

# Sociology 901-001: Special Topics in Sociology-- Becoming a Community-Engaged Scholar

The web address for this syllabus is:

<http://comm-org.wisc.edu/syllabi/becoming.htm>

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M 2:00-5:00pm  
2425 Sterling

## UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION MANDATED COURSE CONTENT

The university administration is now mandating that faculty include certain content in their syllabi. Here is the content complying with that mandate:

- Institution Name: University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Credit Hours: This seminar is three credits.
- How this course complies with the credit hour policy: We will meet for at least 150 minutes in class each week (not including break time) and there will be at least six hours of work per week outside of class time.
- Official course description: Critical review of most recent research in sociology.
- Requisites: Graduate or professional standing
- What learning goals we will meet: We will meet the CESoc learning goals of understanding how social science arguments are constructed and evaluated; developing an ability to assess data quality and understand whether particular data is appropriate to answer specific questions; learning general theories on basic social processes, especially those related to the relationships between society and the environment and the social organization of communities, and learning communication skills in the social sciences. We will meet these goals by reading stuff, writing stuff, and talking about stuff.

## OK, NOW ON TO THE SYLLABUS

### Why a Course on Becoming a Community-Engaged Scholar?

The most recent push for colleges and universities to be more "engaged" is now over three decades old, and the popularity of the idea shows no signs of waning. Job announcements in various fields now routinely include experience in community engagement among their preferred qualifications. There are conferences from local to global focusing on various kinds of higher education community engagement. But there is very little actual preparation of graduate students to position themselves for these opportunities. This course will be designed for you to understand where the field of engaged scholarship has come from, where it may be headed, and how you can choose your own path to pursue in it.

## **Statement on Diversity**

The Good Society will not come from an exclusive and very powerful few people representing only one set of experiences. It will come from many voices representing many life experiences. Likewise, the best knowledge will come from many voices speaking and listening and combining their wisdoms. I will do everything in my power to create a classroom environment that welcomes and includes diverse perspectives, especially perspectives that have been historically silenced through one or another form of structural oppression, exploitation, or exclusion. I welcome the voices of people of all races, ethnicities, and nationalities; all sexual and gender identities; all body types; all spiritualities; all economic classes; all language backgrounds; all family types; all combinations of abilities and learning styles; all participation in international, national, and community service including activism and protest. And I encourage those who feel invisible in relation to these diversities to educate me so that I can welcome you as well. I cannot promise you a "safe" environment. In the current state and national political climates there are no "safe spaces," not even for me. I can only promise you that I will do my utmost to create a "brave space" where people can hopefully gradually feel powerful enough to speak from their experiences and contribute to knowledge diversity for all of us. I will also admit that I will do that imperfectly and welcome you to hold me accountable so that my deeds live up to my words.

## **Learning Needs**

It is very important to me that everyone is able to maximize their learning in this class. While, of course, you are responsible for much of that, I am responsible for creating a space where your learning style is respected. I always welcome, and will actively seek, feedback on how well the class process fits your learning style. I also welcome you to inform me of any learning needs that require adjustments in how the class materials are presented and how the class process is organized.

## **My Philosophy of Education**

When teachers realize they have things to learn and students realize they have things to teach, and when everyone is in an atmosphere where both students and teachers are encouraged to learn and teach, everyone benefits.

My job is to create and maintain a learning environment where everyone feels comfortable taking intellectual and interpersonal risks, and to help you do your part in maintaining that environment. I welcome critiques of ideas, especially my own. In the end, the best learning comes from connecting through our differences, especially if we practice respect for each other as people while we question, criticize, connect, and build upon each other's ideas.

## **Professor Consultations**

Please feel welcomed to consult with me whenever you have a question about course assignments, lectures, discussions, readings, or project activities. I will gladly discuss questions you have about the course material and our class process. Please also feel welcomed to consult with me whenever you find yourself interested in the issues raised in the course and you want to discuss further or get more information.

