

CE250/HN202: Intro to Community Studies Fall 2025

This class meets in person at **SAS 303 on Monday and Wednesday from 2:30-3:45 p.m.**

Your instructor is **Michaela Saunders** (Mik-uh-luh/she/her), Lecturer of Leadership Studies in the Aleshire Center for Leadership and Community Engagement. Drop by with questions at her office **Plas 211** or on **Zoom** during office hours: Monday 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.; Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 9-11 a.m., or by appointment.

Office Hours Zoom: <https://washburn.zoom.us/my/saundersm>

Phone: 785-670-2005

Email: michaela.saunders@washburn.edu

Course Description

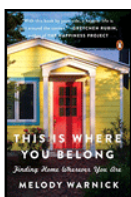
This course is an introduction to the interdisciplinary academic discipline of *community studies*. Topics include the importance of understanding self and place, theories of community change, basic community-based research methods, and the importance of civic engagement.

Student Learning Objectives

On successfully completing this course, all students will be able to:

1. **Analyze** the term *community* as well as articulate how community is connected to identity and social categories of difference.
2. **Apply** basic social science theories to understand community-identified issues.
3. **Use** basic ethnographic and community-based research methods to study a community.
4. **Justify** the importance of community and place in civic engagement work.
5. **Evaluate** written, oral (and/or visual information), evidence, and argument for reliability and authority (and/or usefulness). Examples of sources listed include but are not necessarily limited to the following: observation, testimony, measurement, and experimental research.
6. **Analyze** own and other's assumptions systematically and methodically and evaluate relevance of contexts when presenting a position.
7. **Develop** well-supported, clearly articulated argument(s) to support a stance and use to justify one or more conclusions.

Textbooks



This is Where You Belong by Melanie Warnick, 2017. New York: Penguin Press. ISBN: 9780143129660.

Additional readings and course materials will be available as links or PDFs on D2L.

Course Requirements

Participation and Attendance	100 points
CEL Activities and Journals	300 points (@ 10 x 30 points each)
Essay: What is Community?	100 points
Census and Neighborhood History Report	100 points
Community Asset Map	100 points
Neighborhood Ethnography	300 points
<hr/>	
Total	1000 points

Grading Scale

900-1000 points = A
 800-899 points = B
 700-799 points = C
 600-699 points = D
 599 points or fewer = F

Note: Washburn does not utilize +/- grades.

Participation and Attendance

Excellent	Very good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Always attends every class session well prepared for class. Evident student has completed all reading assignments prior to class. Exhibits positive, supportive attitude toward course and class members. Consistently contributes meaningfully to class discussions and activities	Participation is as good as one receiving an excellent rating, but one or two elements are not quite at an excellent level	Participation is generally similar to one receiving an unsatisfactory rating, but there are one or two elements which are relatively well done	Does not attend class on consistent basis. Never prepared for class; evident student has not completed reading assignments prior to class. Exhibits negative attitudes toward course and class members. Does not contribute to class discussions or in-class activities

The instructor will define the various ways participation points will be earned including (but not limited to) taking attendance, assigning in-class pop quizzes, quick written reflections, etc. These in-class activities may not be made up if missed due to their participatory nature.

Community-engaged Learning Activities and Journal

To deepen our understanding of our community, each student will participate in community-engaged learning (CEL). CEL is teaching approach where students get hands on educational experience working in the community to deepen their classroom learning and draw connections between their learning inside and outside of the classroom. The projects you will undertake this semester with your community partners address community-identified needs. The goal of CEL is

Washburn University Aleshire Center for Leadership and Community Engagement

to help you learn and simultaneously have a positive impact for the community partners and the individuals they serve.

This semester, you will be able to preference different elements of a project with neighborhood partners serving Topeka's Central Park neighborhood. Additionally, you will learn about Topeka's neighborhoods and have the opportunity to attend neighborhood meetings, go on tours of their neighborhoods, conduct interviews with NIA officers and create materials to share your learning and experiences with others.

Remember that you are a guest in neighborhoods you visit, and an ambassador for WU. You should model professional behavior (e.g., practice punctuality, have a positive attitude, demonstrate initiative, follow through on tasks, etc.) Community partners will be asked for feedback at the end of the semester. These assessments will be considered in the overall grade for the project. Students will also evaluate their community partners through their reflection journals discussed in further detail below. Students will be responsible for arranging transportation to and from the sites. I encourage students to carpool or take mass transit and consider transportation when choosing their placement site. If you have questions or concerns, please come and speak with me earlier rather than later.

