

JHR 525 – Action Research: Health and Justice

Class Sessions Th 6:05 – 8:55 Class: Sands 225	Dr. Perla A Vargas 602.543.8224 Perla.Vargas@asu.edu	Dr. William Simmons Office: 602.543.6089 Wiliam.simmons@asu.edu
Office: Office Hours:	FAB N254 TTh 2:00 to 3:30 and by appointment	FAB N241 TTh 3:00 – 4:30 and by appointment

Course Overview

This is an action research course with an emphasis on health and justice issues in the Phoenix area. We will also explore some health issues nationally and globally, especially health inequalities in the U.S. and HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa.

This course aims to prepare students to conduct original scientific research. Such research aims to make a contribution to science, to add to the existing knowledge about the social world. Action research is also crucial in applied social justice and human rights settings. It is used by government agencies, international governmental organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for evaluating programs, assessing grant projects, developing needs assessments, and making policy decisions.

People don't usually do research the way people who write books about research say that people do research.

-- Arthur Bachrach

The instructors strongly feel that action research is a dynamic, collaborative, and open-ended process. Research questions, community partners, the scholarly literature, and practical considerations should drive the research design, hypotheses, data collection, data analysis, and the interpretation of the results. Such a process is often messy and rarely follows a linear path.

Students will work hand-in-hand with faculty and community members in designing and running a community-based research project. Students will be involved in all aspects of the project from developing the research question, to conducting a review of the relevant literature, building community partners, developing the research design, securing Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, and, if time allows, collecting the initial data.

We are strong proponents of mixed-methods research. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods have their place and researchers should have facility in both without disparaging either.

We have decided to devote almost three full weeks to quantitative data analysis with an emphasis on multiple regression techniques. Facility in these techniques will be required for understanding much of the academic literature on health and justice issues and is the most commonly used method for analyzing health and social science data. Moreover, the framework of multiple regression is quite helpful in visualizing how most empirical research is conducted. Whether we end up using multiple regression techniques in our own action research will be determined by the research questions we ask and the needs of our community partners.

This course breaks down many artificial borders that are common in university research courses. It is team-taught, learner-centered, community-embedded, inter-disciplinary, and trans-disciplinary. The success of the course will require a willingness to be respectful, open-minded, and to learn from each other. We all must do our part to make the course a success.

Course Objectives

Take the scientist. If he has matured in the scientific tradition, he is willing to give up every particular of his scientific findings (they are all preliminary, never final), but he will never give up the scientific attitude, even if a tyrant should demand it of him.

--- Paul Tillich, *Ultimate Concern*

The overall class objectives are to help you develop a "scientific research attitude" and an "action research ethos." A scientific research attitude includes a skeptical *but informed* stance toward previous research, a certain amount of hubris about your ability to contribute to scientific knowledge, a substantial amount of humility before your data, an acceptance of the provisional status of empirical results, and a strong commitment to conduct research ethically. An action research ethos reorients our thinking about research to simultaneously emphasize action, research, and participation (see Greenwood and Levin 2007, 6-7). We will work together throughout the semester to create our own understanding of these terms and their inter-relationships.

More specifically, by the end of the semester students will:

1. Have a good understanding of action research including its historical and theoretical contexts, ethical and political considerations, and an overview of major "methods" of action research.
2. Be intimately familiar with major theoretical perspectives and empirical literature in selected areas of the study of health and justice, including have a solid understanding of
 - a. current research on health disparities among various ethnic and racial groups in Arizona and elsewhere.
 - b. current research on sexual violence against migrant women and other marginalized women in Arizona and beyond.
 - c. many aspects of the HIV/AIDS crisis in sub-Saharan Africa such as the extent of the problem, current prevention and treatment techniques, and attempts at making this a human rights issue.
3. Develop a greater understanding of quantitative and qualitative research methods including having
 - a. an appreciation for the importance of mixed-methods research.
 - b. a solid understanding of multiple regression techniques that includes their strengths and weaknesses, when to run such analyses, how to run them, how to interpret computer printouts of results, and how to present such results.
 - c. acquired an increased facility in selected qualitative research techniques through reading examples of these techniques and the development of an action research proposal.
4. Will have made substantial contributions to action research projects, especially the development of a research design for dealing with health and justice issues in Arizona. Students will have
 - a. Participated in the design, planning, and implementation of an action research study, including determining a research topic related to health and/or social justice and develop research questions that need to be addressed.
 - b. Experienced the process of developing and designing participatory community research projects.
 - c. Better understood how to negotiate the ethical and political challenges in conducting action research, especially on health issues.
 - d. Gained important experience working in research teams.
 - e. Developed a research proposal based on the action research project

