2017


Betsy Schmidt

University of Massachusetts Amherst

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umass.edu/spp_ed_materials

Part of the Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons

Recommended Citation


https://scholarworks.umass.edu/spp_ed_materials/1

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Public Policy at ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. It has been accepted for inclusion in School of Public Policy and Administration Educational Materials by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst. For more information, please contact scholarworks@library.umass.edu.
MAKING A DIFFERENCE: POLICIES AND STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE
PUBP&ADM397M-SEC01 FA17

Email: Eschmidt@pubpol.umass.edu
Meeting Time: Mon. Wed. 10:10-11:25 am
Location: Machmer E-50

Office Hours: Feel free to stop by my office (Thompson 240) or set up an appointment. Tuesdays and Thursdays are best, but I can meet other times, too.

Description of course: This course looks at social change through the perspective of policies and strategies that have been shown to make a positive difference in people’s lives. It explores strategies for designing and measuring successful policies, as well as strategies for convincing others that proven policies are worth pursuing. It examines these strategies through the lens of specific policies that have proven successful regarding community building, economic prosperity, the environment, and the justice system. It asks students to consider the world they would like to live in and how they could help bring that world about.

UNIT 1: DESIGNING POLICIES FOR SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITIES

Sept. 6: Introduction to the Course

There is no homework, but if you have a chance before class to introduce yourself in the discussion forum, that would be great. I am especially interested in what interests you in general, and in particular, why this course struck you as interesting. I have started the introductions forum by introducing myself. If you do not see this until after the first class, please still participate! This is a way for all of us to get to know each other a little bit.

Sept. 11: What is a Successful Community?

Ultimately, we are trying to create a successful community, whether that is at an international, national, local, institutional, or even family level. What that looks like will vary, depending on your values and world view, and it will be the subject of much discussion over the semester and particularly through this unit.

Homework: Before class, please submit a paragraph or two describing your definition of a community and what makes it successful. Your response should explain how, if at all, your own experiences have framed this definition of a successful community. I realize that you could write a dissertation on this topic, so if you want to write more than two paragraphs, that is ok, but please--no dissertations!

Please also find two articles in the Solutions StoryTracker that illustrate your definition of
community and explain why you chose these articles. I prefer you think about your definition first, because it will help you narrow your search, but you can reverse the order if you want.

**Recommended reading:**


**Sept. 13: Systems Thinking**

Our traditional way of thinking is linear, but the proponents of systems thinking maintain that such thinking perpetuates the status quo because it does not recognize the systems that are affected by change.

**Homework:**
Daniel Aronson, *Introduction to Systems Thinking*

Download the PDF in *Introduction to Systems Thinking*. Read pp. 1-8, 16.


David Stroh, Kathleen Zurcher, *Acting and Thinking Systemically*

Be able to explain how systems thinking relates to the topic you were assigned in the last class.

**Sept. 18. Appreciative Inquiry, Asset Mapping**

Asset mapping is a way of looking at the strengths of a community and then building on them as a planning tool. Appreciative inquiry is a closely related concept, that of looking at what is working and building from there. Both strategies assume the importance of considering the community that will benefit from the solution as an asset and listening to their ideas of what will and will not work in their community.

**Homework:**

UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, Sec. 1, *Asset Mapping* (n.d.)
Written assignment: Think of something that you would like to improve in your life or in your community. It can be something relatively small, like improving a relationship or your study habits. Or it can be something you would like see improved at U Mass or in the larger community. Ask yourself appreciative inquiry questions and think of the questions you would ask one other person in your quest towards this goal. Then try to design an asset map that will help you build on the strengths you already have. (Those strengths can include other people in your life or other assets in your community). Your response to this prompt should show that you have done the reading. You do not need to actually draw a map, but at least describe it.

Sept. 20: The Treehouse Foundation & Family to Family

We will end Unit 1 by examining two initiatives that work to ensure (or are in fact) successful communities-- Family to Family and the Treehouse Foundation. Today, the homework is to learn about them, but you should also begin thinking about the paper you will write about one or the other of them by next Monday, Sept. 25. You will explain whether one of these organizations (your choice) is working to create or has created a successful community, using the definition of a successful community that is the one that you think is best. The instructions for that paper are on a document attached below.

