

COMMUNITY POWER RESEARCH PAPERS

You will write 2 research papers for this course. You will choose a topic, choose from a list of methods (or approach me with a different idea). *****The key here is that each paper should address community power at a different level of analysis – SO your first paper could be about a topic at the level of the city, or the local government more generally; your second paper could be about a topic at the level of the neighborhood/community/small organization or at the level of the individual – or informal political action.***** You may keep the same topic in both papers, just examining it from a variety of scalar perspectives, or you can switch topics for each paper.

Getting started: TOPIC.

This may be the hardest part. You can begin thinking about these papers from a million different places. Consider these ideas, for starters: You could be interested in a place (exs: Fredericksburg, DC, Albuquerque), or a group of people (exs: people living with HIV/AIDS, recent immigrants, animals) or a specific issue area (exs: hiking/biking trails, sports development – like baseball team for Fredericksburg or Olympic development in Boston, small business initiatives – like Main Street Initiative, policing issues – like community responses to police-initiated violence/shootings or community-oriented policing, the Black Lives Matter movement, Occupy movement at a local level, immigrants' rights movements in a particular locale, quality of life campaigns, reactions to gentrification). Pick something that sounds *interesting* to you.

Next: METHOD.

You may choose from this list of methods, or you may propose an alternate method to me. You may use the same methodology for each paper – on the same topic or on different topics. Or you may mix up methods, according to what seems like the best fit. Having trouble making decisions, or thinking about "best fit"? Come see me.

1. **Field work.** Pick site(s) where you could observe your topic effectively. This can include meetings (city council? Planning? Court?) that are open to the public, as well as neighborhoods, public spaces, etc. Expect about 6-8 hours/field work. Take good field notes, in-depth (guidance will be provided on canvas). Write your findings up, in depth, along with your analysis. What did you learn about your topic through this field work?

2. **Academic literature review.** Identify and read 5+ academic/scholarly sources on your topic. Discuss them thematically in a traditional literature review. What do scholars say about your topic?

3. **Cultural content analysis.** Identify several items within a particular pop culture medium (movies, songs, tv shows, fiction, advertisements) that address your topic. Engage in content analysis of these items. Write up what you found – focusing primarily on what you learned from this analysis, by key themes. What is several? It depends on your medium. But in order to do this kind of analysis, you need to be able to describe THEMES, so no less than 3 movies, no less than 7-10 of anything else.

4. **Community engagement.** You will be collecting observational data (participant-observation, in fact) while working with a community organization of some type, engaging in their work. For instance, you could work with Virginia Organizing, perhaps, on whatever issue they are currently engaging. Or you could volunteer with a local organization – anyone doing work that is really local (not necessarily Fredericksburg – you can choose another community, so long as you do your work during this course.). Consider the need to engage with this organization (and conduct observations while doing it) for maybe 6-10 hours.

5. **Photo/video project.** Use a combination of your own photos/video and photos/videos taken by others (so long as you provide proper attribution). Gather visual “data” about your topic – choose thoughtfully, and annotate your choices. In other words, you will provide a textual narrative to explain to the viewer what you have gathered, and what you learned about your topic from this visual evidence. I do not have a strong idea of “how many” items would be sufficient – look at the other options and consider an “equivalent” amount of work.

6. **Historical documents analysis.** Identify historical, primary sources you would like to examine to shed light on your project: these could be news articles from a given time period/place on your topic; they could be city planning documents and/or maps, or any other kinds of primary documents of this source. You’ll want to identify enough pieces of evidence that you have a solid contribution to make; then in your paper describe what you’ve found and explain what it tells us about your topic.

THE PARTICULARS:

A. Each paper should be 5-8 pages long. Use (relatively) formal language, double-spaced and reasonable margins and fonts. Be sure to use the “necessaries” of college writing: introduction with thesis, and a conclusion. Always proofread: never submit anything you’ve not proofread.

B. Submission to class blog with an ABSTRACT: You will submit these projects to the class blog: but they will be quite a bit longer than is really manageable in a typical blog post. So, you need

to write up a ONE-PARAGRAPH ABSTRACT of your project. (Summarize your project, key findings in that paragraph) Post that to the class blog. Use tags, if you'd like! Make your abstract engaging, encourage your peers to read it! And then you need to embed your larger document/project at the end of your abstract, so that we may click on your link/file to read/view your project in its entirety.