Reasonable Accommodations

The instructors will be happy to work with students who require reasonable accommodations for disabilities or other circumstances. Students who wish accommodations for a disability should contact DRC as early as possible to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided.

WARNING!

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism includes not only the exact duplication of an author's words but also an unacknowledged close paraphrase. When in doubt give a citation. Students are responsible for knowing and observing the ASU Student Life *Academic Integrity Code*. The introduction to this code states the following:

“The highest standards of academic integrity are expected of all students. The failure of any student to meet these standards may result in suspension or expulsion from the university and/or other sanctions as specified in the academic integrity policies of the individual academic unit. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, fabrication, tampering, plagiarism, or facilitating such activities. The university and unit academic integrity policies are available from the Office of the Provost and Academic Affairs and from the deans of the individual academic units.”

The rest of the code, which consists of several pages, is available on the ASU web page.

Course/Instructor Evaluation

The course/instructor evaluation for this course will be conducted online 7-10 days before the last official day of classes for any given semester. The use of a course/instructor evaluation is an important process that allows our college to (1) help faculty improve their instruction, (2) help administrators evaluate instructional quality, (3) ensure high standards of teaching, and (4) ultimately improve instruction and student learning over time. Completion of the evaluation is not required for you to pass this class and will not affect your grade, but your cooperation and participation in this process is critical. About two weeks before the class finishes, watch for an e-mail with "ASU Course/Instructor Evaluation" in the subject heading. The email will be sent to your official ASU e-mail address, so make sure ASU has your current email address on file. You can check this online at the following URL: <http://www.asu.edu/epouupdate/>

Course Requirements

Homework (40 Points):

I hear, and I forget;
I see, and I remember;
I do, and I understand.

---- Chinese Proverb

Research is a craft that can only be mastered through a combination of "doing" research and observing others who are good at "doing" research. Short assignments will be assigned throughout the semester to help you get a feel for conducting research and to encourage you to critically reflect on the research of others. These assignments will most likely include critical analyses of previous studies, class presentations, statistical assignments, and reflection papers.

Research Teams (50 Points): Students and faculty members will form research teams that will work together throughout the semester. The main assignment for the research teams will be to develop a

research proposal in conjunction with community partners. Groups will conduct a thorough literature review, develop theoretically informed research questions, formulate hypotheses, develop the appropriate research design, prepare the necessary IRB documents, and collect initial data (as time allows). At the end of the semester, each group will turn in a research proposal and each individual student will turn in a research portfolio that includes copies of scholarly articles, field notes, and two or three short reflective essays. More details will be provided during the semester.

Attendance at Campus / Community Events (10 Points): We are fortunate that several important speakers will be giving talks on campus or in the community during the semester on a range of health and justice issues. Students will be required to attend two of these presentations and write a three-page reflection paper on each. Students should conduct research on the topic or speaker before attending the event.

Attendance and Preparation: Class attendance is expected. Since class sessions will often be conducted in seminar or group format, attendance, preparation, and participation from all students are crucial for the success of this course. Students missing more than three class periods will have ten points deducted from their course grade. Excessive tardiness (more than 5-10 minutes) counts as an absence. Regular attendance at research meetings is also expected.

Late Papers: All late assignments, without a valid excuse, will be penalized two points per day.

