WASHINGTON SEMESTER PROGRAM
American University
Professor Katharine Kravetz
www.transformingcommunities.net

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES SEMINAR SYLLABUS
GOVT-417-001T and 418-001T or JLS-464-001T and 465-001T

All human existence throughout history, from ancient Eastern and Western societies up through the present day, has strived toward community, toward coming together. That movement is as inexorable, as irresistible, as the flow of a river toward the sea.
-John Lewis, Walking with the Wind

The Transforming Communities Seminar is a survey of community problems, and of policies and programs, particularly at the national level, designed to solve them. The purpose of the Seminar is threefold: (1) to provide a theoretical, historical, and real context for understanding community issues; (2) to understand and evaluate policies and programs dealing with community issues; (3) to provide insight into the work of people of different backgrounds and political persuasions who are changing and strengthening our communities. The Seminar will provide opportunities to meet with policy makers, administrators, grassroots leaders, individuals and groups impacted by change, and members of the research and evaluation communities examining the effectiveness of the system and new approaches to build and strengthen our communities.

The Seminar will cover several topics related to communities and community building. As each topic is raised, the course will analyze past and recent federal policy, innovative local (both public and private) initiatives, and the relative success or failure of federal, state and local policies and initiatives. An introductory lecture will begin the discussion of each seminar topic. Guest speakers, site visits, and discussions will elaborate on the topic. Speakers will include those who are active at the community level and those who are involved in public policy. Small discussion groups will complete each topic.

You will be an active participant in the Seminar. You will be expected to prepare for each topic and have questions ready for the speakers on that topic. You will be an equal member of our discussion groups as we attempt to clarify the issues and analyze policies and solutions. Finally, you will be evaluating community issues through service learning with a grassroots organization.

Schedule

The Seminar will meet Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays throughout the semester, with occasional pre-announced exceptions, including American University holidays. No required class ends later than 4:30 in the afternoon. However, you may have evening or weekend commitments for activities related to the grassroots project you choose.

Your weekly Schedule of Classes will provide times, dates, locations and, when necessary, directions to off-campus seminar locations. Each week, I will e-mail and post copies of the following week's schedule. Posted copies are on my door and on the Dunblane House bulletin board. We have approximately six seminars weekly, each approximately 90 minutes, but you should be prepared for variation. Many of the speakers carry heavy work schedules and encounter unexpected meetings and deadlines, which requires us to be flexible with the occasional schedule disruptions. I will communicate schedule changes by email as quickly as possible.

Punctual attendance is required at all classes with guest speakers. This is simply a matter of courtesy. See the academic requirements below.

Office Hours

Each week I will set aside some office hour time. I will also be available to meet with you by appointment, and encourage you to call or come by with any questions or comments and to discuss your work and your experiences in Washington. You can leave messages for me by phone, e-mail, or on the board on my office door.

Topics and Reading

Following is an outline of the topics and a partial list of the readings this semester. A complete list will be in your weekly schedule of classes.

I. What is a community?

A. Definitions of "community" from the following perspectives: social/cultural, economic, political

1. Social and civic capital: declining or changing form?

Reading: Robert Putnam, Bowling Alone
Gary Wills, "Putnam's America," *American Prospect*
Mark Leibovich, "Instant Community: No Assembly Required," *The Washington Post*
Henry Fountain, "The Lonely American Just Got a Bit Lonelier," *The New York Times*

2. Economic disparities: capitalism and globalization

Reading: Thomas Friedman, "It's a Flat World After All," *The New York Times Magazine*
"Where Did They Go? The Decline of Middle Neighborhoods in Metropolitan Communities," The Brookings Institution
Elizabeth Warren, "The Middle Class on the Precipice," *Harvard Magazine*

4. Politics: polarization or accommodation?

B. Community development

1. The role of market forces, government policies and race

Reading: Robert Fishman, "The American Metropolis at Century's End," Fannie Mae Foundation

2. Community economic and political power

a. Community and asset development

Reading: John P. Kretzmann & John L. McKnight, Building Communities from the Inside Out

b. Going local in the face of globalization

Reading: Excerpts: Michael Shuman, Going Local

3. Building social capital

a. Discouraging anti-social behavior

Reading: Wendy Kaminer, "Crime and Community," James Q. Wilson and George Kelling, Fixing Broken Windows,"

b. Community builders

(1) Public spaces
(2) Private spaces
(3) Civil society: secular and faith-based

II. The components of a healthy community

A. Housing

1. Affordable housing

2. Home ownership and community
3. Integration: economic and ethnic

Reading: Excerpts from Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, American Apartheid
Alex Kotlowitz, There Are No Children Here
Readings on Hope VI

