

HOD 2620: ACTION RESEARCH

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Tues/Thurs 2:35 to 3:50
Room 122 Wyatt

Course Description

This course is an applied course combining a set of principles on collaboration, power and change with research methods and skills in an effort to effectively address “real world” problems. Action research is a core course in the Community Development and Social Policy Track of the Human and Organizational Development major.

Course Overview

Regardless of the setting in which the HOD major is applied, solving problems in organizational and institutional settings will be required of almost all HOD graduates. Action research is an approach applied in diverse settings; for-profit, non-profit and public sector settings all use action research approaches. This course will address theoretical and conceptual issues of problem solving in a community context, and provide hands-on experience in a community problem-solving process. While the course is community-focused, the principles inherent in this process are applicable in diverse settings.

Action research draws solidly on empirical methodologies, but combines this orientation with processes that seek to identify diverse stakeholders, involve multiple parties, collaborate with all involved and apply knowledge generated to changing social conditions which are thought to lead to problems or difficulties. Action research approaches are often presented in an idealized way; action research must be highly sensitive to context. Furthermore, action research, as an approach that ultimately seeks to create change, necessarily must confront issues of social power. Students are expected to combine their conceptual learning with applied participation in community contexts to give them “hands-on” experience in carrying out action research.

Course Objectives

At the completion of this course students are expected to demonstrate:

1. An understanding of the principles to community-based action research.
2. An understanding of the basic steps in designing and carrying out action research.
3. An understanding of how data can be feedback to stakeholders in a way that is both interpretable and offers the greatest potential for action.
4. Skills in data collection and data analysis
5. An understanding and sensitivity to power dynamics imbedded in organizational, institutional and community contexts.
6. Awareness of ethical, gender, racial and ethnic issues imbedded in research processes.

Readings

We will use a textbook to guide our basic understanding of action research through the course. This book will be supplemented by readings and videos through the semester. The text we will be reading is:

Greenwood, Davyd, & Levin, Morten. *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Grading

Grading will be based on two sources:

1. **Assignments.** There will be 5 assignments based on analyzing community data. We will draw on Nashville data to complete these assignments. Each assignment will be worth 15% of your grade, making these assignments worth 75% of your overall grade.
2. **Applied work.** The applied work (an action research project) will represent 25% of your grade. Because of the dynamic nature of this applied work, the specific requirements and format for this grading will be provided as the applied work becomes solidified. It is expected that you will spend at least 30 hours outside of class on your applied work.

Action Research Project

Our class will be working Tying Nashville Together (TNT) and the Organization for Affordable Rentals (OAR) this semester. We will meet with representatives of these organizations and develop our action research project in collaboration with them.

COURSE CALENDAR

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments Due
January 12	Introduction		
January 17	What is Action Research?	Greenwood: Chap. 1	East St. Louis/TNT
January 19	LAB: Data gathering/structure		Lab: Census data
January 24	Traditional research methods	Greenwood: Chap. 4	
January 26	LAB: Census data		Lab: Census data
January 31	Epistemology	Greenwood: Chap. 5	
February 2	LAB: Census Data		Lab: Excel work
February 7	Collaborations	Greenwood: Chap. 6	
February 9	Power		Assignment 1: Census
February 14	Local knowledge	Greenwood: Chap. 7	
February 16	LAB: Segregation		Lab
February 21	Data Feedback for change	Tufte principles	
February 23	LAB: Data synthesis		Lab
February 28	Triangulation methods	Greenwood: Chap. 8	Assignment 2: Housing
March 2	LAB: Data Analysis / SPSS		Lab
March 14	Interpreting Data	Greenwood: Chap. 9	
March 16	TNT/OAR work		
March 21	TNT/OAR work		Assignment 3: Segregation
March 23	LAB: violent crime		Lab
March 28	Human Inquiry	Greenwood: Chap. 12	
March 30	LAB: regional variation		Lab [TRISH has LAB]
April 4	TNT/OAR work		Assignment 4: MSA
April 6	LAB: data presentation	Tufte: powerpoint	Lab
April 11	Organizational Learning	Greenwood: Chap. 11	Assignment 5:
April 13	TNT/OAR work		
April 18	TNT/OAR work		
April 20	Draft presentation		
April 25	Presentation		Final Project Due