Course Title: Community Psychology: A Social-Ecological, Developmental Systems and Strengths-Based Perspective to Consultation, Social Action, Action-Research, and Sustainable Change

Course: 18:820:593:02 (Index # 10948)

Meeting Times: Tues. 1:15 p.m.- 4:00 p.m.

Location: Busch Psychology Building, Room A317

Instructor: Maurice J. Elias, Ph.D.

Office: Livingston Campus, Psychology Building: Tillett Hall, Room 431

Email/Telephone: RutgersMJE@AOL.COM/ 732-445-4036; 445-2056

Office Hours: By arrangement via email; after class at Busch will often be the best time

Course Description & Goal Areas:

Community psychology is an empirically grounded field that employs an integration of research and action toward the goal of enhancing the well-being of individuals and the ability of communities to sustain that well-being. Community psychology is committed not only to the prevention of health-compromising and problem behaviors but also to the promotion of social competence and developmental socialization of skills needed to for people to grow in healthy, satisfying, and productive ways.

Education settings are becoming increasingly important as sources of transmission of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that future generations of children will bring with them into their adult roles. Relatedly, more and more adults are turning to formal and informal education settings as a source of fulfillment or a place to “catch up” on current issues, trends, or areas of interest. Either way, those who work in education settings in Public School, Private School, and Religious contexts will find themselves standing at the threshold of opportunities for impacting on people that are new, exciting, and important.

Combined with this are advances in the areas of “emotional intelligence,” “social-emotional learning,” “multiple intelligences,” “strengths, resilience, and competencies,” “community psychology,” and an understanding that learning occurs best in the context of caring communities of learners, among people whose life skills are positively directed and supported by living in competence-enhancing settings. This course will illustrate these concepts and the practical methods needed to bring them alive in educational settings using a strengths-based approach.

It is believed that the synergy of academics and social-emotional learning—of IQ and EQ—is essential to leaving no child behind. From a community psychology point of view, this synergy is also essential for giving children and schools the power to advance all children toward the goal of being productive, healthy, contributing citizens of their families, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and democratic institutions. Developing Safe and Civil Schools: A Social-Emotional Learning Initiative (DSACS) has been funded by the NJ Department of Education to begin to create this synergy in public schools around the state. How this initiative, even if successful, will become a sustainable model scaled up to reach the state’s 600 school districts is a key problem in community psychology. Indeed, the issue of sustainability of interventions is looming as the current challenge
across various kinds and levels of school-based services. Understanding and addressing this challenge will be a primary concern of this course.

Also part of our consideration is the larger backdrop of educational, child welfare and social services. There is a great deal of turmoil in NJ government and this has a way of translating itself into difficulties with children’s services. In particular, our system for educating urban and other disadvantaged youth has been under court order to reform for two decades. What insights and practical applications does community psychology have to these issues? We will also be mindful of the continued impact of the aftermath of September 11, 2001, and the shadow that war and terror cast on how youth are now growing up, especially those in high-risk, high-need communities. What does community psychology have to say about this? The impact of media, ethnic issues, and family organization also will be part of our considerations. These reflect a changed context for psychologists and other professionals who work with children and adolescents.

The core reading for the course will be the new text, *Community Psychology: Linking Individuals and Communities*, which is based on the key concepts of ecology, context, citizen participation, support and coping, risk and resilience, prevention of problem behaviors and promotion of competence, empowerment, diversity, collaboration, community change, and empirical grounding. It takes the perspective of Community Psychology, the branch of psychology most closely associated with how our society produces competent or dysfunctional citizens. It is especially concerned with the socialization institutions through which our children and youth pass (such as schools, the health care system, and families) and with the systems we have set up to help people when they have difficulties. Our focus in this course will be on educational settings and the ecological surround that impacts so strongly on their effectiveness. Rather than focus on a conceptual understanding of the field of community psychology, as outlined in the text, our emphasis will be on applying the concepts of community psychology to understand and inform key situations and decisions relating to the various topic areas noted earlier. These decisions are driven by political, economic, and media forces and are not waiting for psychologists’ or other professionals’ input. How do apply our knowledge and skills in such a fluid context?

