



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Course title:	Participatory Research Strategies to Maximize Community Impact	
Course #/term:	SW867,001, Winter, 2022	
Time and Place:	Friday, 9am-12pm 1804 SSWB (with Zoom contingencies)	
Credit hours:	3	
Prerequisites:	Need to be a doctoral student or have permission of instructor	
Instructor:	Lisa Wexler	
Pronouns:	[She, her]	
Contact info:	Email: lwexler@umich.edu	Phone: (413) 824-1190
	You may expect a response within 48 hours	
Office:	3838	
Office hours:	By appointment (email 3+ days in advance to find a mutual time)	

Acknowledgements: The School of Social Work is located on the Huron River watershed, on land stewarded by Niswi Ishodewan Anishinaabeg: The Three Fires People who are the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Bodewadmi. As we work, live and learn on these territories, we must keep in mind the ongoing effects of colonization, the communities' struggle for self-determination, colonial state violence and the recognition of Indigenous sovereignty.

It is important to recognize that racism is part of the social fabric of the United States. Racism and white supremacy animate our socio-economic, cultural, and political institutions and practices, and create conditions for health, political and economic inequities. This history infiltrates our individual understandings, permeating our daily experiences and interactions.

Creating real and enduring change toward social justice is important for the wellbeing of us all. This work requires that each of us works to actively dismantle racism and white supremacy, starting with ourselves and extending to our communities and our individual spheres of influence. Doing this work is often uncomfortable and may sometimes be painful, yet it is a necessary part of the process of creating justice and healing.

Through relationship, scholarship, and learning, we work to create a future in which the past is understood and the present is oriented toward social justice. We do this with an ethic of care and compassion, and an openness to laughter, innovation and joy.

1. Course Statement

The course will offer an advanced introduction to participatory research methods and methodologies. Learning will involve reading and hearing about the ways in which researchers and community members collaborate to generate useful knowledge that contributes to social justice, health and equity. The nature of knowledge and the purpose of research will be examined along with the roles of scientists, research partners, and institutions. The course will invite students to examine the theoretical, technical, and practical elements of doing participatory research, from philosophical underpinnings to research design and analysis strategies to protecting (and engaging) research participants. The course will explore and reflect on issues of power, trust, (in)equity, and social (in)justice; and examine the multiple ways in which participatory research can be used as a vehicle for positive social change.

a. Course description

Students will learn about different participatory approaches to engage partners in assessing community strengths, priorities and issues in order to develop research questions and methods that can engage community members in each step of the research and evaluation process (to greater and lesser extents). Throughout the semester, students will read leaders in the field, learn from case examples, and discuss tensions that often arise in participatory research practice. Because participatory research processes are often fluid and build within relationships and lived experiences, the course will involve students in a small, instructor-facilitated research project of the students' choice. The culminating work of the class invites students to design a final project that illustrates their learning and meets their individual learning goals. Final project will vary and can be done individually or in groups.

Course objectives and competencies

1. Recognize the historic roots and major concepts, terms, models and theories used in participatory research to address health and social inequalities.
2. Explain the core principles of participatory research, and the application of these principles in developing, maintaining and evaluating community-academic research partnerships.
3. Consider the different definitions of community in community partnerships, and the ways that the social and professional roles of the partners may influence the participatory research process and outcomes.
4. Reflect on one's positionality as an important factor to consider within a participatory research process.
5. Describe the continuum of participatory research (in terms of governance and power-sharing within them), and the rationale for using different models.
6. Identify key philosophical, paradigmatic, epistemological and feasibility considerations for conducting participatory research.
7. Understand how to involve community members and organizations in strategic planning and prioritization of research efforts related to their lives.
8. Formulate appropriate, culturally responsive, and feasible research questions and specific aims that respond to partners' priorities, understandings, organizational and communication systems.
9. Identify and discuss the challenges involved in conducting participatory research and the facilitating factors for overcoming these challenges.
10. Evaluate participatory research processes and/or outcomes
 - a. select and use appropriate methods for evaluation of processes and outcomes;

- b. apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the evaluation of outcomes;
 - c. apply evaluation findings to improve participatory research practice.
11. Articulate a critical understanding of privilege, oppression, diversity and social justice in the conduct of participatory research.

b. Course design

Over the semester, students will read, listen and talk about participatory research—from identifying a shared area of interest, to developing a research plan, to evaluating the outcomes of the work. Each class session will be broken into two sections with a break in between. The first part of the class will be academic (theoretical or abstract) in nature. This time will include lectures and discussions focused on the readings or assignments from the week before. The second part of the class will workshop ideas and structures to apply the ideas read about or learned that week. The assignments will invite students to experience an aspect of the participatory process and the culminating work of the class asks students to design a final project that illustrates their learning and meets their individual learning goals.

c. Intensive focus on PODS and anti-racist and decolonizing approaches to learning.

