

Carleton University
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
SOCI 4171/ANTH4171
Community Engagement Capstone
Tuesdays 11:35am to 2:25pm
In-person

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Office Hours: by appointment (in person or via Zoom)

Carleton University acknowledges the location of its campus on the traditional, unceded territories of the Algonquin nation. In doing so, Carleton acknowledges it has a responsibility to the Algonquin people and a responsibility to adhere to Algonquin cultural protocols.

Course Description

Explore how community engagement can **advance social change, racial justice, and equity**. This capstone course offers an interdisciplinary and critical approach to community-engaged research, grounded in **anti-racist, feminist, and participatory methodologies**.

What you'll explore:

- The principles and practices of community engagement
- Power dynamics in fieldwork and collaborative research
- Comics and collaborative ethnography as tools for storytelling and activism
- Conversations with scholars and/or activists, especially those working in Latin America
- The challenges and possibilities of inclusive, justice-oriented engagement

What to Expect

This capstone is a space for critical inquiry, creative practice, and ethical engagement. You'll participate in vibrant discussions, reflect deeply on your role as a researcher, and collaborate on hands-on projects that bridge theory and practice.

Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this course, learners will be able to:

- **Critically engage with community-based research methodologies** by developing a nuanced understanding of their ethical, political, and relational dimensions.
- **Interrogate the researcher-participant dynamic** with attention to power, accountability, and positionality in community-engaged scholarship.
- **Assess the potential and limitations of participatory research** to foster transformative change across diverse social, political, and geographic contexts.
- **Apply anti-racist, feminist, and decolonial lenses** to evaluate the scope and implications of conducting research *with* communities rather than *on* them.
- **Demonstrate socially accountable scholarship** by articulating how ethical engagement and methodological reflexivity contribute to de-extractive, reciprocal research processes.

How we will learn? Pedagogy of Liberation: Voice, Respect, and Solidarity

This course follows a **student-centered approach** grounded in relationality, reflexivity, and co-creation. The classroom becomes a shared space where learners' voices and their critical role in constructing meaning are at the heart of the educational experience.

Learners are invited to take active responsibility for their engagement and pace, contributing to a vibrant, reciprocal learning community. Together—students and instructor—we cultivate an environment rooted in **horizontal relationships**, built on mutual respect across cultural, sexual, racial, political, and religious differences.

As an **Afro-Latin feminist scholar**, I approach teaching as a **practice of liberation and transformation**. Drawing inspiration from bell hooks' *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), this course explores the deep connections between lived experience, critical theory, and collective action for social change.

To support this vision, we will:

- Engage in **critical dialogue, reflexive writing, and interactive activities** that challenge dominant narratives and promote diverse forms of knowledge.

- Foster **peer-to-peer learning and shared leadership**, recognizing each participant's unique contributions.
- Create space to ask difficult questions, while **affirming the complexity of our identities, experiences, and perspectives**.

Course Structure

This course is organized around **weekly thematic modules**, each building upon the last to foster a cumulative and interconnected understanding of community engagement. The themes draw from diverse interdisciplinary sources and remain flexible to adapt to students' feedback, questions, and learning needs.

Throughout the term, students will be expected to actively participate in:

- **Guest speaker dialogues** exploring the blurred boundaries between research, activism, and creative expression.
- **Critical assessments of real-world community-engaged projects**, including:
 - *Yanomami the Good Project*
 - *Surviving Memory in Postwar El Salvador Partnership Project* Students will engage directly with principal investigators and simulate funding review panels to evaluate project impact and ethics.
- **Exploring of comics and collaborative ethnography** as tools for storytelling, memory work, and participatory action research—featuring materials like *Historieta Doble*.
- **Focused conversations on Latin American contexts**, emphasizing transnational solidarity and justice-oriented engagement.
- **Classroom discussions** based on lectures, guest speaker presentations, readings, films, and documentaries
- **Critical engagement** with course materials through a lens of reflexivity and shared inquiry

Adjustments to the syllabus and weekly dynamics may occur in response to the collective rhythm and evolving needs of our classroom community.

Reading (s) and Audiovisual Material

- You are not required to buy any textbook for this class. Required readings for this course, including journal articles or book chapters, will be posted on ARES (accessed through our Brightspace course). All the readings are listed in the course schedule below.
- Weekly assigned readings might be changed to reflect learners' areas of interests after consultation with them.

- Links to assigned documentaries, YouTube or TED talk videos will be posted on our Brightspace course.