Homework:

Read the information that describes Family to Family and watch one of the 2 videos on the linked website.


Listen: Caroline Lester, Rebuilding Foster Care from the Ground Up, Innovation Hub (Aug. 25, 2017) (19 minutes)

Think about: What kind of appreciative inquiry questions do you have for our guest?

Think about: How often do you hear the words "community" or "system?" How often do you hear someone saying something positive?

Recommended: Watch the video, Treehouse Intergenerational Communities: The Village in Action
UNIT 2: MEASURING SUCCESS AND USING DATA/REASONING
IN THE CONTEXT OF BUILDING ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Sept. 25: Measuring Overall Community Success

Today we will discuss why our current measures of economic success, such as the GDP, may not be the best measures and what could replace them. There is no reading homework but the first paper is due before class.

Homework: First paper is due.

Sept. 27: Success of a Project or Program: Theory of Change & Impact Measurement

Today we learn about theories of change and logic models, which provide a way in which governments and private institutions can determine how they will achieve concrete goals.

Homework:

Reading:
- Innovation Network, Logic Model Workbook. (Also attached below). As you read this document, try completing a logic model for either Family by Family or the Treehouse Foundation. Bring that document to class, and we will crowdsourced your ideas to come up with a great logic model. (It might help to watch the video first).

Recommended reading: Amy Kincaid, An Adventure Logic Model, Change Matters (April 5, 2016) (This document provides an example of a logic model based on Star Trek. The document’s vocabulary is a little different from that in the Logic Model Workbook. The author uses "results" instead of "outcomes," and her short term results are changes in KSAB--knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior. Her longer terms results, which she calls "impact," are changes in the community

Video: Understanding Logic Models by Way of Analogy (n.d.)

Oct. 2: Erasing the Digital Divide

Today we will discuss Estonia's policy of creating a digital government and making digital resources available to everyone. We will discuss whether this policy can help create economic prosperity and whether it can (or should) be adapted elsewhere.

(Some of this may seem redundant, but I did not understand how it worked until I had listened to the podcast and read these 2 articles). Consider: If you could make policy decisions, would you include Estonia's policies in the United States and/or in an imaginary perfect country? Why or why not?

Recommended: E-Estonia Website (The official government site)

Oct. 4: Understanding Facts and Data

We begin a discussion today of strategies that can help move public opinion to the point at which a potentially successful policy will be implemented. Carefully collected data and persuasive argument form the backdrop for all such change, and in the highly politically charged era of today, the ability to analyze facts and data critically is crucial.

Read:
- University of Leicester, *Student Learning Development, What is Critical Reading?*
- Center for Writing, University of Minnesota, *Quicktips: Critical Reading Strategies*

To do: Find at least one article in the SolutionsU Storytracker (or elsewhere) that describes a successful policy you might want to explore for the rest of the semester and upload the article in the Assignment below. What is this policy and what facts or data does the author provide that indicate this could be a successful policy? How will you determine the accuracy of the facts/data, and what other information will you need to find before you determine whether this is a successful policy that you can propose for another geographic location or a wider community?

Oct. 10: Cash Stipends or Personal Responsibility?

A current public policy debate exists over the best route for helping people who need immediate economic help. Is it better to give away cash with no strings attached or to make the process one that ensures no one takes advantage of the system?

Homework:
- Listen to a BBC podcast on cash transfers in Peru, its "juntos" program.

**Research:** Find two stories in the SolutionsU Storytracker, one about a cash stipend program (conditional or unconditional) that is part of a solution to a societal challenge that interests you, and the other about a solution to the same (or a similar) challenge that is being pursued through a more traditional mechanism.

