

## Community Studies DCG Application **Communicating across the Curriculum**

### What is proposed

We propose to strengthen the connections between the two core curriculum courses that fulfill Community Studies' DC requirement. We will create new written assignments post-field study (in CMMU 194, The Analysis of Field Materials) that revisit and extend key analyses conducted before field study (in CMMU 102, Preparation for Field Study), in the light of students' learning during field study (CMMU 198, not part of the DC requirement but, significantly, featuring extensive field notes). We further propose to enhance the written communication requirements by devising a new assignment in 194 whereby students engage in a series of policy forums designed to place the analysis of their own work in direct conversation with the analyses of others. Persuasive oral communication in advocacy and other social justice work is essential, as are attentive listening and active engagement with various stakeholder perspectives. We are eager to explicitly incorporate these communication skills into our overall disciplinary communication requirements.

### *Background*

The DC-fulfilling courses wrap around the field study.

For some years now, CMMU 102 has been a full-cohort course. In contrast, 194 has been structured as a collection of parallel seminars, free-standing sections of 18-24 students taught by various faculty. With the program's restructuring, as of January 2015 CMMU 194 will become a full-cohort course for all declared majors returning from their field study (+/- 75 students). In this context, the previous course needs to be revamped. Analytic writing continues to be essential, but assignments such as close coding of field notes and weekly feedback-intensive writing exercises have become prohibitive.

We see far more than sacrifice, however. The fact that declared majors will share the experiences of four quarters' worth of sequential core courses (102, 198 x2, and 194) presents distinctive pedagogical opportunities. We've learned from our experiences with 102 and 194, and the proposed DC project will capitalize on these lessons and opportunities.

### *The Proposal*

We request funding to support the re-design of 194, as follows:

1. Change some of the 194 assignments to strengthen methodological and thematic connections with 102. Students begin satisfying their DC requirement in CMMU 102. They enter possessing a field study plan, meaning they know the topical focus of their work, the organization in which they will be working, and their geographical location. Having a plan at the outset permits students to fulfill the learning goals of

CMMU 102, i.e., preparation for field study not as an abstract proposition but with respect to an actual organization and place.

Students complete a variety of assignments in 102. The relevant pieces for this proposal are: community analysis, review of legislative frameworks, composition of research questions, and literature review. Typically, the value of these assignments comes into clearest focus during field study. Moreover, as students engage in their work as participant-observers, they learn more about place, definitions of community, the policy frameworks that actually are critical to their organizations' work, and therefore what kinds of reading and research questions are most relevant and compelling. In the past, these revisions occurred in some but not all students' work; now, we will drop some of the former 194 assignments in favor of these opportunities to formally improve the analytic writing that was begun during Preparation for Field Study.

2. Require all students to complete a senior essay, and to do so by the end of (say) week 7. In the past, students had the option to use 194 either to complete a senior essay, draft a prospectus, reading list and one chapter for a senior thesis to be completed in independent study the following quarter, or to prepare for a project or student-directed seminar that also would be completed the following quarter. Our plan now is for all students to complete an analysis that begins in 102, is strongly supported through field study assignments, develops in 194 through the assignments described above, and which therefore can be finished in time to take the work of disciplinary communication into valuable new territory. (Completing a senior thesis is still an option for ambitious, appropriately prepared students; however, the senior essay will function as a high-quality stand-alone piece of writing for everyone.)

Community Studies students have a strong track record of receiving Dean's and Chancellor's Awards for their field study analyses. We hope to continue this tradition of high standards for independent research and vibrant analytic writing.

3. Introduce a new capstone requirement: to participate in an issues forum moderated by alumni and community NGO partners, and to write a brief evaluative summary reconciling the arguments presented. This innovative assignment will build on the students' already-established sense of cohort identity, developed throughout the core curriculum and essential to Community Studies' disciplinary themes. Students will have engaged in various theoretic debates, and have done so together, on numerous occasions before beginning 194. They will therefore be able to achieve considerable depth. The new assignment will also capitalize on the strong connections Community Studies maintains with alumni and local organizations.

Having completed their individual analyses of field study, students will spend the last three weeks of the quarter stepping back from their individual analyses in order to engage with key debates ongoing in the social justice community? In a series of organized issues forums, students will present their work in conversation with the

work of others. For each forum, we propose to recruit a local professional working in the relevant field to be the moderator. Students will benefit from a real opportunity to have their analyses heard, and get valuable feedback on their argumentation skills. Collectively, the class would face up to tensions and opportunities inherent in a salient health and/or economic justice issue. A final brief written assignment will require students to digest the spectrum of views presented and propose principles for negotiating a way through them.

