

School of Community and Regional Planning
The University of British Columbia

PLAN (6.0), Sec Cat No

SOCIAL LEARNING STUDIO

2007-08 Winter Terms I and II

Thursday, 900 to 1200, WMAX 150 (class sessions will not be held every week; see Format below)

Assistant Professor Margo Fryer, Director of UBC Learning Exchange and UBC-Community Learning Initiative (www.learningexchange.ubc.ca) (604) 822-1602, margo.fryer@ubc.ca

Keywords: social learning, university-community engagement, community development, social planning, participatory planning, reflective practice, community service learning, cross-cultural planning, social and cultural change, participatory leadership.

Description

Planners who engage with civil society encounter a number of challenges and opportunities, e.g., the need to collaborate with organizations and individuals who are members of diverse cultures or sub-cultures and who are grounded in different epistemologies and have varying priorities. This course provides an introduction to concepts and theories about social learning combined with hands-on experience with the kinds of social learning processes that form the foundation of effective community engagement and participatory planning. Students will act as planners and leaders in Community Service-Learning projects undertaken through the UBC-Community Learning Initiative, an innovative model for short-term, small-group projects in the non-profit sector that enhance students' understanding of academic course content while addressing sustainability issues, contributing to the strengthening of civil society, and cultivating global citizenship among participants.

Each student will:

- In Term I, collaborate with a community organization to design a short-term sustainability-oriented project
- In Term II, lead a small group of undergraduate civil engineering students (6-7) in the implementation of that project during Reading Week (February 18-21);
- Design and conduct an evaluation of the project
- Reflect on the process of identifying, planning, implementing, and evaluating the project and the links between the lived experience of being a planner and the concepts and theories presented in the course readings and discussions
- Reflect on the course itself as an instance of a social learning community of practice.

Course Objectives

Students will be introduced to key concepts related to social learning processes and will develop an understanding of how these concepts can inform participatory planning

practices. In addition, through hands-on experience, students will develop skills in the following areas:

- Collaborative priority-setting, decision-making, and problem-solving
- Project planning, implementation, and evaluation: including determining what kinds of community projects are feasible and meaningful; developing a project plan that provides structure and direction while allowing flexibility and group decision-making; organizing project logistics; and designing and implementing appropriate evaluation methods
- Team leadership: including building rapport, trust, and teamwork in diverse contexts, including inter-professional contexts
- Translating macro-level sustainability issues into concrete, short-term projects that make a difference in community settings
- Critical self-reflection.

Format

The course includes regular class sessions and allows time for students to meet periodically with their community partner organization and the group of engineering students they will be leading. Therefore, the class does not meet every week. There will be eight weekly class sessions in Term I and six in Term II. The total time commitment for this course (including class sessions, meetings with the community partner organization and student group, project implementation, readings, and assignments) is comparable to other SCARP courses. The schedule for the class sessions and expectations regarding meetings with the community partner and the group of engineering students will be provided at the first class (September 13).

Classroom sessions will take place on Thursdays from 9:00 to 12:00 and will use a variety of instructional techniques including workshops, discussion of readings, student presentations, small group dialogue, and reflective journaling. Students will be expected to devote four days during Reading Week (approximately 7 hours each day; February 18 to 22) to the implementation of their Community Service-Learning project. The final class session will be on March 6.

Content

Through the class sessions and through the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating their Community Service-Learning project, students will be introduced to a variety of topics and will learn how these topics are relevant to planning practice in community settings. The themes that will be central to the course include: social learning, Community Service-Learning, sustainability, cross-cultural communication and collaboration (“culture” here is intended to include sub-cultures such as those found in different kinds of professions, organizations or aspects of civil society), cycles of planning/action/reflection, social planning, and participatory leadership.

Readings

There is no required textbook. Readings consisting of book chapters and articles will be assigned at the beginning of the course.

Evaluation

20% **Plan for community service-learning project**, to include statement of objectives for project and for engineering students' learning, plan for implementation of group project during Reading Week, and framework for evaluation of project. First draft to be presented in class November 22
Revised draft to be submitted to instructor by December 6. Criteria for evaluation include: clarity, comprehensiveness, and feasibility of plan and evaluation framework.

25% **Reflective journal** to be sent by email to instructor by Tuesday at 9:00 am every week from September 25 to November 20 and January 15 to February 12. Criteria for evaluation include: sincerity of effort to engage in critical self-reflection and insight into links between personal experiences, course readings, and planning theory. An integrative summary of journal reflections is to be included in the final paper/report.

15% **Class participation:**

40% **Report on project implementation and evaluation**, plus synthesis of reflections. Report should be suitable for a variety of audiences, including the community organization that hosted the project. Should include description of project and analysis of project evaluation data from engineering students and community organization. Should also include recommendations for further project work in the community setting. Synthesis of reflections (which can be separate and is for instructor only) should include observations about the connections between planning theory, course readings and the student's personal experience as a planner in the course. Can include recommendations for the course itself (optional).

Criteria for evaluation include: clarity and completeness of description of project and evaluation, insight into links between planning theory and this instance of participatory planning practice, and insight into social learning processes.

Suggested length: 25-30 pages double-spaced; approximately 6,000 to 7,500 words. Due Date: March 27.

Prerequisites

None