

**ACTION RESEARCH SEMINAR
POLITICAL SCIENCE 395/SOCIOLOGY 395
FALL 2007**

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The action research seminar is designed to give students multiple opportunities to engage the larger Central Illinois community as active citizens. Seminar students work independently and in teams with community partners. Course reading focuses on the civic engagement “crisis” in the United States and various strategies for addressing it. As they participate in applied research projects, students will be encouraged to develop a broad array of civic capacities.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Introduction

8-28 Action research, the ARC seminar, and three projects

Part One

Three Projects: Affordable housing survey, Hispanic fact sheet, Needs assessment

- 9-4 Topic: Bloomington, McLean County, Illinois
Reading: *Democracy at Risk*, 1-65; City of Bloomington Demographics Sheet
Community: Meet our Community Contacts: Judy Stearns, Alex Cardona, Marty Sallee
- 9-7 ARC noon brown bag: Action plans
- 9-11 Topic: Beyond voting: The civic engagement crisis
Reading: *Democracy at Risk*, 67-115
Community: Group #1 Cultural District neighborhood: Census tracts
Group #2 Hispanics in McLean County: Census tracts
Group #3 First Christian Church neighborhood: Census tracts
All groups: Walking your block group/Getting to know your block group
- 9-18 Topic: How government structures associational life: three routes to engagement
Group #1: What are the civic SWOTs of your neighborhood organization?
Group #2: What are the civic SWOTs of your nonprofit advocacy group?
Group #3: What are the civic SWOTs of your church?
Reading: *Democracy at Risk*, 117-154
Community: All groups: Meeting with your community contacts/Expanding your contact list
- 9-21 ARC noon brown bag: Mission statements
- 9-24 **ESSAY # 1 DUE IN CLA 251 BY 5PM (what kind of association and political context?)**

- 9-25 Topic: Community-based action research
 Reading: *Action Research*, 14-63
 Community: All groups: Meeting with your community contacts/Researching your issue
- 10-2 Topic: Skills or transformation? Bridging or bonding? Kinds of ties and democracy?
 Reading: *Democracy in Action*, 3-144
 Community: All groups: Researching your issue
- 10-5 ARC noon brown bag: Meetings and minutes
- 10-8 **ESSAY # 2 DUE IN CLA 251 BY 5PM (what kind of civic engagement?)**
- 10-9 Topic: Look, think, act
 Reading: *Action Research*, 65-134
 Community: Designing the housing survey; Hispanic fact sheet; needs assessment
- 10-16 Topic: The variety of community projects
 Reading: *Democracy in Action*, 149-220
 Community: Designing the housing survey; Hispanic fact sheet; needs assessment
- 10-19 Fall Break Day no brown bag
- 10-22 **ESSAY # 3 DUE IN CLA 251 BY 5PM (what kind of action, e.g. survey, fact, or assessment?)**

Part Two: Conducting, Crafting and Presenting Your Survey/Data/Assessment

- 10-23 Topic: Mapping with GIS and the US Census: Exercise #1
 Reading: American FactFinder website
 Community: Conducting the housing survey; Hispanic fact sheet; needs assessment
- 10-30 Topic: Mapping with GIS and the US Census: Exercise #1
 Reading: American FactFinder website
 Community: Conducting the housing survey; Hispanic fact sheet; needs assessment
- 11-2 ARC noon brown bag: Working in groups
- 11-5 **SURVEY/DATA/ASSESSMENT DRAFT DUE IN CLA 251 BY 5PM**
- 11-6 Topic: Mapping with GIS and Geocoding: Exercise #2/Stories from the field
 Reading: *Dreams of My Father*, 123-169
 Community: Crafting an analytical presentation
- 11-13 Topic: Mapping with GIS and Geocoding: Exercise #2/ Stories from the field
 Reading: *Going Public*, ix-xix; 1-32
 Community: Crafting an analytical presentation

11-16 ARC noon brown bag: Effective presentations

11-19 MAPS DRAFT DUE IN CLA 251 BY 5PM

11-20 Thanksgiving Break

11-27 Topic: Improving the quality of civic engagement
Reading: *Democracy at Risk*, 155-178
Democracy in Action, 222-261
Community: Preparing to present your findings to the class

11-30 ARC noon brown bag: Assessing your work

12-4 Topic: Summing up: Improving the quality of civic engagement
Community: Presenting your findings to the class: Groups #1 and #2

12-11 Topic: Summing up: Improving the quality of civic engagement
Community: Presenting your findings to the class: Group #3

12-14 ARC noon brown bag: Feedback and class assessment

12-14 FINAL GROUP DOCUMENTS DUE IN CLA 251 5PM

CLASS READING

The following texts should be purchased at the IWU Bookstore.

Macedo, Stephen, et al. 2005. *Democracy at Risk: How Political Choices Undermine Citizen Participation, and What We Can Do About It*. Washington, D.C. Brookings Institution Press.

Smock, Kristina. 2004. *Democracy in Action: Community Organizing and Urban Change*. New York. Columbia University Press.

Stringer. Ernest T. 1999. *Action Research*. Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, California. Sage Publications.

The following items can be found on ARC's library outside Professor Jim Sikora's office (CLA 263) or on the relevant group's website.

Juan Andrade, Jr., Ed., *The Almanac of Latino Politics 2006* 4th Edition

Arlington, Virginia, *Creative Affordable Housing Development Tools* (2006)

City of Bloomington, *Community Development Block Grant Program*

City of Bloomington, *Comprehensive Plan 1998*

City of Bloomington, *Comprehensive Plan 2004*

City of Bloomington, *Consolidated Plan 2005-2010*

Economic Development Council, *2006 Demographic Profile of Bloomington/Normal*

McLean County, *Regional Area Plan* (2006)

Illinois Facilities Fund, *Early Child Care and Education Fact Book* (2001)

Illinois Facilities Fund, *Getting it Right: How Illinois Nonprofits Manage for Success* (2004)
Illinois Poverty Summit, *Illinois Affordable Housing Primer* (2002)
US Department of Commerce, Office of the Census, *Property Owners and Managers Survey* (1996)
IWU Department of Sociology, *Needs Assessment of LeRoy, Illinois* (2004)
John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (1993)

Selections from the following items will be held on e-reserve with Ames Library.

Gecan, Michael. 2002. *Going Public: An Organizer's Guide to Citizen Action*. New York. Anchor Books.
Obama, Barack. 1995. *Dreams of My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*. New York. Kondansha International Inc.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The grade in this course is based on following assignments:

Essay #1:	10%
Essay #2:	20%
Essay #3:	20%
Drafts:	10%
Final Document:	25% (group grade)
Class Participation:	15% (includes attendance at the ARC Brown bags)

OFFICE HOURS

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