

CDAE 295 / VS 295

Local Community Initiatives

Instructor: Will “Chip” Sawyer

Fall 2009

Wednesdays, 4:05-7:05pm, Lafayette L309.

Syllabus Draft 09.01.09

Course Description

Students will take an active role in local projects addressing a variety of essential community issues in the Mad River Valley region of Vermont with our course partners, the Mad River Valley Planning District and the Valley Futures Network. Through local project work, case studies, course texts, student research and class discussions, we will learn about the different ways that community members work together to identify challenges, resources and solutions and how they envision their future.

Date	Notes	Readings	<i>Better Together</i> Case Study	Assignments DUE
Wed, 2-Sep				
Wed, 9-Sep		Kemmis Chapters 2-5		
Wed, 16-Sep	In MRV	Kemmis Chapters 6-8		
Wed, 23-Sep	No Class			
Wed, 30-Sep		Flora Chapters 1 & 12, Wolf Chapter 1 on Nonprofits		Kemmis Reflection
Wed, 7-Oct		Flora 3-Cultural, 5-Social, Shirky Chapter 2	Ch. 1 – Valley Interfaith	
Wed, 14-Oct	No Class			
Wed, 21-Oct	In MRV (tentative)	Flora 4-Human, 6-Political	Ch. 3 – Shipyard Project	
Wed, 28-Oct		Maser Chapters 6 & 7, Richardson Chapter 4	Ch. 4 – Dudley Street	
Sun, 1-Nov	In MRV 12-5pm			
Wed, 4-Nov		Flora 2-Natural, 7-Financial, 8- Built	Ch. 5 – Tupelo Model	
Wed, 11-Nov			Ch. 12 – Portland	
Wed, 18-Nov				
Wed, 25-Nov	No Class			
Wed, 2-Dec	In MRV (tentative)			MRV Group Project (Presentation Worthy)
Wed, 9-Dec	In MRV (tentative) Last Class			MRV Group Project

Readings

Required Texts

Flora, C.B. & J.L. Flora. 2008. *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change*, 3rd edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. ISBN-13: 978-0-8133-4377-8

Robert D. Putnam, Lewis M. Feldstein and Don Cohen. 2003. *Better Together*. Simon & Schuster. ISBN-13: 978-0743235471

Daniel Kemmis. 1990. *Community and the Politics of Place*. University of Oklahoma Press. ISBN-13: 978-0806124773

All texts are available in the UVM Bookstore [listed under CDAE 295 / VS 295] and at common online venues. Also available in the Course Reserves at Bailey-Howe Library.

Other Required Readings (in order of assignment) (will be up at Blackboard and/or Bailey-Howe e-reserve)

Wolf, Thomas. Chapter 1 “Understanding Nonprofit Organizations” in *Managing a Nonprofit Organization in the Twenty-First Century*, 1999. Simon & Schuster.

Shirky, Clay. Chapter 2 “Sharing Anchors Community” in *Here Comes Everybody*, 2008. Penguin Books.

Maser, Chris. Chapter 6 “True Leadership” in *Vision and Leadership in Sustainable Development*, 1999. Lewis Publishers.

Maser, Chris. Chapter 7 “Coping with the Responsibilities and Pressures of Leadership” in *Vision and Leadership in Sustainable Development*, 1999. Lewis Publishers.

Richardson, Jean. Chapter 4 “Lessons Learned about Leadership” in *Partnerships in Communities: Reweaving the Fabric of Rural America*, 2000. Island Press.

Assignments

Assignments will be made with clear expectations on content quality and due dates. It is the duty of class participants to state any questions on assignments in a timely manner.

Mad River Valley Group Projects:

This project is the source of the service learning designation of this course, and it is likely that you will learn as much, if not more, from your experience in this project than you do from reading the class texts. This project is meant to be a nexus between what you are learning in class and in your degree and what the residents of the Mad River Valley are attempting to address in their community. You will all learn invaluable information from each other.

