Proposal for an Upper Division Cluster Course

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USP 450  Concepts of Citizen Participation
Winter Term
Healthy People/Healthy Places Cluster
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Concepts of Citizen Participation explores issues associated with civic involvement. The course explores the health of a community as expressed through the involvement of its citizens in community decision processes. The design and implementation of citizen participation programs, and the experience of cities in the Portland metropolitan with participatory efforts will be critically analyzed. Efforts to enhance participation as a strategy to improve the health of the community as well as of individuals are stressed.

This is an existing course. There is material in it that addresses the value of civic involvement. This material will be augmented to highlight a perspective on the health of social and political systems that fits the cluster theme.

Inquiry and Critical Thinking: Students will critically analyze the role of citizens in community decision making, and critique existing avenues of citizen participation. Contemporary theories regarding the importance of social capital for the health of local polities will be discussed.

Communication: The course will stress skills associated with group and meeting facilitation, and interviewing and active listening. Students will write place profiles and public involvement plans.

Human Experience: The course will survey the diversity of experience regarding participation in the political life of a community. Students will study diverse learning and presentation styles, and the origins and resolution of conflict at the community level.

Ethical Issues and Social Responsibility: The responsibility of members of a community to each other as expressed in the political system is a central element in this course. The ethical implications of different methods for involving citizens in decision making will be stressed. Students taking this course should be knowledgeable about ways of enhancing participation, and should be ready and able to assume leadership roles in community decision processes.

Topical Outline:

1. The Value of Civic Involvement
2. The Case Study

3. Existing Institutions and Processes for Involving Citizens

3. Designing and Implementing Public Participation Programs

4. Facilitating/Conducting Groups and Meetings

5. Presentation of Case Study Results and Public Participation Programs