**Be prepared to discuss:** If you could make policy decisions, would you include Peru's cash transfer policies in the actual United States and/or in an imaginary perfect country? Why or why not? Be able to include data/arguments from the materials you have read, listened to, and/or watched. In class, we will outline persuasive arguments for each of these positions. We will also work to develop a story Collection to submit to Solutions U.

**Oct. 11: Persuasive Arguments**

Today, we will discuss again how to use data and logic to persuade others.

**Read:**

• Scribendi, *How to Write a Persuasive Essay* (May 19, 2016)
• Adam Pollak, Jen Collins, *Persuasive Essays* (no date)

**Discussion question:**

Find a thread on Reddit's "Change My View" and analyze one of the responses trying to change someone's view. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the responses, in your opinion? Feel free to comment on a response someone else from this class has commented on as long as you have something to add or a different perspective (and are respectful of the other student(s)).

**Think:**

Be prepared for a class debate on personal responsibility versus state responsibility. Be prepared to make either argument.
Oct. 16 Data Visualization

Read:


Watch:


Create:

Try your hand at visualizing some of the data you have learned about the policy you suggested on Oct. 4 or 10.

Oct. 18: Education

Today we will discuss an interesting phenomenon in education. The countries with the two highest educational scores, Korea and Finland, have almost opposite educational philosophies. One is quite hierarchical and structured, and the other is learner centered. For homework we will use examples from different countries to illustrate these different philosophies: a structured Chinese approach to teaching math and a learner-centered approach developed in India.

Watch:  *Sugata Mitra: Build a School in the Cloud*

Listen: *BBC podcast* on the Shanghai approach to math

Listen: Andreas Schleicher: *What Are the Keys to a Successful Education System?*, Rethinking School, Ted Radio Hour (Aug. 11, 2017)

Recommended Listening: All of *Rethinking School*, Ted Radio Hour (Aug. 11, 2017)  Be prepared to discuss: If you could choose the policies for your perfect country, would you use the Chinese approach, the Indian approach, both, or neither? Why? Or is the philosophy irrelevant, because other factors are more important?
UNIT 3: EMOTIONAL AND EMPATHETIC PERSUASION IN CONTEXT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Oct. 23: What Neuroscience & Psychology Tell Us

As much as we like to think of ourselves as rational creatures, neuroscience shows us that we are far more complex.

Watch:
- P. Ditto, *How Morals Influence if You are Liberal or Conservative*, U. Cal. (Feb. 16 2016)

Read:

Recommended:

Oct. 25: Climate Change Mitigation

The Netherlands has recently changed strategies for dealing with the reality that it is already below sea level in a time of rising seas. Rather than fight the water, the country is adapting to and living with it. The academic article reviewing the policy touches on data and persuasive argument, as well as the importance of addressing issues through a specific "storytelling" lens.

Read:
- Michael Kimmelman, *The Dutch Have Solutions to Rising Seas, the World is Watching*, NY Times (June 15, 2017)
- Heroen Warner & Arwin Van Buuren, *Implementing Room for the River: Narratives of Success and Failure in Kampen, the Netherlands*, International Review of Administrative Sciences (2011) (If the link does not work, go through library.umass.edu and look for the Sage Journals in the database. Then search for this article and download the PDF).

Skim: *Room for the River Programme website*

Be prepared to discuss:
- Would you include the Dutch solution in your imaginary perfect country and/or in the United States?
- How should we deal with the psychological issues surrounding climate change?
Oct. 30: Active Listening and Empathy

Today we discuss listening and empathy, two important tools in persuading others that our policy proposals are good ones.

Read:
- Sean Blanda, *The "Other Side" is Not Dumb*, Medium (Jan. 6, 2016)

Watch: *Accidental Courtesy - Theatrical Trailer*, Vimeo, (2 min. 9 sec. Trailer for documentary)

Assignment: Try active listening in a conversation with a friend or family member and write a paragraph about how well it went. Were you able to do it? Was it awkward? Did it make you understand the other person better? Do you think it could work in your life? Do you think it could work in the wider community?

Nov. 1: Reframing the Issue

Once we understand the values of those opposing our proposed policies, we may be able to reframe our argument in a way that appeals to them.