Below are descriptions of the three project ideas as discussed so far with the VFN representatives. By 9/16, you will be organized into project groups. At our meeting in the MRV on 9/16, we will meet with the MRV partners for the first time, and then each of our class groups will meet with their MRV project partners. During these break-outs, you will clarify and finalize project deliverables with the project partners and develop memoranda of understanding (MOUs). This collaborative process will benefit the projects and your class experience as a whole.

Also on 9/16, you will exchange contact information with your project partners. Every Wednesday, after group time in class, your group will submit a weekly project update to your project partners. They, in turn, will respond with comments and questions in 1-2 days. The final presentation of your projects will take place in the MRV on 12/2 or 12/9 (TBA). Your project may also conclude by publishing certain materials online for all residents of the MRV to see and develop further after this class is over.

The Three MRV Group Projects:

A. VFN Structure Project:

1. An exploration into how and why VFN was formed, how VFN presently functions, and what strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT Analysis) benefit or inhibit VFN's future growth and effectiveness in building a healthy and sustainable future for the Mad River Valley community.
2. Initially students will conduct a site visit to the Mad River Valley and hear from organizers of VFN in a question and answer session. The purpose will be to understand and develop a case history of the organization.
3. Then students will reach out to the VFN membership at large by conducting a S.W.O.T. analysis.
4. Next students will research case studies of similar community initiatives. The primary focus will be on organizational structure. What structure works or does not work and why?
5. Finally students will provide a written report and presentation with recommendations in answer to the following question: Should VFN continue as a grassroots, volunteer, informally structured organization, or pursue a more parliamentary organizational structure?

B. Mad River Path Association Project:

1. Work with Mad River Path Association (MRPA) Board Members to compile a history and organizational case study of the MRPA's efforts to become a financially stable and sustainable organization, focusing particularly on its membership, fundraising, and grant-writing efforts.
2. Research and compile case studies of similar initiatives from around the country, with a focus on membership, fundraising and grant-writing efforts. Research how membership drives are conducted, how memberships are sustained, incentives for members, whether business memberships are offered, and so on.
3. Compare and contrast with MRPA.
4. Make recommendations for MRPA to consider going forward.

C. Renewable Energy Project:

1. Devise and implement a methodology to locate renewable energy installations in the Mad River Valley.
2. Determine counts of renewable energy installations in the MRV, broken out by type.
3. Conduct site visits to some of these installations.
 - a. Record type, location, and obtain a picture.
4. Interview owners of some installations on purpose and apparent benefits.
 - a. why they chose the particular renewable energy source, what lessons learned they have from doing the installation, and would they do it again, and if not, why not.
5. Research outreach efforts to encourage such installations across the country.
6. Compile a report of methodology, findings and recommendations for the VFN Energy Cmte Wiki.

Note: You can check out the MRV Energy Wiki at mrvenergy.org

Personal Group Project Reflection:

This piece will be done individually. I'll ask you to reflect on your group project experience and what you learned. In no more than 15 pages, please address the following questions and items:

1. How did your group make decisions, allocate tasks and bring your project together. What was group leadership like? Did it work well?
2. What of your experience working with your project partners? Did you have good lines of communicate and develop a clear understanding of the project deliverables? Do you feel like you understood the value of what you were doing for the VFN? Can you see how they will use your project results into the future? What would you have done if you had more time?
3. Choose three things that you learned from your group project and/or your experience working with your MRV project partners. Explain how each of the three either reaffirmed or challenged your preconceptions of collective community efforts to identify and tackle local issues.
4. Now that the course is nearly over, what do you think will be you most lasting impression of your project partners and the Valley Futures Network? Discuss whether or not this is a piece of knowledge that you will be able to apply in the near future.

Group Case Study Presentation:

Your group presentation of a case study in *Better Together* should address the following points and questions:

1. What was the problem being addressed by the initiative in the case study? How and by whom was the problem defined?
2. What was the organizational structure of the initiative in the case study? What are its origins?
3. What sort of resources did the initiative put to use? Financial, built, human, cultural, social?
4. What were the results of the initiative's efforts at the point that the case study ended?
5. Please summarize any other notable aspects of the initiative that stand out to your group.

Personal Reflection on Kemmis Text:

In 15 pages or less, please answer the following questions reflecting on Daniel Kemmis' book, *Community and the Politics of Place*. Due 9/30.

