

Final Project Proposal

Due at 5 pm on November 1st, 2017

5 points

As we discussed in class, many of you were interested in developing a case study of a real-life social system. I am open to other ideas you may have had since then as well, so you are not limited to this format. I hope that you will use this opportunity to explore something you are interested in. The goal of this proposal assignment is for you to articulate your ideas for your project to me so that we both know where you are going with it and I can give you formative feedback to guide you moving forward.

Please include the following using the headers provided:

Driving question and context

Explain the question or questions that will direct your inquiry and the particular topic you will engage with or context in which this inquiry will be situated.

Project plan

Provide a detailed outline of what it is you want to accomplish. This should include a description of the format and content of the finished products you plan to produce. You should also describe the intended audience for your products. In other words, who (besides you) might use it?

Relevance to the course

Briefly describe how your project is relevant to this course. You should explain how it fits into the broad field of systems thinking and, more specifically, what concepts or tools you intend to employ in your project.

Criteria for success

Please describe your goals for the finished product and how you want to be graded for this assignment. This should include specific criteria for a successful product related to content, scope, writing, etc. The final submission is worth 30 points, so you should articulate how you want those points to be distributed. I know this is probably new for many of you, but try your best and I will let you know if you are way off.

Next steps: Snowball activity

In your group of two, develop a list of responses to the following questions. If there is overlap in individual responses, consolidate the ideas where appropriate.

1. (HW Q3) Given everything you've learned from class readings, your work, and what was shared in class, what is your most pressing question about systems thinking at this point?
2. (HW Q3) What do you think would be the best course of action to address your question?
3. (HW Q4) What else would you like to know by the end of the semester?
4. (HW Q4) Is there something you would like to produce by the end of the semester?

Gallery Walk Responses

What are strategies for better representing the interests of students in setting course policies, content, and assessment?

- Shared norms
- Include more applications of theory
- Incorporate more student feedback
- Request more student feedback (midterm assessment)
- Once you've asked for their interests, take action and implement
- Give students choices (assignment, in-class examples)
- Ask what questions the course needs to answer in order to feel it has been of value to them
- Mid-semester low stakes
- Evaluations/feedback
- Feedback assessment loop
- Build in areas of flexibility to give students choices
- Empathize with their day to day struggles reflected in course
- Invite them to the table- pre-course design and mid-semester feedback.

In what ways might the interests of teachers and students be in conflict?

- Teachers may focus more on theory, students on application
- Teachers may have more insightful than students in terms of what is actually needed. But teachers don't always know student's constraints
- Especially in intro classes. Students may prioritize "easy A" material over a challenge
- Students are focused on short term, faculty on long term
- We know good learning is effortful, they want learning is effortless
- Coverage of the course content
- "just want to pass" vs. "want to learn"
- Methods of teaching/learning and a lack of transparency for why

Challenges/tensions in negotiating student and teacher interests and power relations?

- Meeting proscribed objectives and goals
- Learning vs. assessment
- As a teacher, I fear losing control of the class- things could get chaotic and or unruly and no one will learn.
- There is an inherent power difference between students and teacher and the ultimate outcome for students' grades
- Fear of bad course evals and grade appeals
- Students are not always capable of making learning-based decisions

Strategies for negotiating conflicting interests in course planning

- Solicit feedback from past students
- Being reflective and constantly experimental
- Allowing negotiations and making it happen
- Allow students to choose how their grade is calculated
- Processing student feedback with them quantifying, responding, transparency

Gallery Walk Responses

- Be mindful of language used with students

Tensions/Challenges in power relations

- Scarcity mindset
- Grading
- Grading vs completing
- Tradition
- Race/class/gender dynamics
- Trust/mistrust
- Instructor as authoritative figure in the teaching process
- Students who lack a background in power relations like 1st and 2nd semester college students have no concept of personal power or worth
- Competition
- Competency based programs

Strategies for giving students more power

- Co-design and facilitate and grade
- Set their own course objectives
- Use students as role models to get stuff across
- Autonomy in assignment/graded course reflections
- Needs assessments
- Choose format of expression for assignments
- Put down the rope
- Flexible deadlines
- Instructor and student set up together classroom rules and guidelines for navigating difficult discussion
- Providing choice
- Explaining why and asking for feedback/suggestions relevant to the why
- Ask them what they want to learn/how they want to learn
- Emphasis on trying for correctness the first time

In what ways can we better align our ethical commitments to students with our planning practices?

- Create an explicit list of our ethical commitments for direct comparison to our plans
- Transparency in why structures exist.
- No textbooks unless open source
- No out of class activities
- Objective grading...share rubrics with students
- Demo/model behaviors we expect
- Flexibility of the course (in line with student's cultural identity)
- An unwavering belief that everyone has the capability to learn
- Ask them
- Make ethical commitments explicit. Explain why. Ask for input.

Gallery Walk Responses

What are your ethical commitments in course planning?

- Planning to be inclusive of diverse cultures/religions, universal course design
- Patient safety (live animals)
- First gen/low income solidarity
- Sensitivity to cost/fit in selection of learning resources (and commercial interests)
- Anti-racist pedagogy
- Student agency
- Deep student learning for later professional use
- Fair grading practices
- Meeting the needs of a diverse intellectual development group
- Decolonial praxis
 - Design
 - Readings
 - Assignments
 - Grading
 - Pedagogy
- Student preparedness
- Get to know students
- Dispense knowledge