

DCES/SOC 573: Community Organization and Change
Syllabus – Final

**Department of Community and Environmental Sociology (DCES) 573:
Community Organization and Change**

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University of Wisconsin-Madison, Spring 2021

Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:30-3:45

Meets virtually via Zoom

<https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/96649967929?pwd=eXhiem1qNDdpUjVYVWk5FWEk2UnV1QT09> (Links to an external site.)

How can we manage, lead and create change in community and organization settings? Sometimes change happens unexpectedly, like a natural disaster or the closing of a major employer. Other times trends like an aging or diversifying population can be anticipated. And sometimes, social, economic and other changes may be highly desired, like increasing the number of women in elected positions or improving equity. This interactive course focuses on the theory of change and the methodologies used to diagnose, facilitate, lead, implement and evaluate change efforts. The course will include student driven discussions and guest speakers from Wisconsin communities, all designed to prepare students to manage, lead and create change in their own teams, workplaces and communities.

Student learning goals include:

1. Situating oneself, individually, as an agent and (re)actor of change.
2. Developing a general understanding of how the study of community organization development and change has evolved into a behavioral science over time, in a variety of settings and with multiple, equally valid approaches.
3. Assessing need and readiness for change.
4. Evaluating key change interventions and their efficacy for achieving intended outcomes.

5. Connecting with UW-Madison, Division Extension professionals and engaging with them in real-time examples of practice in leadership, non-profit, organization and community settings.
6. Creating and constructing a theory of change that demonstrates and articulates how a planned change effort is diagnosed, facilitated, implemented and evaluated.

Student Evaluation

Your grade for this course will be based on the following: class participation (25%), a weekly scholar-practitioner journal (25%), a situation analysis (25%), and a theory of change (25%).

Participation

In a class of this size, it can be difficult to “stand-out” in terms of participation. The good news is that your participation will not be measured by how often or how loudly you speak. Rather, it will reflect the extent to which you practiced scholar-practitioner collegiality and good citizenship. My hope and expectation is that we are able to learn from one another through your:

- Substantive contributions, including evidence of your preparation and engagement with course readings, guest speakers and your “huddle” (see below).
- Being present and your quality of listening in huddles, class discussions and guest speakers.
- Attendance and promptness (life happens – email me at annie.jones@wisc.edu if you’re going to be late or absent).
- Service to the group by volunteering to lead or help with small learning (or other) tasks of general benefit to the class (for instance, volunteering to lead a class conversation or the constant reminders that I will need to hit the record button!).
- Netiquette – cameras on when possible please! Are you having technology issues? See these resources for [technology tips and tools](#)[Links to an external site.](#) and strategies to [manage slower internet/lower bandwidth](#)[Links to an external site.](#)

Scholar-Practitioner Journal

The intention of the weekly scholar-practitioner journal is to give you a chance to develop your own views on the readings, lectures and guest speakers, to communicate those views to your classmates, to demonstrate your command of what we’ve learned thus far and to keep you up-to-date with the material in the course. The format is fairly simple: Write a critical appraisal of 200-350 words (longer is fine, shorter is not) of a particular theme for the upcoming week. Sometimes I will assign a topic and other times the topic will be left to your discretion. Email your draft (which can be an initial reaction to the past week’s learnings) to your “huddle” (see below) ideally by **midnight Sunday**. By the end of the week, post the final version of your journal entry on the course Canvas site, incorporating any modifications of

your original version, in light of huddle and class discussions. It is important to develop one theme or argument, rather than a scatter of observations. Also, it is important to document your theme or argument and to explain your reasoning, rather than offering opinion. You are expected to prepare **ten** journal entries over the course of the semester, noting that some topics and journal entries will be identified by me and required.

Huddles

Each “huddle” will be a group of ~4 students who will dialogue together at least once per week to share and make sense of learnings. The goal of the huddle is to help one another with comprehension, and to review and improve work products. Occasionally, huddles will be provided time in-class by using Zoom break-out rooms. Other times, your huddle may choose to provide written feedback to one another by email or verbally by utilizing a virtual format. While I expect that most huddles will choose to meet virtually, ***if you do decide to meet in person, it is essential that huddles meet using COVID-safe practices, either with masks and physical distancing in an outdoor setting. Please note that huddles are not expected nor required to meet in person.*** It is both essential and expected that students should read the first draft journal entries of the other members of their huddle group. Each huddle should bring at least one idea from the group’s discussion forward to the entire class. I anticipate a periodic re-organization of huddles through the course of the semester.