Go back to Chapter 2 or Kemmis. Which theory of human proximity do you agree with the most? Is Jefferson right that an open frontier is the key to peaceful discourse? Or is Hegel correct that community only begins when we force people to live in proximity? If you wish, you can choose either Madison or Jefferson's nuanced views on the "keeping people apart" side of the coin. Or is proximity a determining factor at all? Explain your answer, using examples from the Kemmis text and from your own experience.

Also, choose two other themes from the Kemmis book that you feel are essential or prerequisite for a successful community initiative and explain why.

Assignment formats:

Please submit your work with body text in 1.5 or double spaced lines, 1 inch margins, and 12 point times new roman font. You can go wild with headings, but they must be consistent. Formatting of references and citations must also be consistent.

References/Citations:

All assignments must employ a **consistent** system of citations and references that include authors, date of material, date of retrieval (if online), title, location and name of publishing company (if book), web address (if online) and other pertinent reference information.

I don't care whether you use footnotes or in-text citations for quotations and such, but they must be consistent and **must** include the page number. And all references should then be listed again at the end of the document.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. When in doubt, make a reference and citation – cover your ass!

Wikipedia: Wikipedia and other online open topic contribution collectives are great places to **start** your search for references. If you find information you want in a Wikipedia article, then follow up and verify it by perusing the references at the bottom of the article. **Those** are the sources on which to base your references and citations in your work. **Repeat: I do NOT want to see Wikipedia in your list of references.**

Course Grading Scheme

Assignment	Due	Portion of Grade
MRV Group Project	December 9	35%
Personal Group Project Reflection	December 16	25%
Group Case Study Presentation	As Scheduled	15%
Kemmis Text Reflection	September 30	15%
Participation in Class		10%
	Total	100%
<i>Please see me with inquiries about additional extra credit opportunities.</i>		

Expectations of Students and Project Partners

These are guidelines for the behavior and level of commitment of students and project partners in this class. To be discussed, revised and ratified at 9/16 meeting in the MRV.

Expectations of Project Representatives/Partners:

1. Meet with the student group 3-4 times, including when the class visits the MRV.
2. Give their phone and/or email contact info and be available for questions from the student group.
3. Respond to Wednesday student group updates with questions/comments within 1-2 days.
4. Participate in defining the purpose, expectations, deliverables and benchmarks of the project.
5. Be the point of contact for the network/organization that the project is benefiting.
6. Provide a means of making contact with any local project participants (e.g. residents to be surveyed).
7. Be respectful and receptive to student work and provide comments and questions.

Expectations of Students:

1. Meet with project partners 3-4 times, including when the class visits the MRV.
2. Give their phone and/or email contact info and be available for questions from the project partners.
3. Conduct themselves in a respectful and reflective manner at all times. Wear appropriate, non-offensive attire (hint: office-casual).
4. Collaborate with project reps/partners in defining the purpose, expectations, deliverables and benchmarks of the project and in understanding any necessary background information.
5. Submit weekly (Wednesday) group updates to the project partners.
6. Fulfill project deliverables to the best of their abilities and within the time promised.
7. Identify themselves as UVM students and be prepared to clearly and effectively explain the class and project to any study participants.
8. To communicate any project difficulties and/or limitations to the class instructor and/or project reps/partners ASAP.
9. Be thoughtful, conscientious and truthful in all research and presentation activities.

Special Health Request for Fall 2009:

You are formally requested to not attend class or any course function if you feel ill or have a fever and for 24 hours afterward. This is a good policy in any case, but is made as a special request during the ongoing pandemic of the H1N1 flu virus. The same request is being made of our project partners in the Mad River Valley. I will work out necessary arrangements and/or make-up work with any ill students.

Contact Info:

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Office Hours by Appointment, Please

Our Course *Blackboard* site:

bb.uvm.edu and then sign in with your UVM login.

Valley Futures Network website:

valleyfutures.net

Mad River Valley Planning District website:

mrvpd.org

Center for Whole Communities – Knoll Farm

wholecommunities.org

UVM Center for Rural Studies website:

crs.uvm.edu