We also will read *Reclaiming youth at risk: Our hope for the future*. This book, written by individuals who probably have never heard of community psychology, is nevertheless an exemplary application of CP principles to issues related at the focal level of the individual, particularly one who has experienced clinically significant difficulty. Through this book, we will explore the applicability of CP ideas across the full range of ecological levels and “levels” of prevention: primary, secondary, and tertiary. In addition, we will examine web sites and look at other readings selected according to the interests of the course participants. Course participants will also become familiar with the operation of CASEL, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, and the CASEL and other web sites that are the source of much energy and networking in the field, including international work. The course also involves workshops to show preventive/competence promotion interventions “in action” and build students’ skills in carrying out this kind of community/preventive work.

Overall, a CESEP (Civic Engagement and Service Education Partnership) perspective will guide the course. This focuses on the processes that lead to competence, strength, and resilience and how these are necessary if children are to grow to become productive citizens in a democracy. Learning best takes place as concepts are applied to specific environments, contexts, and needs.
ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS:

1. ATTENDANCE: Students are requested to attend all class sessions. If you cannot attend a class, PLEASE INFORM ME IN ADVANCE VIA EMAIL.

2. CLASS PARTICIPATION: Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss and challenge the assigned readings. Many classes will include detailed text analysis and discussion of a focal article/chapter. Full involvement in class-based work groups is also expected.

3. COMPLETION OF ASSIGNMENTS:
   a. Writeup of 2 assigned readings using the R-E-Q format
   b. Web Quest on Urban Education leading to the creation of a Prevention Policy Brief using a specific format that I will provide.

   Explanation: Students will be asked to participate in several write-ups of assigned readings, and a web search assignment; you will also be expected to lead/participate in discussions in which the readings or web findings are analyzed with concepts, tools, and/or the related material being considered in class. This will revolve around the focal concepts such as Character Education/Social-Emotional Learning, Urban Education/Abbott Schools, Implementation and Sustainability of Interventions, and Civic Engagement. Students will use work group and class discussions as the basis for producing a disseminable "product"—a “Policy Brief”-- that will have social/professional impact/influence.

4. TERM PROJECT: Each student will produce a product related to consultation to education settings or related to organizations linked to topic areas studied. In most cases, this will take the form of a consultation/intervention plan, a participant/conceptualizer problem analysis, intervention grant application, and/or policy document related to the area of educational consultation chosen. Where possible, the project will be linked to actual concerns in practicum, work, or volunteer settings, with realistic implementation considerations as a paramount grading consideration.