A significant amount of learning happens when we are asked to critically reflect. To that end, you will complete short weekly reflection papers in response to a prompt on D2L. Many of the prompts will ask you to collect and analyze data related to your community partner or neighborhood so be sure to review the prompts well before deadline. Each journal should be 200-300 words and should show you are grappling with the course material – drawing from lecture, readings, and videos as well as your CEL work. Your journal can be typed directly into the submission portal, or you can type it in Word and then copy and paste it into the submission portal. Journals should be reflexive (i.e., it's OK to write in first person) and show you are making connections between class content and your work in the community. Finally, be sure you fully engage with part of the prompt each week.

There are a total of 12 reflection journal prompts. Among them, 10 will count toward your final grade. If you complete 11 or 12 journals, your lowest one or two grades will be dropped, respectively. We will draw from these journals and your CEL experiences in our in-class discussions about the connections between what you are experiencing at your community site and what we are learning in class.

Essay: What is Community?

In this thesis-driven essay, you will synthesize what you have learned about *community* in the first six weeks of the course to answer the question: *what is community?* In supporting your thesis, you should draw on class materials (readings, films, etc.) and cite relevant sources. This is a formal academic essay so your prose should reflect that tone and audience. Unless your major requires another style convention, you should use APA 7. Information is available on D2L to support you in learning these conventions.

Census and Neighborhood History Activity

To help us learn more about the neighborhoods in which we work and live, we will use census and historical data to construct a profile of the neighborhoods in which we are working. This will

Washburn University Aleshire Center for Leadership and Community Engagement

be a team-based assignment that culminates in a team grade. More information about the assignment is available on D2L.

Community-asset Mapping Activity

To augment the quantitative data from the U.S. Census (and other sources) used in creating your team's neighborhood profile, you will also work with your team to create a community map that focuses on assets in your neighborhood. This will be a team-based assignment that culminates in a team grade. More information about the assignment is available on D2L.

Neighborhood Ethnography

Your team will create an ethnography of your neighborhood incorporating the information you learned this semester from the census, neighborhood asset map, your fieldwork in the community, your community-engaged learning, and other multimodal data collection activities. Your team will turn in your ethnography as well as give a presentation about your ethnography in the community for our partners and other guests. A portion of your grade for this assignment will be connected to a peer evaluation and another to a self-evaluation.

*Note: CE250 was originally designed by Dr. Jason Miller. This iteration builds on his work, and I am grateful for his permission to adapt it.

Course Policies

Classroom Environment and Expectations

This course involves self-directed reading, written work, self-assessment, a group project, and discussion/participation activities. You'll find supplemental materials for our course, including readings, a copy of this document, and more in our D2L space. Be sure to check D2L and your email regularly for announcements and other important messages.

You are grown and responsible for yourself, and how you carry yourself. Be respectful in your interactions in the classroom and with your community partners. It is my intent that you are well-served by this course and that materials and activities are respectful of diversity in all forms: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, faith tradition, and culture. I believe each of us has a right to learn free from dignitary harm. This means we will listen to each other to learn, rather than listening to respond. Disagreement is acceptable, disrespect and dignitary attacks are not.

Furthermore, I intend for our learning environment to support a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and honor your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.) To help accomplish this:

- If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official records, please let me know.
- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, you are welcome to share this with me.
- If something was said in class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it.
- Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for others.

Academic Impropriety

All students are expected to conduct themselves appropriately and ethically in their academic work. Inappropriate and unethical behavior includes (but is not limited to) giving or receiving unauthorized aid on examinations or in the preparation of papers or other assignments or knowingly misrepresenting the source of academic work. Washburn University's Academic Impropriety Policy describes academically unethical behavior in greater detail and explains the actions that may be taken when such behavior occurs. For guidelines regarding protection of copyright, consult <http://www.washburn.edu/copyright>. For a complete copy of the Academic Impropriety Policy, visit: <http://www.washburn.edu/academic-impropriety>.