Resources for your positionality assignment:

- Crenshaw, Kimberley. 1990. Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford law review*. 43 (6):1241-1299.
- <https://youtu.be/ViDtnfQ9FHc> Crenshaw, Kimberley
- Potts, Alina, Harriet Kolli & Loujine Fattal. 2022. “Whose voices matter? Using participatory, feminist, and anthropological approaches to centre power and positionality in research on gender-based violence in emergencies.” *Global Public Health*. 17(10): 2530-2546.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2001. Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment. New York: Routledge. Introduction
- Misawa, Mitsunori. 2010. Queer race pedagogy for educators in higher education: Dealing with power dynamics and positionality of LGBTQ students of color. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 3(1), 26-35.
<http://libjournal.uncg.edu/ijcp/article/view/68>

Digital Resources and Requirements

You will need:

- Digital access to Brightspace (<https://brightspace.carleton.ca/>)
- MS Office 365 (Students have free access to MS Office. Link: <https://carleton.ca/its/ms-offer-students/>)
- PDF Reader (part of your browser, Adobe Acrobat, or Mendeley, etc.)

Consultation with Instructor

To schedule a meeting, please email me to arrange an appointment. I offer both **in-person consultations** and **Zoom meetings**, depending on your preference and availability. I will make every effort to respond within **48 hours** on regular working days. **Please note:** messages sent over **weekends or holidays** will be answered on the next business day.

AI use in this course

Learners may use AI tools for basic word processing and formatting functions, including:

- Grammar and spell checking (e.g., Grammarly, Microsoft Word Editor)
- Basic formatting and design suggestions (e.g., Microsoft Word’s formatting tools, PowerPoint Design editor)

Documenting AI use: It is not necessary to document the use of AI for the permitted purposes listed above. If you have questions about a specific use of AI that isn’t listed above, please consult your instructor.

Why have I adopted this policy? This policy ensures that student voices and ideas are prioritized and authentically represented, maintaining the integrity of the work produced by students while allowing basic support to enhance clarity, correctness, layout, and flow of ideas. The goal of adopting a limited use of AI is to help students develop foundational skills in writing and critical thinking by practicing substantive content creation without the support of AI

Citation Style

The Chicago author-date citation style (17th edition) is to be used in the assignments and papers of this course. For more information, please see:

https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html

Course Evaluation

Course Timeline of Assignments

- **Week 4 (Jan 30)** – *One-Page Proposal* (5%) Submit a one-page proposal with title, five Ws, and preliminary references.
- **Week 6 (Feb 13)**– *Community-Engaged Project Assessment #1* (10%) Group assessment of the *Yanomami: The Good Project*.
- **Week 8 (Feb 27)** – *Positionality Statement* (15%) Reflect on your positionality, intersectionality, and how they shape your research.
- **Week 10 (Mar 10)**– *Community-Engaged Project Assessment #2* (10%) Group assessment of the *Surviving Memory in Postwar El Salvador Partnership Project*.
- **Week 11 (Mar 20)** – *Decolonized Scholarship Blog Post* (10%) Write a blog post engaging with two readings and connect them to your project.
- **Week 12 (Mar 26)** – *Community-Engaged Methodology Paper* (15%) Submit an 800 word paper analyzing your chosen research methods.
- **Final Weeks** – *Final Capstone Project + Presentation* (25%) Submit your final research plan (paper, poster, podcast, or video) and present in class.

Attendance & Participation (10%)

This course values **active participation and collective learning**. Your grade will reflect both attendance and the quality of your engagement. To succeed, you are expected to:

- Attend each class regularly.
- Come prepared, having read and reflected on the assigned materials.
- Contribute thoughtfully to discussions by raising questions, connecting readings to your own experiences or projects, and engaging critically with course themes.

Participation is not only about speaking often, but about demonstrating **careful preparation, respectful listening, and meaningful contributions**. As part of this requirement, you must

prepare **one or two questions** for each of the two Guest Speakers, showing engagement with their expertise and the course topics.

Assessing Two Community-Engaged Projects (20%)

Due Week 6 and Week 10

This assignment is designed to foster **co-learning and peer-to-peer teaching**. Working in groups, you will critically assess two case studies:

- *Yanomami: The Good Project*
- *Surviving Memory in Postwar El Salvador Partnership Project*

Each group will take a position:

- One group will highlight the **strengths and potentialities** of the project.
- The other group will analyze its **limitations and challenges**.

Your assessment should consider:

- The project's nature and objectives
- Methods and governance philosophy
- Outcomes and impacts

Groups will **defend their positions respectfully**, using informed questions and arguments grounded in at least **three course readings**. The instructor will provide an initial guiding question, and as the course progresses, students will co-create additional questions to build a shared **critical assessment tool**. This tool will later be used to evaluate classmates' final projects.

