

Interdisciplinary Studies 240 Maine Social Research
Mr. McEwen
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Office Hours: Wed 2:45 - 4

Tues, Thurs 10-11:30,

Other times by appointment

Course description

A hands-on, semester-long research experience in the local community. Students design and carry out research on different aspects of a longer term research project revolving around affordable housing, homelessness, hunger and economic insecurity in the Brunswick-Topsham area in cooperation with local agencies. The project will use a variety of research methodologies, including quantitative analysis, in-depth interviewing, observation, and use of available data and historical records. Students with methodological training in a variety of disciplines are welcome. This course may be repeated for credit with permission of the instructor.

This course centers on designing and carrying out community-based research in relation to the existing bodies of scholarly work from several disciplines and in close cooperation with partner agencies. By its very nature, field research cannot be easily scheduled over the course of a semester. As a result, students will need to be flexible as much as possible within the contexts of their own busy schedules and will need to recognize that parts of the course outline are provisional! Adjustments will need to be made as we work together in developing the research and putting it into the field.

During the semester, we will be engaged in three parallel and interconnected activities simultaneously. *First*, we will be reading, talking and thinking about issues of homelessness, affordable housing and economic insecurity – using other research to gain background and perspective and to examine policy. *Second*, each of you will be developing special expertise about a particular approach to these issues – for example, child development, family decision making, social networks, gender and family. Your growing expertise will help inform the data collection and will guide your data analysis. *Third*, we will be designing research instruments and collecting and analyzing data.

As a result, class sessions will often be divided into two or more sets of activities: 1) discussions of the reading; 2) working sessions in developing the research methods, design and instruments; 3) reporting on progress and challenges in doing the research; and 4) teaching classmates (and me) about your particular perspective on the research issues.

Community Partners

Two local agencies are the central community partners in this work – Brunswick Housing Authority (<http://www.brunswickhousing.org/>) and Tedford Housing (<http://www.tedfordshelter.org/>).

In addition, we may have contact with Volunteers of America of Northern New England (<http://www.voa-nne.org/>), the Town of Brunswick Planning Office (<http://www.brunswickme.org/planning/index.htm>), Habitat for Humanity (<http://www.habitat.org/cd/local/affiliate.aspx?zip=04011>), Midcoast Hunger Prevention Project (<http://academic3.bowdoin.edu:9780/computerscience/courses/s05/csci107a/hungerprevention/>), Avesta Housing in Portland (<http://www.avestahousing.org/>), and Preble Street (<http://www.preblestreet.org/>) among other organizations. For Regional planning and coordination on affordable/workforce housing, we may have contact with Midcoast Council for Business Development and Planning (<http://www.mcbdp.org/>).

Community Context

One immediate policy context for this research is the pending closure of Brunswick Naval Air Station in 2011. Roughly 700 military family housing units are affected by the closure. These are located both on and off the base, but the federal government owns the land that off-base units are located on and will transfer that land during the closure process. A private developer/manager owns these housing units and leases the land. Some of these housing units are in Topsham, but most are in Brunswick. The future use of these family units is at issue, as is the priority to planning for space for future housing as part of the base redevelopment.

A ‘homeless provision’ in the federal statute governing base reuse gives providers of services to the homeless a special priority in requesting facilities “to fill in gaps in the homeless continuum of care” in the local labor market. The Department of Housing and Urban Development reviews all such proposals.

For more information about surplus property and the base closing and redevelopment process, see:

<http://www.topshamlra.org/> Topsham Local Redevelopment Authority <http://www.brunswicklra.org/> Brunswick Local Redevelopment Authority

Textbook and readings

Elliot Liebow, Tell Them Who I Am: The Lives of Homeless Women. New York: Penguin Books, 1993.

David Shipler, The Working Poor: Invisible in America. New York: Vintage Books, 2004.

Robert Weiss, Learning From Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies. New York: Basic Books, 1994.

Other readings on electronic RESERVE.

Assignments, grading and evaluation:

Class participation: 10%

Short papers

Paper 1 How Housing Matters (2-3 pages) DUE SEPTEMBER 21: 12%

Paper 2 Statement of research focus and interest with beginning literature review (4-5 pages) DUE OCTOBER 12: 13%

Completion of class exercises (e.g. writing workshop on data analysis (November 19) and of field research (interviews and transcripts/coding): 20%

Presentations of work to class and community partners: 10%

(includes an executive summary or poster to present results of final research paper to community partners)

Final research paper (roughly 20 pages) DECEMBER 11: 35% of grade

Citation and academic honesty

I expect that all of the work that you do will be your own (sometimes in collaboration with others – more on this later) and that you will provide clear citations to sources that you use in your work. The format for citation is up to you. But your choice should be among well-recognized styles in the disciplines or the Chicago Manual of Style (http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html). Because many of you are psychologists or sociologists, you will probably choose APA style (<http://www.liu.edu/cwis/CWP/library/workshop/citapa.htm>) or ASA style (<http://asanet.org/page.ww?section=Sociology+Depts&name=Quick+Style+Guide>). As you presumably know, Endnote is available to help with citation. It may be especially helpful in preparing your final paper.