Read:

Write: Choose an issue that about which people can disagree. It does not need to be political. We can disagree about all sorts of things, from current events to the best flavor of ice cream. Explain how you would ordinarily explain to someone why your position is correct and then think of a way to reframe that issue to explain to someone with different. This assignment will be easier to do if you talk to a classmate or a friend about something you disagree on and then think about reframing your argument to convince that particular person, but you do not need
to use this technique.

**Nov. 6: Renewable energy**

Costa Rica and Germany are generally considered leaders in renewable energy policy, and yet, both face criticism. As you listen and read the homework for today, do so critically and determine for yourself whether they are truly successful policies.

Listen to [BBC podcast on Costa Rica's renewable energy policies](https://www.bbc.com).  

**Read:**  
- Lindsay Fendt, *All that Glitters is Not Green: Costa Rican Renewables Conceal Dependence on Oil*, The Guardian (Jan. 5, 2017)  
- Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, *Green Energy for the Poor*, NY Times (Sept. 9, 2015)  

Be prepared to discuss:  
- Would you include Costa Rica's or Germany's green energy policies in your imaginary perfect country and/or in the United States?  
- Do you agree with the assessment at the end of the *Big Green Bang* article that "fossil fuels have lost?" Whichever way you respond, please tell us why you hold this opinion and what systemic implications you see from this result.  
- How would you reframe the issue to convince a fossil fuels proponent that green energy should prevail?  
- How would you reframe the issue to convince a green energy proponent that fossil fuels are still necessary?

**UNIT 4: JUSTICE AND RESISTANCE**

**Nov. 8: Intro to Justice and Resistance**

No reading. Paper due. In class, we will talk about our papers and ask what is justice.

**Nov. 10: Access to Justice**

Today we will discuss what we mean by access to justice and how we can improve this access in Uganda, India, the United States, and in a perfect country.
Read:

Listen: *My Perfect Country: Uganda, Legal Advice*

Recommended: World Justice Project, *What is the Rule of Law?* Be prepared to discuss: Would you include Uganda's or India's "access to justice" policies in your imaginary perfect country or the United States?

**Nov. 13: Protests, Boycotts, Civil Disobedience**

How successful are protests and boycotts in changing public opinion? It depends, of course, on the cause, the organizational ability of the groups, and the cultural setting in which the protests and boycotts take place. Following are articles suggesting that such tactics may have mixed success.

Read about protests:
• Micah White, *Without a Path from Protest to Power, the Women’s March Will End Up Like Occupy*, The Guardian (Jan. 19, 2017)

Read about boycotts:

Read about civil disobedience:

**Nov. 15: Criminal Justice System**

Today we discuss the criminal justice system and examine some controversial proposals. We will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of implementing these proposed policies, how they would affect the criminal justice system if they were implemented, and ways in which we could reframe the discussion so that our policies would be better understood and more likely
to be implemented.

Watch:

Read:

**Nov. 27: Art as an Instrument of Social Change**

Read:

**Nov. 29: Decriminalizing drug use and possession**

Portugal decriminalized drug use in 2001 and treats drug abuse as a health issue instead of a criminal one. Portugal has seen a significant drop in drug abuse and drug deaths since this policy change. Additional governmental social and medical support has probably also helped lower the rates of drug addiction there.

Listen to the BBC podcast on [decriminalizing drug use in Portugal](https://www.bbc.com/). 

**Dec. 4: Community Organizing**

The term "community organizing" has several connotations, ranging from groups trying to disrupt the system at a grassroots level to those that are simply trying to organize a community to solve an issue. Today's discussion brings us full circle. It touches on protest as a strategy for policy change, which is the strategic topic for this unit, and it brings us back to the definition of a community, which we discussed in the first unit. It also discusses a recent movement in community building---"collective impact"--which brings us back to the question of how we know when a policy has succeeded.
Community Engagement:

**Read:**

Collective Impact:


**Read:**

Dec. 6: Class presentations
Dec. 11: Class presentations

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).