

Design and Evaluation of Sustainable Community Projects

Course Syllabus

Schedule: Varies per semester. Class sessions are 3 hours each with a 15-minute break in the middle.

Lead Instructor: Daniel Bryan, daniel@pachaysana.org

Co-Instructors: Daniel Acosta, Will Waters

Office Hours: Anytime outside of normal class hours. Just ask.

Course Description

Each semester international students work on ongoing community-based projects while designing new ones. All projects must be carried out according to well-studied and effectively practiced methodologies in design and evaluation. This course takes students and their local counterparts through the different phases necessary for effective design and evaluation of a development project. It also requires students to view projects as a holistic and humanistic process that seeks social, economic, environmental and cultural sustainability. We approach projects from the grassroots, treating them as acts of community-based creativity and topics are chosen by students and their counterparts based on conflicts, needs and opportunities existing within our host community. Together they identify the problem/need, develop an idea and create a proposal with goals, objectives, plans, budget, etc. All the while they are exploring the project as small-scale community development yet unmistakably interconnected with a globalized reality. The cohort is divided into small groups and each one creates a project, which can be related to any community issue and might fall within such areas as public health, education, housing, basic amenities, agriculture, small business, etc. Specific readings are assigned to both international students and community counterparts to discuss the practice and importance of designing and of evaluating projects, and each group must carry out self-directed readings that go along with their selected topic.

Note: Each semester, this course works in tandem with one of the two creative classes, which serve as qualitative research tools (in essence, in the methodology-based course, we rehearse the problems and potential solutions). Such coordination encourages the cohort to use participatory methods with the community at large, thus more immediately examining the potential for sustainable implementation.

General Objective:

Students and their counterparts develop knowledge, skills and practical experience in designing and evaluating sustainable projects, focusing on a small-scale community development undertaking, yet understanding that undertaking as interconnected to a complex development system.

Specific Objectives

By the end of this course, students and their counterparts will have the knowledge, skills and/or experience that allow them to:

- Understand each component of the project cycle, from its planning stages to the evaluation stage.
- Identify and evaluate common problems in each stage of project cycle.
- Identify the humanistic qualities of development and how we can approach grassroots development projects more holistically
- Apply the contentious issues studied in our other classes to practical, real-world projects. (For example, some issues are “self vs communal identity,” “access & control over natural resources” and “contrasts between local & global realities in the development discourse”)
- Suggest strategies and practical tools for improving local development project implementation, sustainability and evaluation.
- Work more effectively with a community (and in teams) in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of a Sustainable Community Project.

General Content

The course begins with an exploration of development theories and they relate to grassroots community development practices. It then dives deep into what it means to create a project as a collective and how projects are not just a series of plans and activities that seek to achieve measurable goals. Then, the course transitions to a survey of the Project Cycle and a dialogue on the complexity of how each component is intricately tied into the others. Next, each part of the project cycle is addressed and practiced: 1) Problem Analysis (identification, characterization & diagnosis), 2) Goals/Objectives as related to community participants (or “beneficiaries”), 3) Sustainability (Financing opportunities, partners, etc.), 4) Action Plan, 5) Budget/Financial Plan, and 6) Evaluation Plan. After a series of presentations, we select one or two projects for implementation in coordination with the community at large.

Evaluation:

In each part, students and their counterparts create a written design of the project component. All three components form the grassroots project proposal.

Project Component 1 – Identifying the collective dream	20%
Project Component 2 – Goals, Objectives and Participants (beneficiaries)	20%
Project Component 3 – Action Plan with Budget and Evaluation Plan	20%
The Minga	20%
Final Presentation	20%

The Minga is an Andean practice in which the entire class comes together for a collective/communal workday. Students participate in the day’s activities and write a reflection. It should be no less than 1000 words and include references to the course readings.

The final presentation is a live presentation of each group’s project. Students are required to write a final reflection of no less than 1000 words and include references to the course readings.

Readings:

- Alarcón Costa, Cesar Augusto. (2001). *Al futuro con la microempresa: de país de desempleados a patria de emprendedores*. Raíces.
- Altmann, Philipp. (2017). “Sumak Kawsay as an element of local decolonization in Ecuador.” *Latin American Research Review*. 52(5), pp. 749–759
- Castillo, Edgar and Carlos Quesada Carvajal. (2001). *Manual de Capacitación para emprendimientos rurales*. Centro Internacional del Desarrollo Rural.
- *Dragon Dreaming: Diseño de Proyectos*. Ebook Versión 2.09. Dragon Dreaming.

- Mollison, Bill. (2002). *Introducción a la Permacultura*. Tagari.
- Ruiz, V, O. Nirenberg and J. Brawerman. (2003). *Programación y Evaluación de Proyectos Sociales: Aportes para la racionalidad y la transparencia*. Paidós Iberica.
- Pereira, José. (2009). *La fiesta tradicional popular del Ecuador*. Ministerio de Cultura.
- Weber, Gabriela. (2011). *Debates sobre cooperación y modelos de desarrollo: Perspectivas desde la sociedad civil en el Ecuador*. CIUDAD.
- Yunus, Muhammad (2008). *Hacia un mundo sin pobreza*. Andrés Bello.