You will be working with others in designing and carrying out research and, perhaps, in small groups, in analyzing aspects of the data. By and large, ideas that emerge in such groups are community property and do not require citation. On the other hand, a classmate or friend might provide you an important insight or observation that you would want to footnote.

If you are in doubt on any of these issues, be sure to ask me your questions!

Blackboard

I will use Blackboard to post announcements and assignments. Reserve readings and other course materials will be available through the Blackboard Web site (<http://blackboard.bowdoin.edu/>). Please let me know if you have any difficulties getting access to materials.

If you have questions for me on course organization or course content, please post them in the Blackboard Discussion board for the course. We will discuss in class other possible uses of the discussion board.

To submit your *first two papers*, please use the Digital Dropbox area of the Interdisciplinary Studies 240 Blackboard site. (**Note:** In order to send a paper to me, you have to do **two** things: first **Add the File** to the site, and then **Send the File**. Just adding the file will not submit it.). Please submit the final research paper on paper!

Course Outline

- September 3 Introduction of issues
 Liebow, Introduction, pp.1-4 and Chapter 7, pp. 223-234
 Shipler, Introduction, pp. 3-12
- Introduction of research
 Affordable Housing and America's Future Panel
 Discussion, MacArthur Foundation
 http://www.macfound.org/site/c.lkLXJ8MQKrH/b.2506557/k.DD61/Affordable_Housing_Housing_and_Americas_Future_Panel_Discussion.htm
- September 5 Introduction of housing and homelessness issues continued
 Liebow, Chapter 1, pp. 25-49
- Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, "The State of the Nation's Housing" 2007, (pp. 1-4) RESERVE
- Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, "America's Rental Housing: Homes For A Diverse Nation" (pp. 4-7, 16-19) RESERVE
- National Alliance to End Homelessness, Homelessness Counts, pp. 1-16 <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/1440>
- Research questions on housing
- September 10 Work and Economic Insecurity
 Shipler, Chapter 1, pp. 13-38
 Shipler, Chapter 2, pp. 39-76
- Interviewing
 Weiss, Introduction, pp.1-14
 Edin and Lein, "Interview Topics," Making Ends Meet
 RESERVE
- September 12 Work and Economic Insecurity continued
- Shipler, Chapter 5, pp. 121-141
 Shipler, Chapter 10, pp. 254-269, 282-284

Liebow, Chapter 2, pp. 51-79

Abi-Habib, et al, “Wave 3 Interview” RESERVE (focus on sections I - M of interview)

Research questions about work, resources, expenditures

September 17

Children

Shipler, Chapter 6, pp. 161-173

Shipler, Chapter 8, pp. 201-230

Evans, “The Environment of Childhood Poverty” (pp. 77-92) RESERVE

Research questions about children

September 19

Family and friendship networks

Liebow, Chapter 3, pp. 81-114

Liebow, Chapter 5, pp. 151-188

Shipler, Chapter 7, pp. 174-200

Research questions about family and support networks

SEPTEMBER 21 PAPER 1 DUE

September 24

Income and other supports for families

Stoker and Wilson, “Work Support Programs,” pp. 27-63
RESERVE

Qualitative interviewing— selecting respondents and designing the interview

Weiss, Chapter 2, pp. 15-35

Weiss , Chapter 3, pp. 39-59

Research questions about other income supports and resources

September 26

Other research -- samples

Popkin, et al. “Decade of HOPE VI: Research Findings and Policy Challenges” (Chaps. 1-5, pp. 1-33) RESERVE

Meeting the Local Partners

John Hodge, Brunswick Housing Authority

- November 5 The Ethos of Neighborhood
 Low, “The Edge and the Center” (pp. 45-58) RESERVE
- November 7 Homelessness policy
 O’Connell, M. E., “Responding to Homelessness: An
 Overview of US and UK Policy Interventions” (pp. 158-
 170) RESERVE
- November 12 Housing policy in the United States
 Rice and Sard. “The Effects of The Federal Budget
 Squeeze on Low-Income Housing Assistance.” RESERVE
- November 14 Poverty concentration and housing policy
 Goetz, “Case for Deconcentration.” From Clearing the
 Way: Deconcentrating the Poor in Urban America (pp.
 24-41) RESERVE
- “Voices of Cabrini” videotape (in class) (RESERVE)
- November 19 Workshop on interpreting and presenting qualitative (and
 quantitative) data
- Bring to class 2-3 pages of data presentation and
 interpretation for “workshopping”**
- November 21 Thanksgiving**
- November 26 Student Presentations
- READING TBA
- November 28 Student Presentations
- READING TBA
- December 3 Student Presentations (to community partners?)
- December 5 Reflecting on community-based research
- DECEMBER 7 SERVICE LEARNING SYMPOSIUM 2-4 p.m.
 Class poster??**

DECEMBER 11 FINAL PAPER DUE!