenged so that our ideas are as rich and fruitful and appropriate to the local situation as possible.

Readings

Kretzmann, John P. and John L. McKnight. Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets. Institute for Policy Research. 1993.

Mattessich, Paul and Barbara Monsey. Community Building: What Makes It Work; A Review of Factors Influencing Successful Community Building. Wilder Foundation. 1997.

Additional readings may include:

Neighborhood Strengthening through Community Building
Suzanne M. Singh, Comm-Org Papers 2003
<http://comm-org.wisc.edu/papers2003/singh.htm>

Homan, M. S. (1999). Promoting community change : making it happen in the real world. Pacific Grove, CA, Brooks/Cole Publishing. Ch. 14.

Marti-Costa, S. & Serano-Garcia, I. (1995). Needs assessment and community development: An ideological perspective. In Rothman, J., J. Erlich, et al. (1995). Strategies of community intervention : macro practice. Itasca, Ill., F.E. Peacock. Chapter 14.

Jacobs, Allan, Looking at Cities, Harvard University Press, 1985, Chapter 1(pp 1-13) and partial Chapter 3 (pp 30-53).

Anstein, Sherry. (1969). A Ladder of Citizen Participation. Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 8 (3).

Checkoway, Barry (1997). Core Concepts for Community Change. Journal of Community Practice. 4(1), 11-29.



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Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Assignment
Week 1	Introduction. Understanding an ideal community, community development, & sustainability	Assignment: What is a social community? Due end of week 1.
Week 2	Reading the community. Public spaces.	Assignment: Individual Field Report. Due end of week 2.
Week 3	Collecting community data	Assignment: Action Plan for Change. Due end of week 3.
Week 4	Social capital and networks	
Week 5	Midterm & Asset based community development	Assignment: Midterm Exam
Week 6	Process of Social Change	
Week 7	Citizen Participation	
Week 8	Whole class exercise: sketch out ideas for fostering the social community (in conjunction with Planning Studio?)	
Week 9	Whole class exercise: draft plan for implementing ideas	
Week 10	Open – catch up, reflect, incorporate new ideas	
Week 11	Public presentation of ideas	Assignment: Final Paper Due.

Classroom Standards

- ⚠ One thing that makes the University environment great is its explicit purpose to be a place to share ideas and perspectives. Accordingly, this class and the classrooms we use will be one in which each voice is respected, diverse views are encouraged, and differences of opinion at the least, tolerated. Discrimination on the basis of age, disability, national origin, race, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or veteran status of any kind will not be tolerated.

Final Comments

- ⚠ In some cases, the readings will not be directly referred to in class. This has three implications for you:
- You should read for main points and themes rather than specific facts. When key terms are present, however, you may want to make sure you understand what they mean.
 - You will be responsible for keeping up with the readings and for understanding them without prodding from the instructor.
 - Remember, you are in college to learn; the readings have been selected specifically because they make a point you might find interesting, and therefore doing the readings is a not an exercise of meeting requirements (although it is), but of helping you in your life-long learning process.
- ⚠ You are adults and will be treated as such and you are expected to behave as such.
- ⚠ If you feel the need to sleep in class (hopefully not an issue, but we've all been there), please leave class to do it.



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- ⚠ Cheating is unacceptable and will result in a failing grade in this course. This includes plagiarism. It is your responsibility to understand what this means. I have failed students for plagiarism and am increasingly irritated by it. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, 1) type in “plagiarism” in Google; or 2) talk to me or another instructor.
- ⚠ Cell phones, e-mailing, text messaging and the like **WILL NOT BE TOLERATED** in class and may result in the confiscation of your electronic gadgets. If your personal messages cannot wait until after class, then the rest of us would prefer you just not come to class at all.