Grades

Your grade will be determined as follows:

97 and above	A+	77-79	C+
93-96	A	70-76	C
90-92	A-	60-69	D
87-89	B+	Below 60	E
83-86	B		
80-82	B-		

Required Books

Campbell, Catherine. *Letting Them Die: Why HIV/Aids Prevention Programmes Fail*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003. (Paperback, \$23.95), (ISBN=0253216354).

Greenwood, Davydd J. and Morten Levin. *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, 2006. (Paperback, \$50.95), (ISBN= 1412925975).

Babbie, Research “Glossary” (Handout)

Additional short readings, especially for your research groups, will be required as needed.

Information will also be regularly posted on Blackboard.

STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO HAVE ACCESS TO BLACKBOARD!

Course Outline and Readings

Week 1, Jan. 22 Introduction to Health Inequalities

Readings: Vargas, "Social Inequalities, Social Justice and Health" (Blackboard)
WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health, "Closing the Gap in a Generation"
Video: *Unnatural Causes in Sickness and in Wealth*. California Newsreel, 2008.
<http://videocast.nih.gov/Summary.asp?File=14827> (Recommended)
Assigned: Library Research Skills (Strongly Recommended)

Week 2, Jan. 29 Conflicting Approaches to Health Inequalities

Readings: See Assignment Sheet
Assigned: Presentation on Funding Priorities for Health Inequalities

Week 3, Feb. 5 Overview of Action Research and the Historical Context

Readings: Greenwood and Levin, Chapters 1 and 16
Greenwood and Levin Chapter 17 (Recommended)
Cornwall and Jewkes, "What is Participatory Research?"
Assigned: Group Presentations on Selected Action Research Studies in Health

Week 4, Feb. 12 Action Research in Context: Ethical and Theoretical Perspectives

Readings: Greenwood and Levin, Chapters 4, 9, and 10
Wallerstein, et al., "Developing and Maintaining Partnerships with Communities"
Brydon-Miller and Greenwood, "A Re-Examination of the Relationship between Action Research and Human Subjects Review Processes"
Assigned: NIH IRB Training Certificates

Week 5, Feb. 19 Action Research as Science and Knowledge Co-Generation

Readings: Greenwood and Levin, Chapters 5-8
Tashakkori and Creswell, "Envisioning the Future Stewards of the Social-Behavioral Research Enterprise"
Assigned: Literature Review Outlines for Research Teams

Week 6, Feb. 26 Overview of Quantitative Research Methods and Multiple Regression

Readings: Grimm and Yarnold, "Introduction to Multivariate Statistics"
Licht, "Multiple Regression and Correlation"
Simmons, "Bivariate Statistics"
Simmons, "Bivariate and Multivariate Regression"

Week 7, Mar 5 Multiple Regression in Practice and Introduction to SPSS

Readings: Sample papers on health inequalities using regression
Assigned: Critical Analyses of Quantitative Research Articles
First Draft of Introduction and Literature Review for Research Teams

Spring Break March 8-15

Week 8, Mar 19 HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa

Readings: Campbell, Introduction and Parts I and II
AIDSQuest: The HIV/AIDS Survey Library, “*Behavioral and Social Theories Commonly Used in HIV Research*”

<http://www.popcouncil.org/horizons/AIDSquest/cmnbehvrtheo/index.html>

Movie: *State of Denial*, Producer/Director: Elaine Epstein

Assigned: Presentations on Selected KAPB Studies and Data Analysis of National Surveys of Adolescents

Week 9, Mar 26 Toward a More Holistic View of HIV/AIDS Prevention in sub-Saharan Africa

Readings: Campbell, Parts III and IV
Farmer, Paul, et al., 2006. “Structural Violence and Clinical Medicine” *PLOS Medicine* 3 (10): 1686-1691.

“Greiner et al., 2007. “Structural Violence and Clinical Medicine: Free Infant Formula for HIV-Exposed Infants” *PLoS Medicine* 4 (2): 394-395.

Assigned: First Draft of Research Teams’ Methodology Sections

Week 10, Apr. 2 Make-up Week

Week 11, Apr. 9 Consultants’ Review of Action Research Designs

Assigned: Short Group Presentations

Weeks 12-14 Group Research and Final Presentations