We offer an example by way of illustrating our intention here. During academic year 2012-13, two students returned from field studies with organizations that work in the area of violence against women. One student learned that although her organization was endlessly supportive of women's need to recover from psychological trauma, it fell short in terms of connecting survivors to practical resources such as housing or employment; nor did it engage in advocacy that linked interpersonal violence to rectifying structures of economic, gender, or racial inequality. The other student concluded that her organization offered valuable shelter and skills training but was woefully lacking in what she considered much-needed therapeutic intervention. Their two analyses stood apart, each robust enough on their own but permitting both student analysts to remain rooted in stances driven by a single (if long-term) experience in a single place. With the proposed new assignment, students in comparable positions will instead join their classmates as they engage collectively in consideration of a question like, "What is the relationship between therapeutic and pragmatic frameworks to address violence against women?" Or alternatively, "What is forfeited when analyses of interpersonal violence fail to account for structural, symbolic, or "everyday" violence, or when organizations representing victims of violence neglect these factors in their work? What would it look like for organizations to change their agendas and take up that challenge?" Or, more generally, "What are the implications of addressing social justice from structural vs. instrumental vs. therapeutic perspectives?"

In another potential forum, students might examine the relative strengths, weaknesses, synergies and conflicts associated with localism as compared to regional or global strategies in social activism. Again, the idea is to surface cross-cutting themes—some of which are staples of the discipline, others of which are dynamic year to year—in a way that requires clear verbal articulation and even-handed comparison of ideas.

We've always encouraged our students to step back from their primary analyses to consider where their work fits into larger pictures, and to understand what those 'pictures' are. This assignment will formalize that encouragement. In terms of disciplinary communication, it will require—and we will teach—students to distill their analytic writing into well-crafted oral arguments readily understandable by a variety of audiences. This new component of our DC teaching reflects the frequency with which our students are called upon to participate in meetings, public forums, or graduate school. Community Studies students choose a wide variety of careers; a

connecting thread, however, is their civic engagement. This final element of their senior capstone work will equip them for such participation.

### *Work Plan & Time Line*

We request funds to develop and pilot this course, as follows:

During summer 2014, Community Studies continuing lecturer Andrea Steiner, who has taught 194 virtually every year since 2003 and 102 since 2010, will take the lead on course design. For both these courses, Dr. Steiner's student evaluations have been consistently stellar. She is ideally positioned to carry this transformation forward, not only because of her teaching experience but also because she's already convened a highly successful "praxis retreat" for Community Studies alumni. That 2012 retreat reconnected students spanning the last nine years, and reinvigorated the program's active engagement with local alumni.

During the first summer session, we propose to interview representatives of at least 10 local NGOs or other organizations that are engaged in social justice work analogous to our students' field study sites. Based on their recommendations, we'll identify a set of key issues and debates at the cutting edge of social activism, and draft the forums assignment for 194. We hope to recruit some of the interview subjects as forum moderators. We also will review and adjust the reading and written assignments in both 102 and 194. Finally, we'll recruit alumni volunteers to attend a piloting "praxis session" during summer session 2. So that they'll have ample opportunity to prepare, at this time we'll target 2-4 key participants to contribute to a mock-issues forum that will form the centerpiece of the pilot.

Toward the start of summer session 2, we'll convene at least one meeting to assess the proposed revisions and pilot the issues forum. In this "praxis session" we'll draw on the memory, expertise, and good will of alumni volunteers. We'll ask participants to reflect on how best to maintain high quality support for analysis and writing under the new full-cohort conditions: what could have been dropped, what seems crucial to retain. We'll then present the proposed framework for a revamped 194, and solicit feedback. Finally, the "key participants" recruited earlier will stage a sample issues forum as proposed for the course. The whole group will debrief the forum experience, and we'll use this valuable information to modify the course format and finalize the 194 syllabus. At the end of summer session, Dr. Steiner will draft a progress report.

In sum, our proposal capitalizes on the strong links that, virtually by definition, the program has forged with alumni as well as community service providers and activists (groups that sometimes overlap). We request funding to support Lecturer Steiner's time throughout summer 2014 to develop the 194 course, which is offered in winter quarter 2015 and winter quarters thereafter. As the budget will stipulate, we also request honoraria for key alumni volunteers (i.e., forum participants) at a level reflective of their time commitment for preparation, and travel reimbursement for up to 12 participants in the praxis session.