Please Note:
It is your responsibility to avoid plagiarism, which is becoming all too common, intentionally and accidentally, in this age of digital, cut and paste, copied and relabeled media. Please look at http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/hc/plagiarism.html for excellent information about plagiarism. If you are not sure whether or not something is plagiarism, please feel free to check with me. It’s better to be unoriginal and honest, than to plagiarize. Remember, the University and individual faculty use many anti-plagiarism filters on students’ work, so the risks are higher than you may think.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings/Work Due</th>
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<tr>
<td>9/14</td>
<td>The Community Psychology Perspective: History and Context for Participant Conceptualization, and Action Planning around Civic Engagement/Community Service/Social Justice Shriver and CP legends videos</td>
<td>Dalton Ch. 1,2; Ch. 5 Bring in Dalton Ch. 1 &amp; 2 REQ writeup</td>
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<td>9/21</td>
<td>Application of the Ecological/Strengths Model in Individual, Clinical Contexts</td>
<td>Brendtro- –Entire Bring in REQ writeup</td>
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<td>9/28</td>
<td>Prevention Programs and the Concepts of Risk, Stress, Coping, Support, Resilience Featuring: “Prevention: The DVD”</td>
<td>Dalton Ch. 8, 9 Web sites: character.org, CASEL, CSEE</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/5</td>
<td>Best Practices for Safe and Drug-Free Schools, School-Based Prevention Program Implementation Featuring: GLEF, CASEL, and NEA Videos</td>
<td>Dalton Ch. 10, 11 Weick 1984 or Sarason 1978 CASEL Safe and Sound Guide</td>
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<td>10/12</td>
<td>In-Service Workshop in Implementation Of School-Based SECD</td>
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<td>10/19</td>
<td>Building Blocks for Change: Foster Participation, Sense of Community Final Project Assignment</td>
<td>Dalton Ch. 12 Brendtro- Circle of Courage Li, 2009; Pearrow, 2009 JSI, readings of choice Project Assignment Handout</td>
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<td>10/26</td>
<td>Sense of Community and Competence-Enhancing Environments; Climate Assessment</td>
<td>Dalton Ch. 7</td>
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<td>11/2</td>
<td>Empowering Settings: Ken Maton and Sargent Shriver</td>
<td>Readings to be arranged Brief Project Updates</td>
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<td>11/9</td>
<td>Creating Sustainability/Lasting Organizational Change: Essential Parameters &amp; the Role of Data Final Project Updates</td>
<td>Dalton Ch. 13, 14 Theories of Change article(s) Dalton Ch. 3, pp. 96-110 &amp; 125-127</td>
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<td>11/16</td>
<td>Analysis ad Application to Urban Education: Policy Brief Project Assignment</td>
<td>Belsky, 1980; Rosado, 1986 Dalton Ch. 6 Policy Brief Handout</td>
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11/30  Presentation of Policy Briefs  Policy Briefs Due
12/7   Project Consultations/Presentations  Dalton Ch. 15
12/14  Final Project Consultation  Project Deadline 12/16
  Course Summary and Evaluation

Texts

• Readings covering class assignments; CP Bibliography/Reading and Resource List to be provided via eCompanion: Log in at https://ecollege.rutgers.edu/students.jsp; other readings/course materials also may be distributed via e-mail. BE SURE TO PROVIDE ME WITH ANY NON-EDEN E-MAIL ADDRESS YOU PREFER THAT I USE!

Required and Optional Readings

AJCP Special Issue on Oppression and Liberation:


JSI Special Issue on Community Involvement:


Web Sites
Brief Summary of SCRA/APA Div. 27 Mission Statement and Connection to the Course:

SCRA is an international organization devoted to advancing community theory, research, and action, especially as these relate to promoting empowerment and preventing problems that diminish human potential.

Four broad principles guide SCRA: 1) Community research and action requires attention to and respect for diversity among peoples and settings; 2) Human competencies and problems are best understood by viewing people within their social, cultural, economic, geographic, and historical contexts; 3) Community research and action is an active collaboration among researchers, practitioners, and community members that uses multiple methodologies; 4) Effective change requires strategies implemented at multiple levels. We welcome those sharing these values.

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Education settings are becoming increasingly important as sources of transmission of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that future generations of children will bring with them into their adult roles. Relatedly, more and more adults are turning to formal and informal education settings as a source of fulfillment or a place to “catch up” on current issues, trends, or areas of interest. Through the application of community psychology in educational contexts, broadly speaking, professional psychologists are standing at the threshold of opportunities for impacting on people that are new, exciting, and important.

Combined with this are advances in the areas of “emotional intelligence,” “social-emotional learning,” “social-emotional and character development,” “multiple intelligences,” “strengths, resilience, and competencies,” “community psychology,” and an understanding that learning occurs best in the context of caring communities of learners, among people whose life skills are positively directed and supported by living in competence-enhancing settings. This course will illustrate these concepts and the practical methods needed to bring them alive in educational settings using a strengths-based approach.
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