Throughout the course, participants (professor included) will engage in dialogue, relationship-building and shared decision making in order to model participatory methods and dismantle structural racism / marginalization. The beginning of the class will provide an overview of participatory approaches and models, in a more 'traditional style, but students will be encouraged to increasingly direct their learning over the remainder of the semester. As we deepen our understanding of each other's priorities and contexts, the course will adjust. The writing, discussing and participation in the participatory research course aims to uplift connection, understanding, intellectual risk-taking, sustainability, exploration of complexity and alignment for action.

2. Class Requirements

In an effort to increase learning in uncertain times, I expect all students to show up, complete the readings and assignments (or communicating about adaptations), and share their thoughts, ideas, and concerns as they arise throughout the course. As in participatory research, the course is a partnership to encourage co-learning through a process of research (finding and considering information), action (applying that information), and reflection (what does it mean for me/us/our shared purpose). Assignments are negotiable and are intended to deepen student engagement and learning.

- a. Text and class materials – All assigned readings, websites and other content will be posted on Canvas at least 2 weeks before each session. By populating the course materials 'as we go,' I am able to tailor the course to student interests, understandings and learning goals. To fully engage in the course and to maximize your learning, please complete the reading, watching, listening for the week before class. Session discussions will center around this content.

Date	Class Content and Materials (see Canvas)	In Class	Assignments: Due the day before class, 5pm
Jan 7	Introduction to the course and each other.	Getting to know each other- Students' interests & goals, Syllabus, class format, expectations Shifting to something else-	
Jan 14	Overview / history of participatory research	Why do participatory research?	Short essay: Why do participatory research? (10%)
Jan 21	Decolonizing and Antiracist Research	What is it? What can it be? Guest: Dr. Katie Schultz	
Jan 28	Ethics, Definitions and Paradigms	Conceptual models for working with communities for equity Guest: Dr. Paul Chandanabhumma	Due: PEERES course completion and reflection related to ethics Short essay: Making sense of ethics (10%)
Feb 4	Engaging 'the community'	Who is 'the community' in my project, and how might I engage them?	
Feb 11	Governance & power	What decisions should be made and by whom and at what level? Evaluating partnerships and engagement Guest: Dr. Chris Coombe – in person or virtual	Short essay: Reflecting on 'the community' (10%)
Feb 18	Project planning	Conceptual models in participatory research	
Feb 25	Defining/understanding the problem	Offering a perspective to guide directions forward	Sparking dialogue: Produce a 'data story' or critical conversation starter about an issue (10%)
March 4	No Class - Break		
March 11	Doing participatory research	Examples and ideas	
March 18	Doing participatory research	Examples and ideas	
March 25	Dissemination: For whom? To what purpose?	Translating research into socially just change: Policy and practice Guest: Dr. Aline Gubrium	Do something: Student Choice (20%)
April 1	Research for Social Justice	How might participatory research contribute to antiracism, decolonizing and culturally affirming knowledge production and use?	Zoom: Get together to divvy up content and to link up with a partner to prepare to facilitate small group discussions on April 8 and 15 th .
April 8 April 15	Take aways related to participatory research	Student-pair sparked discussions: Considerations, methods, tools. World Café Style	In class

b. Assignments

Assignments	Due date	Percent grade
<p><u>Why do participatory research?</u> Short essay* that describes how this approach applies to your area(s) of interest and professional goals.</p>	<p>January 13th, 5pm</p>	<p>10%</p>
<p><u>Making sense of ethics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete the Peeres RCSR module - Explore the First Nation’s OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, Possession) website and short video - Write a short essay* relaying your thoughts about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o What are some key take aways for you related to ethics and research? o What does OCAP bring up that is not considered in the PEERES training? o What are some lingering questions you want to explore with others in class? 	<p>January 27th, 5pm</p>	<p>10%</p>
<p><u>Reflecting on ‘the community’.</u> Please write a short essay* answering the following quesitons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who is your 'community' (please be specific and think through who might best be involved in your proposed work)? - How will their perspectives, understandings and experiences support the research? - How might the research/evaluation work support their work/lives/goals? - What power dynamics might be in play among the community participants? - How does your own positionality shape the interpersonal dynamics? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How might your identities affect how people engage with you and how you engage with community partners? - How might your expertise and interests affect the research? - How might you build in processes to reflect on these issues as you proceed in the research? 	<p>February 10th, 5pm</p>	<p>10%</p>
<p><u>Sparking dialogue:</u> Produce a ‘data-story’ or ‘critical conversation starter’ you can use to generate a conversation with your community partners about ‘the problem’ you would like to address/understand through the research or the possible benefits of the evaluation you might do. Create this product with ‘the community’ you defined in the ‘reflecting on the community’ assignment in mind. We will workshop these in class, so bring a copy to share with all (18).</p>	<p>February 24th, 5pm</p>	<p>10%</p>