Situation Analysis

In Module 2, “Diagnosis – assessing need and readiness for change,” each student will prepare a textual situation analysis for a team, neighborhood, organization or community of your choosing. The goal of the situation analysis is for you to assess the need and readiness for change in the setting that you’ve chosen. Don’t worry, class activities in Module 1, “Change – the art and science of organizing hope,” will help you focus in on a topic and setting that aligns with your own personal learning goals and interests. Consistent with action research approaches, the situation analysis will consist of qualitative and quantitative measures and may include data collection, literature reviews, surveys and key informant interviews. The narrative portion of the situation analysis should be in the range of 1200-1800 words. Your situation analysis, along with your participation and scholar-practitioner journal entries to-that-date, will help me provide you with a mid-term assessment of your progress. The situation analysis will provide the base-line data needed to complete your “Theory of Change.”

Theory of Change

The intention of a theory of change is to illuminate an identified need that you would like to address, the changes that you want to make (intended outcomes) and the activities that you have selected/designed for the purpose of increasing the likelihood of achieving your intended outcomes. In more simplistic terms, it describes:

1. Where are we now?
2. Where would we like to be?
3. How will we get there?

Theories of change are communication tools designed to be effective and impactful for the audience(s) for whom they are intended. These audiences can range from neighborhood residents, funders, CEO's, non-profit leaders and elected officials, among others. Because of this, they can take on a variety of forms but generally consist of a mix of narrative, visuals, graphics and compelling stories. Based on the topic and setting of your choosing (most likely from the situation analysis that you've completed), you will determine your intended audience(s) for the theory of change and the best format(s) for presenting your theory of change. Formats may include textual narratives or pre-recorded presentations (or other methods). As the course progresses, we will negotiate the best approach, learning goals and rubric for your theory of change. This final project will take the place of a final exam. You are not expected to implement your theory of change, but you will have a good roadmap for a planned change effort that you can carry forward if you choose to do so.

Readings

Course readings will be made available electronically under files here on the Canvas site.

Work Load and Credit Hours

This course requires 3 credit hours of work. Under UW-Madison's guidelines and the traditional Carnegie definition that means, in addition to our class meetings, you can expect an average minimum of 6 hours a week of work outside of class. In this course, that will mainly entail the weekly readings and writing assignments.

Having one of those days, weeks, months or even a year?

This happens to all of us once in a while. Emails dropped, deadlines that have flown by and goals that are drifting further out of reach. If you're feeling this way and it is interfering with your performance in the class, please let me know! I am here to help you succeed.

Office Hours

Tuesdays and Thursdays, I will open our Zoom link at 2pm (30 minutes before the start of class) and I will remain on the Zoom link until at least 4 pm (15 minutes after the end of class). I am also happy to meet at other mutually arranged times. Email me at annie.jones@wisc.edu if you would like to set up a time.

Weekly Rhythm of the Course

The week will normally flow as follows:

Weeks-end and weekend

Post the first draft of your journal entry by midnight Sunday, via email to your huddle.

Monday

Read your huddle-mates' draft entries.

Tuesday

1:30 pm or earlier: Huddle groups dialogue and/or meet, in a COVID-safe fashion, and discuss each other's journal entries on the current module's readings, speaker(s) and lecture.

2:30 to 3:45: We meet for class as a whole group, via Zoom ([link here \(Links to an external site.\)](#)). Huddles should bring one idea forward for discussion to the whole group.

Wednesday-Friday

Make any revisions in your journal entry that you would like, in light of class discussions, lectures and presentations, and post your new draft by noon on Friday.

Thursday

2:30 to 3:45: We meet for class as a whole group, via Zoom. Note, most guest speakers have been scheduled for Thursdays.

Friday

Do the readings for the new module, and sketch out some thoughts for your new journal entry.

Modules

Module 1: Change – the art and science of organizing hope

Week 1: Orientation - what are we bringing into this field of study?

Week 2: Perspectives and foundations of community organization and change

Week 3: How change happens - from values to action

Module 2: Diagnosis – assessing need and readiness for change

Week 4: Focusing in on needs

Week 5: Driving forces

Week 6: Systems thinking and diagnosis

Week 7: Justice, engagement and capacity building

Module 3: Strategic directions – framing change and identifying strategies, tactics and appropriate interventions

Week 8: Framing change and starting with the end in mind

Week 9: Interventions - inter-organization coalitions

Week 10: Interventions - community-wide

Week 11: Interventions - whole system

Module 4: Facilitating, implementing and evaluating change

Week 12: Evaluating change efforts

Week 13: Implementing change - the long-haul

Week 14: Facilitation, the keystone of success

Course Evaluation

Students will be provided with an opportunity to evaluate this course and learning experience. Student participation is an integral component of this course. Your feedback is important to me. I strongly encourage you to participate in the campus digital course evaluation which will be made available to you about one week before the end of the semester. In the meantime, I find mutual feedback to be very helpful so that there are no surprises for any of us at the end of the semester. It will take all of our contributions to continuously improve the course and make it a great learning experience.