

Course ID and 6-digit Number: URBS 178-401

Course Description and Level

No prerequisites.

One goal of this seminar is to help stimulate a radical transformation of the Penn undergraduate experience – a transformation in which undergraduates would, in the first instance, significantly, appropriately, and actively participate in the construction and operation of the seminars and courses in which they are members, and secondarily, in the construction and operation of all aspects of the undergraduate experience. Another goal of the seminar is to help students develop their interactive, democratic, empathetic, and altruistic values.

The main long-term goal of the seminar is to contribute to the radical transformation of research universities to function as democratic, civic, and community-engaged institutions dedicated to advancing learning and knowledge for democracy, social change and the continuous betterment of human life. William R. Greiner, former president of the University at Buffalo, wrote, “The great universities of the twenty-first century will be judged by their ability to help solve our most urgent problems.” In this seminar students will spend significant time discussing the ways in which universities could and should work to solve those problems.

Class Structure for Fall 2021

- We will meet for seminar W 1:45-4:45. Seminar will consist of whole-group and small-group discussions, as well as time for research groups to work together and meet with the teaching team.
- Students will respond to discussion questions in Canvas, and their questions will be used as the basis for small- and whole-group discussions in class.
- Once students have begun their research projects (we encourage but do not require group work), they will schedule the necessary interviews throughout the week.
- Students will work with high school students at Netter’s partner schools for approximately one hour/week. Penn students will provide guidance about the college application process using a set of structured materials. Preparation for and reflection on this work will take place every week in class.
- Schedule reflecting the workload for a typical week
 - THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY/SUNDAY, MONDAY: Read assigned texts and respond to reflection questions, and others’ responses, in Canvas.
 - TUESDAY: Written reflections on the readings due.
 - WEDNESDAY: Seminar.
 - MONDAY-FRIDAY: Students will work with high school students; schedule TBD.

- MONDAY-FRIDAY: Once students begin their research projects, significant time each day will be dedicated to interviews, traditional research, group meetings, and writing.

Outline of Assignments and Assessments

- For the first half of the semester, students will submit weekly reflections in response to the prompts provided by the teaching team.
- Once students begin their research projects, they will have several written assignments designed to help them complete their projects.
- The culmination of the students' work is the PSL (problem-solving learning paper). The PSL is a proposal aimed at solving a problem, either on campus or involving the Penn-West Philadelphia relationship. The mark of a successful PSL is its implementability.

Essential Course Policies

- There is one text, *Knowledge for Social Change* (Benson et al.), which can be accessed through PennText and/or ordered from Amazon. All other readings can be found on Canvas.