Assignments	Due date	Percent grade
<p><u>Do something: Student Choice</u> – Here are some ideas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interview 2-3 people who have led or participated in a participatory research project to find more about some aspect of the process in practice. This would include a list of interview questions and a summary of learning. 2. Create a logic model/conceptual framework (Good start: https://cpr.unm.edu/research-projects/cbpr-project/cbpr-model.html) that describes key contextual factors, partnership processes/group dynamics, kinds of research processes/outputs and outcomes/impacts for your research project as it stands now. 3. Convene a meeting of (potential) partners to get input about an issue/experience of interest. Develop an agenda, a process for eliciting and documenting feedback and guidance, and way of sharing back what you learned. Report who you invited, who came, what happened and what you learned about participatory research. 4. Develop an IRB protocol for beginning a participatory research project, including consent forms and general data collection methods. 5. **Other: Please check in with Lisa to discuss before March 4th 	<p>March 24th, 5pm</p>	<p>20%</p>
<p><u>'Take aways' related to participatory research:</u> Student-sparked discussions: We will divide the class content that is most interesting to students into 7 or 8 parts, and invite students to get into 'like-minded' pairs who will co-facilitate small group discussions. Each pair will focus on one aspect of learning from the semester and present the insight, dilemma, or possibility for small groups to discuss. These 'products' are intended to invite dialogue and can be a conceptual map/model, a picture or other art piece to spark insights, graphs or other materials/reminders of content from the class, short films, or case studies taken from course readings or something else. Whatever the 'spark' for conversation, sharing and understanding it should take less than 10 minutes. Facilitation teams will then develop and facilitate small group discussion using at least 3 open-ended questions designed to explore/unpack, interrogate, or apply some of the content of the course. This will happen using a World Café organization, leaving enough time for 4 pairs of students to facilitate ~30 minute discussions each class session.</p>	<p>Due April 7th April 14th</p> <p>And, bring to class enough or a way to share with all students</p>	<p>10%</p>
<p><u>Summary reflection:</u> In a short essay* please offer a few short reflections to sum up your key learnings. Specifically describe the understandings you gained through knowledge exploration, application, and reflection, highlighting insights you want to bring into future work.</p>	<p>April 21rd 5pm</p>	<p>10%</p>

Assignments	Due date	Percent grade
<p>*Short essays should be less than 2 single-spaced pages (12 point font), and should integrate ideas from readings, lectures and experiences, using APA formatting guidance. Essays should be written in first person and can be tailored to link directly to student's learning goals and research/evaluation projects. If a student wants to change a short essay assignment, s/he/they should specify how they modified the assignment to meet their learning needs in a 'preamble' so I understand and can offer comments accordingly.</p>		

c. Attendance and class participation – **20%**

Please come to as many classes as you can. A lot of learning is done by sharing ideas, workshopping strategies, and critically examining conceptions. Class participation means:

- Reading the posted material,
- Watching the lectures and videos,
- Checking out the other materials on Canvas
- Bringing questions, concerns or insights gained through this 'outside' work.
- Showing up to class ready to engage.
 - o Listening to understand,
 - o Participating in dialogue based on materials AND personal experiences, knowledge and insights,
 - o Sharing insights/understandings with care.

d. Grading

As in participatory research, the course is patterned to develop partnerships between the instructor and students to encourage co-learning through a process of research (finding and considering information), action (applying that information), and reflection (what does it mean for me/us/our shared purpose). Grades will reflect student effort and willingness to engage. With due diligence, open communication, on-going assignments and an iterative design, the course aims to invite engagement on multiple levels and in terms calibrated to individual learning and personal needs.

The assignments are assessed as 'complete/incomplete' with comments for reflection and guidance. If students (1) come to classes and engage/participate, (2) do all the assignment conscientiously (or negotiate new ones), (3) submit assignments on time (unless adjusted beforehand), and (4) work in ways that respond to their own learning goals and research/evaluation projects, they will receive an A.

My hope to support student learning and to encourage 'intellectual stretching', which means crediting students for engaging (doing the weekly assignments, thinking about the material, coming to class prepared to discuss and explore key ideas, participating in class sessions, applying learning to their work) in the material in ways that make sense for them. I will align grading in the course with the SSW student grading policies, in general, and will let students know if this engagement is not perceived as consistent, satisfactory or shows mastery of the

subject matter. Here are the SSW policies on Grades in Academic Courses and in Field Instruction as well as Student Grievance procedures and the policy for grading in special circumstances.

e. Health-Related Class Absences

School of Social Work students who miss class due to illness of any kind will be given opportunities to access course materials online or provided with alternative learning opportunities. Please notify me by email about your absence as soon as practical, so that I can make accommodations. Please note that documentation (a doctor's note) for medical excuses is *not* required.

Additional School and University policies, information and resources are available here: <https://ssw.umich.edu/standard-policies-information-resources>. They include:

- *Safety and emergency preparedness*
- *Mental health and well-being*
- *Teaching evaluations*
- *Proper use of names and pronouns*
- *Academic integrity and plagiarism*
- *Accommodations for students with disabilities*
- *Religious/spiritual observances*
- *Military deployment*
- *Writing skills and expectations*