The presentations are an opportunity to demonstrate your ability to:

- Critically engage with course materials
- Collaborate effectively with peers
- Defend arguments with evidence and clarity
- Contribute to a respectful and intellectually rigorous dialogue

Decolonized Scholarship Blog Post (10%)

Due: March 20 (Week 11)

This asynchronous assignment invites you to reflect on the responsibilities of decolonized scholarship—specifically, the need to engage, care, and build solidarity in community-based research.

Task:

- Write one **blog-style post** (600–800 words) that engages with **two of the four required readings** for the week.
- Connect the insights from these readings to your own project or research interests.
- Demonstrate how you are thinking about strategies to avoid reproducing oppression and critically analyze the possibilities and challenges of community-engaged research for transformative change.
- After posting, you are required to **respond to one peer’s blog post** with a thoughtful comment that extends the discussion.

Final Capstone Project (60%)

The capstone project is your opportunity to explore a **community-based research project** that connects directly to the themes of this course. Ideally, this project will be based on work you are doing (or hope to do) with a community, social organization, NGO, or similar group.

Your final submission should demonstrate:

1. Reflection on your **positionality** and how it shapes your research process.
2. A **theoretically informed methodology** for community-engaged research.
3. Awareness of the **challenges** of conducting community-based research.
4. Critical analysis of its **limitations and potential** to foster transformative change.

To support your progress, the project is broken into smaller assignments:

1. One-Page Proposal (5%)

Due Friday, Jan 30 (Week 4) Submit a one-page proposal outlining your research plan. Include:

- Title
- The “five Ws” (what, who, why, when, where)
- A preliminary list of at least 5 references

You will share your proposal in class for peer review, using bell hooks’ concept of “**critical affirmation**”—a process of offering constructive critique rooted in respect, collaboration, and solidarity. After feedback, submit the final version to Brightspace. *Format: Word document, font size 12, single-spaced.*

2. Positionality Statement (15%)

Due: February 27

You are required to reflect on what **positionality** and **intersectionality** mean to you, and how these concepts relate to conducting community-based research. This assignment requires time and self-reflection. You will examine your social location, privileges, prejudices, assumptions,

and intersections of vulnerability in order to create a theoretically informed positionality statement. Make sure to **elaborate on how your positionality could influence your work and why this reflection is important to carry on community-engaged research.**

This statement should connect theory with practice and may also serve as a useful document for future applications in community engagement or academic contexts.

Format: Word document, font size 12, single-spaced.

3. Community-Engaged Methodology Paper (15%)

Due Friday, March 27 (Week 12) Write an 800-word paper analyzing the research methods you plan to use. Explain why these methods are appropriate for your project and how they align with your conceptualization of “community-engaged research”

- Include at least 10 references (3 may be from assigned course readings).
- Use proper citations. *Format: Word document, font size 12, double-spaced.*

4. Final Research Plan + Presentation (25%)

Due at end of term Your final submission may be a written paper, poster, podcast, or video, accompanied by an in-class presentation. It should include:

1. Title
2. Project description and research questions
3. Reflection on positionality
4. Description of the community/organization and its socio-political and economic context
5. Methodological approach and rationale
6. Identification of potential challenges
7. Proposed solutions or strategies to address those challenges
8. Reflection on the relevance and limitations of community-based research in confronting oppression and fostering change
9. References (Chicago style)

Assessment Criteria

Your work will be evaluated on:

1. **Evidence of Reading** – Demonstrates engagement with course materials and independent research.
2. **Understanding** – Shows critical grasp of issues in community-based research and complexity of your case study.
3. **Analysis** – Reflects strong critical thinking, clear purpose, and originality.
4. **Presentation** – Delivered in PPT format (or equivalent), well-organized, accessible, and visually clear.
5. **Referencing** – All sources properly cited and listed in Chicago style.

Submission

All visual or written components must be submitted electronically via Brightspace.

Submission Guidelines & Late Policy

All assignments must be submitted through Brightspace. Submissions via email or other platforms will not be accepted unless explicitly authorized in advance.

Late Submissions:

- Assignments submitted after the deadline will incur a penalty of **5% per day**, up to a maximum of **4 days** late.
- After **4 days**, the assignment will receive a grade of zero unless prior arrangements have been made due to exceptional circumstances.
- Technical issues are not considered valid excuses for late submission—please ensure your work is uploaded well before the deadline.