In a world of power, conflict, and interdependence, community development planners and planning analysts of many kinds need to learn in practice all the time. These planners work in-between many interested parties. They need not just to listen to what stakeholders claim—but to listen for underlying issues of significance and value too.

This seminar will explore the worlds of community development and planning by examining the experiences of practitioners in diverse planning fields as they have confronted the challenges and obstacles of their practical work. How can we learn from planners’ and organizers’ efforts to encourage participatory processes (or community mobilization)? Throughout, we will examine the problematically deliberative character of community development and planning practice: who’s involved and who frames agendas, who’s playing catch-up and who’s not?

Our readings will combine applied and theoretical work on “practice” (rhetoric and negotiation, interpretation and judgment, narrative and recognition) with analyses of democratic deliberations (ethics and argument, participation and identity, historical trauma and working-through, and more). Taken together, these readings provide the basis for an analysis of planning and community development practices that we can call a “critical pragmatism”: “critical” because sensitive to issues of power and ethics, and a “pragmatism” because it helps us to assess issues of concrete, situated action in planning and related political processes. We will examine problems of deliberative learning and practice in a range of cases of students’ interest.

This seminar reflects several agendas: preparation for research (and/or doctoral exams) for students with an interest in the politics of community development and planning and critical theories of planning and education, and introduction to theoretical and empirical work underlying the study of planning and organizing practices. The course should familiarize Ph.D. and Masters students (in community development, planning and related applied fields) with social and political theories relevant to assessing plan and policy implementation (and “what practitioners do.”)

Throughout the term we will also focus upon practical problems of research and interviewing: how can we explore “power” or “participation,” for example, through field interviews and oral histories? How can such interviews lead and not just follow from ‘theory”? How can such interviews teach us about planning practice itself? Building on the instructor’s research, we will complement broader “theoretical readings” with successive chapters of The Deliberative Practitioner (MIT 99).

Readings will also be made available for copying in a packet.

Schedule of Meetings and Readings

   (Launching your projects: bringing critical analysis to bear via accounts of engaged practice— assessing and learning from insiders’ stories, and cultivating surprise, insight, and seeing in new ways. Have a look at our new "Profiles of Practitioners" site:
   http://instruct1.cit.cornell.edu/courses/practicestories/index.htm
2. Tues. Feb. 1 Power, Rationality and Deliberative Practice
(Identifying a Mentor? Who would be fascinating to interview? Who faces, everyday, the problems you'd really like to learn about?)

Read:

(Continue your search for practice-wise interviewees, begin to use our Profiles site:
http://instruct1.cit.cornell.edu/courses/practicestories/index.htm)

Read:

4. Tues. Feb. 15 Stories and Ethics, Listening and The Politics of Attention
(Scheduling and Interviewing)

Read:
"From Conflict Generation Through Consensus-Building Using Many of the Same Skills: A Profile of Frank Blechman" (J. Forester, ed. CRP, 2003).
"Dispute Resolution Meets Policy Analysis, or Native Gathering Rights on "Private" Lands: A Profile of Peter Adler (J. Forester, ed. CRP, 2004)"

5. Tues. Feb. 22 Studying Cases: Listening To And Learning From Stories
(Scheduling and Interviewing)

Read:

6. Tues. Mar. 1 The Rationality of Listening In Complex (Messy) Cases (Interviewing)
Read:

7. Tues. Mar. 8 Doing Things With Words: Argumentation, Deliberation and Practice (Interviewing)
Read:

8. Tues. Mar. 15 Presumptions and Critical Pragmatism ("good judgment"), and/or the “Fallacy of Misplaced Abstraction” (Discussion of Completed Interviews)
Read:

Mar. 22  Spring Break  (and transcribing)

9. Tues. Mar. 29 Ritual As An Infrastructure of Democratic, Participatory Learning (Transcribing and more transcribing)
Read:
Barbara Myerhoff, "Life History Among the Elderly: Performance, Visibility, Re-

10. Tues. Apr. 5 Deliberation, Mediated Participation, and Learning About Value (not Values!)
(Discussion of using transcripts, finish transcribing.1)
Read:
John Forester, "The Promise of Activist Mediation in Planning and Public Management," The Deliberative Practitioner, Chap. 6.
Bent Flyvbjerg, “Power has a Rationality that Rationality Does Not Know,” Chap. 20 in Rationality and Power, 1998. pgs 225-237. •

11. Tues. Apr. 12 Deliberation, Ritually Safe(r) Spaces, and Recognizing Loss (1)
(Discussion of using transcripts, finish transcribing.2)
Read:

12. Tues. Apr. 19 Recognizing and Representing Loss (2)
(Begin discussion of completed interview transcripts/analysis)
Read:
Jerome Groopman, “Dying Words,” New Yorker, 10/28/02. pgs. 62-70. •

13. Tues. Apr. 26 What Do We Mean When We Say, “Democratic”?
(Discussion of completed interview transcripts/analysis)
Read:

14. Tues. May 3 Interdependence and Possibilities of Moral Deliberation
(Discussion of completed interview transcripts/analysis)
Read:

15. Monday May 9 Papers Due, 5pm, 111 West Sibley
(Please double-space, use 12-point font, check that the conclusion answers what the introduction poses as questions and that the body, the interview and your analysis, supports your conclusions...