

UMBC UGC New Course Request: PUB 304

Date Submitted: 10/13/09

Proposed Effective Date: Spring 2009

	Name	Email	Phone	Dept
Dept Chair	Roy Meyers	meyers@umbc.edu	52196	POLI/SOND
Contact				

COURSE INFORMATION:

Course Number(s)	PUB 304, to be crosslisted with participating departments, such as POLI, AMST, GES
Formal Title	Community Research
Transcript Title (≤24c)	Community Research
Recommended Course Preparation	Previous completion or concurrent enrollment in a social science major's core methodology course
Prerequisite	Two social science courses; GPA equal to or above 3.0; permission required
Credits	3
Repeatable?	x <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Max. Total Credits	6
If yes, how many total credits?	
Grading Method(s)	X only <input type="checkbox"/> Reg (A-F) <input type="checkbox"/> Audit <input type="checkbox"/> Pass-Fail

PROPOSED CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

This course will involve undergraduate students in a team-based project to generate field research findings useful to a government or non-profit client/partner. The policy areas to be researched will include environment, health, housing, poverty, and urban development, among others. Team participants will include teaching and research faculty and staff, advanced graduate students, and a Sondheim Program-based Peacemaker. Undergraduates will contribute to the research design and to the preparation of the research findings, and will conduct extensive field research. They will build practical research skills and engage with members of local communities.

RATIONALE FOR NEW COURSE:

UMBC's undergraduate students in the social sciences should be encouraged to participate in research and supported in these efforts. Guided undergraduate research on possible methods for ameliorating social and environmental problems would enhance UMBC's contribution to the state and would inspire students to continue in this activity as advanced students and in their careers. Sondheim Program students are heavily engaged in community service as a cohort in the freshman year, and maintaining cohort involvement with the community would be desirable.

The course would likely be taught each year. With sufficient interest from a group of faculty, it could be taught every semester; several faculty have expressed interest when they could fit this course into their teaching schedules.

The course is intended to jointly support the goals of the Sondheim Program, various social science majors, and UMBC's research institutes and centers that specialized in the social sciences. The primary student populations to be served are: sophomores and juniors in the Sondheim Program, for whom the

course will be strongly encouraged; other strong students in the social sciences.

ATTACH COURSE OUTLINE (mandatory):

We have just made an informal agreement with the Baltimore City Public School System to conduct research through this course format in the spring. Our goal will be a feasibility assessment of creating school gardens in each BCPSS school, with an emphasis on pedagogical functions and volunteer support for such gardens. Since we have just concluded talks to select this topic, at this stage, I cannot provide a syllabus. We will be working on it over the next several months as we do preliminary research.

The course this year will be co-taught by Bernadette Hanlon of CUERE and Roy Meyers of POLI/Sondheim, and will engage a group of other interested faculty.

Main topic and weekly assignment schedule, citations for readings, explanation for how students' knowledge and skills will be assessed:--all will vary by year, particularly readings.

Basic framework, though, will include:

Coverage of several research literatures relevant to the policy issue or research problem. Some provided by instructors and clients; others searched for by student teams.

Review of the pros and cons of some alternative research designs and methodologies for addressing the research question. Exposure, when relevant, to the fundamental logic of relevant quantitative analytical methods, though not to their sophisticated details.

Familiarization with relevant ethical principles and practices, including IRB training and HSR protections.

A relatively long period of field research, likely in several stages, with iterative learning about research questions, protocols and instruments.

Report writing and editing. Possible participation in public release of findings.

Assessment: regular short writing assignments; field research reports; participation in class discussion; self-evaluation and evaluation by fellow undergraduate team members; possible term paper.