## **Student Rights and Responsibilities**

You should know that you have specific rights that include accommodations for religious observances, physician-documented illnesses, and disabilities. You also have the right to appeal grading and disciplinary procedures that normally begin with contacting the chair of the department. If you do not feel comfortable

contacting the chair you can contact the Dean's office. Of course, my goal is to structure and facilitate the course in such a way that you feel comfortable contacting me about concerns you have.

You also have specific responsibilities that include things like avoiding plagiarism, not cheating on coursework, and treating each other with respect.

Another right/responsibility you have in this course is to collectively determine other rights/responsibilities. Here are the discussion principles we generated during our first class meeting.

- ~step up, step back
- ~avoid or explain jargon
- ~challenge idea, not person
- ~seek first to understand
- ~name impact, not intent--"I feel" statements
- ~what's said here stays here, what's learned here leaves here
  - offer confidentiality statements
  - ask permission to transmit stories
- ~speak from experience or literature
- ~use thumb voting
- ~use name tags or plates

### **The Syllabus Process**

Because this is a course in community engagement, I want the process of the course to reflect that, including the construction of the course itself. This is only the initial syllabus. During the first course meeting we will have our own "community" meeting where we will develop learning goals and strategies. We will focus on three topics:

1. What everyone wants from the course: our learning goals will come from this.
2. What each person can bring to the course: our learning strategies will come partly from this.
3. What principles and ethics will govern our interactions as a group: our learning strategies will come partly from this.

I will then produce a full written syllabus from that process.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Here will be the course requirements that we will develop in class.

### **COURSE CALENDAR**

#### **Week 1, Jan. 29: Institutionalized Service Learning and Course Design**

##### **Reading Assignment:**

Randy Stoecker. 2016. *Liberating Service Learning*, sections I and II. Temple University Press.

#### **Week 2, Feb. 5: An alternative to Institutionalized Service Learning, and responses to it.**

##### **Readings:**

Randy Stoecker. 2016. *Liberating Service Learning*, section III. Temple University Press.

Kate Johnson and Brooke Millsaps. 2016. Book Review: Randy Stoecker (2016). Liberating service learning and the rest of higher education civic engagement. *Partnerships: A Journal of Service-Learning and Civic Engagement* Vol. 7, No. 2. <http://libjournal.uncg.edu/prt/article/viewFile/1397/977>

Barbara Jacoby. 2017. Book Review: Liberating service learning and the rest of higher education civic engagement. *Journal of Community Engagement and Higher Education* Vol. 9, No. 1. <https://discovery.indstate.edu/jcehe/index.php/joce/article/view/391>

Tania D. Mitchell. 2017. Review Essay: Toward Liberation. *Mighican Journal of Community Service Learning* Vol. 23, No. 2. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?cc=mjcsloa;c=mjcsl;c=mjcsloa;idno=3239521.0023.219;view=text;rgn=main;xc=1:g=mjcslg>

**Week 3, Feb. 12: Favorite readings from John, Julia, Garret, and Angela**

**Week 4, Feb. 19: Favorite readings from Laura, Daniel, Isabel, Annaliese**

**Week 5, Feb. 26: objectifying, colonizing research vs. engaged scholarship**

**Week 6, Mar. 5: alternative epistemologies/methodologies associated with engaged scholarship (includes: native ethnography)**

**Week 7, Mar. 12: moral and ethical issues in engaged scholarship (includes: being temporary and engaged, commitment to community, covenantal ethics)**

**Week 8, Mar. 19: philosophy of engagement: reciprocity, mutual benefit, allyship, solidarity (includes: how to be in community)**

**Week 9, Mar. 26: Spring Break**

**Week 10, Apr 2: understanding community, community power, and the nonprofit industrial complex**

**Week 11, Apr. 9: international and cross-cultural engaged scholarship**

**Week 12, Apr. 16: principles and practices of community work (includes consequences and unintended effects)**

**Week 13, Apr. 23: negotiating power in the academy while doing engaged scholarship**

**Week 14, Apr 30: teaching engaged scholarship**