

## **LARC 2.0 Inquiry-Based Curricular Innovation Proposal** *How to Measure Social Change*

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Course Redesign & Inquiry-Based Module

Sociology Elective 300-level – “Social Change”  
College Colloquium – “No Justice, No Peace!: Constructing and Contesting Social Problems”

I am applying for a LARC curricular innovation grant to redesign a 300-level elective for the department of sociology: “Social Change” will be a significant revision and expansion of my course “Sustainability, Justice & Society” taught in Spring 2015. As part of the redesign I will develop an inquiry-based module on “How to Write a Research Proposal” which I will also use in my college colloquium course. Additionally, I will make the module available to all sociology and college colloquium professors and post a “best practices” page on the sociology website.

The main questions addressed by the “Social Change” course include: What is social change? How does social change happen? And how do we measure social change? Students as scholars will be expected to write a research proposal which focuses on measuring some aspect of social change. The research proposal – in the form of scaffolded assignments – will be the primary mode of assessment for the course.

### **GOALS OF THE INNOVATION**

- *Discovery of Scholarship:* Students will review what qualifies as credible, empirical evidence by (1) discussing case studies on social and environmental justice and (2) comparing publically available data with their own empirical observations at a service learning site. Students will also write an annotated bibliography and literature review which draws from and categorizes empirical information from academic sources.
- *Scholarly Inquiry:* Students will learn to articulate and refine an engaging research question, identify a data source or setting, evaluate ethical concerns related to their data collection, and design an appropriate methodology that answers their research question.
- *Creation of Scholarship:* Students will complete preliminary data collection/analysis when appropriate to their research topics and consider the implications of their research to both sociology and the real world when they write up their expected findings.

Many sociology students want to know how to make the world a better place, but have little understanding of how social or institutional change happens. Also, sociology majors need more experience thinking about how to design their own projects and writing up research proposals – which is revealed in their senior seminar proposals. My goal is to fulfill both of these needs while also resolving the “interest gap” which created difficult classroom dynamics in my previous course “Sustainability, Justice & Society” (Spring 2015). Half of the students were passionate about the environment and the other half were taking the course for a 300-level credit. By broadening the topic of sustainability to encompass social change I hope to bridge that gap. The course will include case studies that bring together: social justice (race, class,

gender, and sexuality); environmental justice (labor, health); and mechanisms of social change (social networks, institutional change, policy reforms, technology). Writing a research proposal will allow students to pursue a topic that they are personally passionate about, resulting in a greater sense of co-ownership of the course.

I also plan to incorporate a service learning component into this course with the Marion-Polk Food Share (MPFS). The MPFS has a long relationship with Willamette University in terms of opportunities for individual internships and organizing one-time visits or work days. I plan to work with them to design an academic service-learning platform that will engage a whole class of students for the entire semester. Students will get a sense of empowerment and creating change, while also studying it.

### **WORK PLAN**

Over the summer of 2016 I will:

- Explore how other sociologists are teaching social change and gather syllabi
- Gather and synthesize resources to help undergraduates write research proposals
- Read new works in the literature and identify key case studies
- Write up and refine informational handouts, assignments (and scaffolding), and assessment rubrics
- Make the course content relevant to the West Coast and the Pacific Northwest
- Develop a service learning component with the Marion-Polk Food Share

### **IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE**

In the short term, I plan to use the research proposal module to:

- Add content to the sociology department's website about how to write a research proposal for all Willamette University undergraduates (Summer 2016)
- Revise the written directions we give senior sociology majors about how to write a senior thesis proposal (Summer 2016)
- Teach my college colloquium students how to write a research proposal and refine the inquiry-based module (Fall 2016)
- Make the research proposal module available to all college colloquium and sociology professors (Fall 2016)

In the long term, I plan to use the full course redesign to:

- Teach the redesigned "Social Change" at the 300-level in the Fall of 2017 (delay due to mini-sabbatical in Spring 2017)
- Teach the "Sociology Senior Seminar" with the theme social change (TBD)
- Teach "Navigating Social Worlds" using the research proposal module (TBD)

### **BUDGET**

Course Redesign Stipend	\$4000
Lunch for meeting with the Marion-Polk Food Share	\$100
Books, printing research proposal materials	\$100