

**THE HELLER SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND MANAGEMENT
BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY**

HS256f
Community Building for Managers
Fall 2007

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Thursday 6:30-9:30

Course Description: Many managers and planners (USA and international) find themselves making community a central feature of their mission. Community can be a mission in and of itself or community might be seen as a way to achieve other outcomes such as deeper reach in social service delivery. Community building has also emerged as an important approach to rebuilding urban and rural communities through comprehensive strategies. This movement of civil society organizations working in partnership with donors and local policymakers uses a bottom-up approach to create an economic base, reduce poverty and improve the well-being of citizens in particular places. Clearly, effective community building takes place in different sectors and turns on a complex set of community-building skills. Learning from these experiences, and reviewing the context that has given rise to the call for community in so many settings, is the purpose of this half course.

The course will focus one part on context, history and background and one part on the practice of community building, with an eye to the career goals and preparation of managers and planners.

In the introductory part of the course we will discuss the elasticity of the term “community building,” some historical themes, and how a term originally focused mostly on neighborhood revival in the USA is now also used in the context of building stronger ties among people who share specific interests (e.g., “micro-communities” defined by race, ethnicity, gender, religion, or other special group characteristics) and used by managers who would like to reinvent the workplace around community principles. With community building jargon increasingly entering into management and public policy literatures, managers and planners must understand the parameters of this “movement” and acquaint themselves with some of the skills and developments that people doing this work have found useful.

In the bulk of the course we will focus on the identification of some specific community building skills, drawing mostly on American readings:

- Agenda and vision setting, asset mapping and needs assessment, and organizing building on community voices

- Collaborative planning and skills to promote the integration of funding streams and that can lead to programmatic approaches addressing the goal of comprehensiveness. Integrating human capital, social capital, economic and physical infrastructure strategies and making access to services and decision-making seamless for residents
- Implementation of partnerships and alliances
- Racial equity and anti-racism work; training and education to promote cultural strengths
- Negotiation
- Learning as a community from evaluation and studies

MBA Distinctive Themes: This course relates directly to one of the core MBA competencies, community-building. It also connects to the governance and accountability themes.

The course may also be of interest to planners who work in international settings enrolled in the SID degree program. While much of the literature in this half course is drawn from American sources, the instructor is presently adding new references for a more global view of community building.

Speakers TBA: Speakers will likely reflect on community organizing, building coalitions, place-based strategies and more.

General Guidelines for Presenting Highlights from Assigned Readings: Summarize key points. Focus on what you, as a teacher, think is most interesting for the course. Don't feel you need to summarize everything! This is very important since we have time issues in a half course. Use the summary to quickly move to a critique of the usefulness, strengths, and limits of the reading(s). What does the reading trigger by way of fresh thinking? Try to integrate the reading with themes raised in other readings or the experiences of the class. Do you see applications of the reading to what "managers in training" need to know and do? Ask the class provocative questions.

Final Written Product: I will pass out nine 2-page mini-cases or scenarios from a fictional community building initiative. Each of the nine cases presents a situation and then asks some questions of the "what would you have done" variety. For the final written product, I will ask each student to answer 3 of the nine cases, choosing any 3 that interest them. The length of the final paper should not exceed 10 pages. This is NOT an evaluative assignment that measures achievement or mastery of specialized information. It is a practice opportunity that allows you to apply ideas from the course. It will be judged primarily around use of class concepts and creativity.

Course Requirements: The course grade is based 40% on active class participation, 30% on class presentations of readings (everyone will be asked at least once to present the highlights of assigned readings) and 30% on one assignment (see above and the written journal).

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person – be it a world-class philosopher or your lab partner – without proper acknowledgement of that source. This means that you must use footnotes and quotation marks to

indicate the sources of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs or ideas found in published volumes, on the internet, or created by another student. Violations of university policies on academic integrity, described in Section 3 of *Rights and Responsibilities*, may result in failure in the course or on the assignment, and could end in suspension from the University. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, you must ask for clarification.

Notice: If you have a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and require accommodations, please bring it to the instructor's attention prior to the second meeting of the class. If you have any questions about this process, contact Beth Mann at ext 62737.

Course Schedule

SESSION 1: General Context of Community Building: Definitions, History, and Theory

Readings:

Kingsley, Tom, Joseph McNeely, and James O. Gibson. Community Building Coming of Age. The Urban Institute, Washington, D.C. 1997

“Community Building: Hope and Caution” – by William Traynor, ShelterForce, October 1995

Voices from the Field II – Reflections on Comprehensive Community Change, Aspen Institute, Roundtable on Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families, 2002

SESSIONS 2-3

Competency Skill Area # 1: Agenda and vision setting, asset mapping and needs assessment, and organizing, building on community voices

“Organizing Stakeholders, Building Movement and Setting the Agenda” by Xavier de Souza Briggs, the Art and Science of Community Problem-Solving Project at Harvard University

“Reflections on Community Organizing and Resident Engagement in the Rebuilding Communities Initiative (RBI)” Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2002. See also CD on RBI

Competency Skill Area # 2: Collaborative planning and skills to promote the integration of funding streams and that can lead to programmatic approaches addressing the goal of comprehensiveness. Integrating human capital, social capital, economic and physical infrastructure strategies and making access to services and decision-making seamless for residents.

“Planning Together: How (and How Not) to Engage Stakeholders in Charting a Course” by Xavier de Souza Briggs from the Art and Science of Community Problem Solving Project

Urban Systems Reforms and Community Revitalization in Indianapolis During the Stephen Goldsmith Years (1992-1999) by Andrew Hahn and Janet Reingold, Annie E. Casey

Foundation, 2000. Shorter version in *Community, a Journal of Community Building for Community Leaders*: “The Indy Story: Changing Government, Changing Lives,” United Way of America, 2001.

“Perfect Fit or Shotgun Marriage?: Understanding the Power and Pitfalls in Partnerships” by Xavier de Souza Briggs

SESSIONS 4-5

Competency Skill Area # 3: Implementation of partnerships and alliances

“Working the Middle: Roles and Challenges of Intermediaries” by Xavier de Souza Briggs

“Doing Social Change for A Living: Impressions of Community and Family Strengthening Strategies from Career Activists with Lessons for the Next Generation of Change Agents – Executive Summary – Andrew Hahn and CYC team with PolicyLink, 2000.

Competency Skill Area # 4: Racial equity and anti-racism work; training and education to promote cultural strengths

“Structural Racism and Community Building” -- The Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, June 2004

Competency Skill Area # 5: Negotiation (optional)

“We are All Negotiators Now: An Introduction to Negotiation in Community Problem Solving” by Xavier de Souza Briggs

SESSION 6

Competency Skill Area # 6: Learning as a community (optional)

Change that Abides: A Retrospective Look at Five Community and Family Strengthening Projects, and Their Enduring Results by Andrew Hahn and team, AECF, 2001. See op-ed.

The Harvard Family Research Project, The Evaluation Exchange, Volume IX, No 3, Fall 2003

The second half of the final session will be used to wrap up the course and to have students report out on a few highlights from a private diary the instructor will ask them to keep on the process of acquiring information about community building, lingering issues about their own qualifications as managers or planners to act in community-building roles and their intellectual journey. This diary exercise, which runs throughout the course, will be stimulated by questions posed weekly in a discussion section on LATTE.