### *Assessment Plan*

The work plan explicitly incorporates the first round of evaluation; namely, syllabus review by former students and piloting of the most innovative addition to the DC requirement. We further propose to evaluate course effectiveness using student surveys at the end of the quarter. This survey plan is consistent with our approved Program Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan for PLO #5 (see attached). (PLO#4 will be assessed through the completed capstone essay.) Regarding the issues forums specifically, we'll solicit reviews from forum moderators. Finally, the instructor will add her critical reflections to the final project report. The timing for this project is ideal, because the first cohort of Community Studies students since the program's suspension was lifted is smaller than it will be. It's the perfect opportunity to test the effectiveness of revised teaching under the full-cohort model.

### *Sustainability*

Our plan is to establish a replicable structure involving both leaders of local community organizations and local alumni. We are not requesting funds that need to be renewed annually. Once the course is designed, implemented, evaluated and adjusted accordingly, the work of this grant will be complete and the course plan will be settled. Each year, we anticipate that the instructor will draw on Community Studies' long-standing connections in the Bay Area in order to arrange the forums. We will use our small budget for guest-speaker honoraria to cover moderators' expenses; in our experience, guests frequently decline the honorarium in order to support the program.

### *Budget\**

½ course equivalency for Lecturer Steiner in summer session 1:	\$ 5,793.
½ course equivalency for Lecturer Steiner in summer session 2:	\$ 5,793.
Compensation for up to 4 key participants' forum preparation & attendance at piloting praxis session:	\$ 400.
Travel reimbursement for up to 12 praxis session participants:	\$ 200.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$12,186.</b>

\*This reflects Lecturer Steiner's anticipated salary as of 7/1/14

## **Community Studies Bachelor of Arts Degree Program Learning Outcomes**

### **Critical Thinking**

*Students earning a B.A. in Community Studies will be able to:*

1. Demonstrate deep knowledge of the history, causes, and contemporary manifestations of specific social justice issues related to health and economic inequality.
2. Deconstruct institutional power residing in private enterprise, government, the media and/or the non-profit sector.
3. Analyze how communities attempt to overcome problems associated with inequality, cultural stigma, prejudice and discrimination.
4. Articulate research questions, methods and findings appropriate to social science inquiry.
5. Demonstrate analytical writing ability that effectively integrates theoretical and experiential knowledge about social justice.

### **Community Engagement**

*Students earning a B.A. in Community Studies will be able to:*

6. Identify, analyze and help to construct strategies for social change through participation in the social justice work of an organization.
7. Exhibit ethnographic observation skills by maintaining a regular record of detailed field notes.
8. Demonstrate effective communication with the diverse constituencies involved in social justice work.

**Program Learning Objectives Assessment Plan for `Community Studies B.A.**

Academic Year	Program Learning Outcomes	Type of Evidence and its Source	Population	Approach to Data Collection and Tools	Data collection date	Reports date
2014-2015	#7 Ethnographic observation skills via field notes	Field notes submitted during CMMU 198B	Entire major cohort on field study	Field Study Supervisor will assess proficiency using rubric (to be created)	Fall 2014	Winter 2015
		Student self-evaluation reported in survey (to be created)	Entire major cohort on field study	Web-based survey using field study ecommons site.	Fall 2014	Winter 2015
	#8 Communicate with diverse constituencies	On-site Field Study Supervisor evaluation Letters	Entire major cohort on field study	Supervisors will receive specific request.	Fall 2014	Winter 2015
		Embedded assignment during CMMU 198B (to be created)	Entire major cohort on field study	Assignment will be submitted as part of field notes.	Fall 2014	Winter 2015
2015-2016	#5 Analytical writing skills that integrate theory and practice	Capstone completed in CMMU 194	Entire major cohort	Assessed as part of overall capstone process	Winter 2015	Spring 2016
		Student survey (to be created)	Entire major cohort	Exit survey will include specific prompt	Winter 2015	Spring 2016
2016-2017	#1 Topical expertise	Capstone completed in CMMU 194	Entire major cohort	Assessed as part of overall capstone process	Winter 2017	Spring 2016
		Embedded assignment in CMMU 194	Entire major cohort	Students will offer their own assessment	Winter 2017	Spring 2017
	#6 Constructing strategies for social change	Embedded assignment in Independent Field Study B (notes) (to be created)	Entire major cohort	Assignment will be completed in field notes	Fall 2016	Winter 2017
		Student survey (to be created)	Entire major cohort	Web-based survey using field study ecommons site	Fall 2016	Winter 2017