B. Transportation

C. Food, nutrition and health care
1. Affordability
2. Accesss

D. Assets
1. Work and a decent wage
2. Security
a. Health care
Reading: Hillary Rodham Clinton, "Now Can We Talk About Health Care?" The New York Times Magazine, April 18, 2004
b. Child care
Reading: Reading:"Overview of Child Care, Early Education and School Age Care," Children's Defense Fund
c. Retirement
Reading: David Shipler, The Working Poor
2. Savings, credit and financial literacy
Reading: www.assetbuilding.org

F. Education
1. Curriculum
2. Funding and governance
3. Teaching
4. Standards and testing
5. What no school can do

Reading: Jonathan Kozol, Excerpts from Amazing Grace and Savage Inequalities
James Traub, "What No School Can Do," *NY Times*
Richard D. Kahlenberg, "Mixing Classes: Why EconomicDesegregation Holds the Key to School Reform" in *Washington Monthly*, December, 2000
"Improving Your Schools: A Parent and Community Guide to No Child Left Behind," The Education Trust

III. Apart and A Part

A. The homeless
1. The mentally ill

2. Addiction

B. Ex-offenders and their families

Reading: Donald Braman, Doing Time on the Outside
Margaret Talbot, "Catch and Release," *The Atlantic Monthly*, February 2003

C. The young

1. Alienated youth
2. Teen pregnancy and single parenting

   Reading: Katherine Boo, "After Welfare" *The New Yorker*, April 9, 2001 and "The Marriage Cure" *The New Yorker*, August 18 & 25, 2003
3. Child welfare

   Reading: Adam M. Tomison, "Spotlight on Child Neglect" at http://www.aifs.org.au/nch/issues4.html

D. The old

E. Undocumented immigrants

IV. Transforming Communities: Means and Institutions

A. The means of community change

1. Community organizing
2. Community development
3. Advocacy and litigation
1. Elective office
2. Service

Reading: Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter from a Birmingham Jail
Tracy Kidder, Mountains Beyond Mountains

B. The institutions of community change

1. The role of non-profits
2. The role of faith based institutions
3. The role of government
4. The importance of leadership

Reading: Excerpts from Bill Shore, The Cathedral Within
Paul Light, In Search of Public Service

Academic Requirements of the Seminars

The following paragraphs explain the requirements to be met in each of the Seminars and the allocation of the grades.

Seminar 1

1. **Attendance** 25% of final grade

Your punctual attendance at required seminars (guest speakers, site visits) and involvement in all the seminars are the basis for this grade. **Two late arrivals is the equivalent of one absence**. The only excused absence is one received in advance for illness. The number of unexcused absences at the seminars affects your grade as follows:

# of unexcused absences	Grade
0	100
1-2	95
3-4	90
5-6	85
7-8	80
9-10	75
11-12	70
13-14	65

2. Community Project 25% of final grade

Part 1: Students will participate in a community project and will be graded by the supervisor of that project on the quality of reliability of their performance.

Part 2: Each community project group will give one or more oral presentations that discusses which overall approach or combination of approaches your organization uses to effect community change, and (understanding that you have limited knowledge) evaluate the effectiveness of the organization in using its approach(es) to effect its mission.

3. **Perspective on Community Assignment:** 50% of final grade

You will get to know a small community in Washington, DC and complete a project related to that community.

Seminar 2

Analytic papers

You will write three papers based on the speakers and readings for each section of the course. Your final journal grade in Seminar 2 will be the average of each of these paper grades. Your participation in the seminars and discussions will serve to raise or lower a borderline grade.

Academic Integrity Code

Standards of academic conduct are set forth in the University's Academic Integrity Code which can be found at ***http://www.american.edu/academics/integrity/code01.htm***. It is expected that all assignments will be completed according to the standards set forth in

this code. By registering, students have acknowledged awareness of the Academic code and are obliged to become familiar with their rights and responsibilities as defined by the Code. Violations of the Academic Integrity Code will not be treated lightly, and disciplinary action will be taken should such violations occur. Please see me if there are any questions about the academic violations described in the Code in general, or as they relate to particular requirements for this or any other course or work at American University.