





Master of Arts Interdisciplinary Studies (MAIS) 604

Planning and Action for Community Change (Revision 3)

Status:

Replaced with new revision, see the [course listing](#)  for the current revision 

Delivery mode:

[Grouped study](#) 

Credits:

3

Area of study:

Arts

Prerequisites:

None

Precluded:

None

Faculty:

[Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences](#) 

Notes:

Students in Group Study courses are advised that this syllabus may vary in key details in each instance of the course. Always refer to the Moodle site for the most up-to-date details on texts, assignment structure, and grading.

Overview

Planning and Action for Community Change delves into the underlying intellectual traditions of community studies and introduces you to the realities of community practice. The central idea of the course is that planning for action, particularly action resulting in community change, is something to be desired in a society that values rationality. In this course, we will draw on a number of academic disciplines that provide a theoretical as well as practical basis for understanding change at the community level. We will apply planning theory from traditions of sociology, political science, and psychology to real organizations in local communities, using theories of practice of community social work and action research. Four traditions of planning provide the framework of the course:

1. social reform
2. policy analysis
3. social learning
4. social mobilization

These traditions cluster into two divergent intellectual positions (Campfens, 1999, p. 26), which we will call

I. *technical reason*, which is manifest in programs of social reform and the practice of policy analysis

II. *social transformation*, which is manifest through social learning and the processes of social mobilization

This theoretical framework will facilitate a deep understanding of how planning for community change takes place from the highest planning authority to the most spontaneous of grassroots groups. Examining these traditions in the light of actual conditions in real communities will facilitate your critical analysis and teach you alternative options and tactics for community change.

Outline

Part I: Theories of Planning for Community Change, consists of six units:

- Unit 1: Background and Foundations of Social Action and Community Change

- Unit 2: Social Reform and Community Change
- Unit 3: Policy Analysis and Community Change
- Unit 4: Social Learning for Planning and Action
- Unit 5: Social Mobilization
- Unit 6: The Interaction of the Four Traditions of Community Change

Part II: Community Change in Action

Outside of the constraints of a textbook, the results of planning for change are infinitely fluid and disorderly. In this second half of the course, you will have the opportunity to spend several weeks drawing on planners' and activists' personal experiences, the internet, library resources, and public documents to compare and contrast change processes in real communities in the context of the four traditions. You will do this by discussing your Reflective Essay and by preparing and discussing your Final Essay outline and ongoing development of your Final Essay.

Discussion should help advance the work each student is doing by providing insights (from course materials and themes, experience, or research), by sharing research resources, by identifying problems or challenges that one is encountering in the research and writing process, and by sharing solutions or examples to other problems. It is important to remember that the themes we have explored in the course and the two broad areas of technical reason and social transformation can guide us through these collaborative and peer learning processes.

Learning outcomes

The course provides students with:

1. a comprehensive method for the understanding of community change processes,
2. a historical context for modern approaches to planning and action,
3. an approach for making current case material accessible for analysis, and
4. a theoretical basis for planning and practice of community work.

Evaluation

To receive credit for this course, students must participate in the online activities, successfully complete the assignments, and achieve a final mark of at least 60 percent. Students should be familiar with the Master of Arts—Interdisciplinary Studies **grading system** [↗](#). Please note that it is students responsibility to maintain their program status. Any student who receives a grade of "F" in one course, or a grade of "C" in more than one course, may be required to withdraw from the program.

The following table summarizes the evaluation activities and the credit weights associated with them.

Activity	Weight
Online Participation	30%
Assignment 1: Reflective Essay	30%
Assignment 2: Final Essay	40%
Total	100%

Materials

Digital course materials

Links to the following course materials will be made available in the course:

Banks, C. K., & Mangan, J. M. (1999). *The company of neighbours: Revitalizing community through action-research*. University of Toronto Press.
(Optional Text)

Campfens, H. (Ed.). (1999). *Community development around the world: Practice, theory, research, training*. University of Toronto Press.

Murray, R., Caulier-Grice, J., & Mulgan, G. (2010). *The open book of social innovation*. Nesta.

Physical course materials

The following course materials are included in a course package that will be shipped to your home prior to your course's start date:

Friedmann, J. (1987). *Planning in the public domain: From knowledge to action*. Princeton University Press.





The course materials for **MAIS 604: Planning and Action for Community Change** include the items listed above (except for the optional textbook, which you may purchase on your own).

Athabasca University Online Materials

Course Home Page: You will find the Course Information, the Study Guide, presented unit by unit, and the assignment descriptions and instructions with upload links to submit your work to your professor on the course home page.

Athabasca University Library: Students are encouraged to browse the Library's website to review the Library collection of journal databases, electronic journals, and digital reference tools: <http://library.athabascau.ca> .

Important links

- › [Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies](#) 
- › [Focus Areas](#) 
- › [Courses](#) 
- › [Fees and Funding](#) 

Athabasca University reserves the right to amend course outlines occasionally and without notice. Courses offered by other delivery methods may vary from their individualized study counterparts.

Opened in Revision 3, May 16, 2021

Updated February 5, 2025

View [previous revision](#) 