AI Use

Use of AI tools: Generative AI tools (ChatGPT, Gemini, etc.) may be used for brainstorming purposes on course assignments. However, any use of such a tool requires fact-checking, in-text citation if the ideas are included in your work, and an **Acknowledgement of AI Use statement** at the end of your work. An example of such a statement can be found at <https://students.unimelb.edu.au/academic-skills/resources/academic-integrity/acknowledging-AI-tools-and-technologies#examples>. It is not acceptable to use AI tools for essays, which are intended to demonstrate your personal ability to apply what you have learned in this course. Passing any AI generated work off as your own is cheating, plagiarizing, and unethical behavior, which has consequences for both your personal character and the value of a Washburn degree. Academic dishonesty also has consequences as explained in the student handbook.

Written Work

Writing is an important aspect of this course. This crucial skill will be sharpened throughout your college experience. Academic writing includes a subset of skills we will practice in this course, including critical analysis, citation, and adherence to our discipline's style: APA 7. As such, all of your assignments should be typed and submitted to the appropriate D2L dropbox. Follow the APA 7th edition style guidelines for written assignments. (What's APA 7? https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/index.html) Concerned about writing? Talk to me! Also, Writing Center tutors can offer suggestions.

Extra Credit

Periodically, extra credit opportunities will be offered at the sole discretion of the instructor. To take advantage of an extra credit opportunity, attend the event or complete the activity. Then, write up a 2-page paper where you discuss a) the event you went to or activity you completed and what you learned at the event/activity and b) how the event or activity relates to something we have discussed in class. Turn in your extra credit paper before the last day of class for 10 extra credit points.

Course accessibility and accommodations

The Student Services Office is responsible for assisting in arranging accommodations and for identifying resources on campus for persons with disabilities. Qualified students with disabilities must register with the office to be eligible for services. The office MUST have appropriate documentation on file to provide services. Accommodations may include in-class note takers, test readers and/or scribes, adaptive computer technology, and brail materials. Requests for accommodations should be submitted at least two months before services should begin; however, if you need an accommodation this semester, please contact the Student Services Office immediately. Students may voluntarily identify themselves to the instructor for a referral to

Washburn University Aleshire Center for Leadership and Community Engagement

the Student Services Office. Contact accommodations@washburn.edu or visit Plasm 316. If you have a request in progress or are considering making a request, please let me know.

Navigate

Students are encouraged to download the Navigate mobile app to assist with navigating their pathway to graduation. Navigate is a communication, academic and career planning tool that is increasingly used at Washburn University to help students graduate on-time. <http://www.washburn.edu/navigate>

Incomplete Grades

Incomplete grades are given when a student is unable to complete a small portion of the course assignments for "good reason." This usually means a documented medical or family emergency has prevented you from completing the final assignment(s). Incomplete grades are awarded at the sole discretion of the instructor. The student must meet with the instructor before the last day of class and sign an incomplete contract. The instructor must submit grades to the University Registrar's Office using an "Incomplete Grade Report Form" by the grade submission deadline of the subsequent Spring semester for Fall incompletes or the subsequent Fall semester for Spring and Summer incompletes; otherwise, an "F" grade will be recorded.

Because I know you're not *just* a student

Tips to help you prioritize your wellness and basic needs to ensure you can show up your best

- **Be open to new ways of thinking.** This course is a bit like a buffet restaurant. There is a little bit of everything to introduce you to many ideas. Just like most buffets, you might not like everything or might prefer some aspects a lot more than others. That's OK!
- **Keep track of assignments.** We're doing to do a lot of work in this course. There are several deadlines you'll want to be ready for. We're also going to practice community work in this course, which can be messy.
- **Keep in touch.** There are going to be unexpected hurdles in this work. That is ok. Be open and direct with me when you are confused, or not sure how to move forward.

If you're stuck and need course help:

- If you have a **general question** about the course such as a due date or a reading, do not email the instructor first. Instead, try following these steps to see if you can answer the question yourself:
 - Read the syllabus. A lot of your answers can be found here.
 - Ask a classmate.
 - Still no answer, then email me. Email is the best way to get a hold of me outside of office hours or class time. I try to answer all email within 1 business day. I typically check email only once on weekends so I will take longer to reply then. If you have not heard back from me, please try again as it may have gone to my spam folder. Please include LE100: in your subject line.
- If you have a **personal question** about something like your writing, your grades, basic needs support, or an accommodation, please contact me via email (again, please include LE100: in

Washburn University Aleshire Center for Leadership and Community Engagement

the subject line). We can correspond or arrange an appointment to speak in person, via Zoom, or over the phone.

- If you have a **technical question**, please contact: Online Education Support (Desire2Learn support) - online-ed-support@washburn.edu or (785) 670-2381. Or visit an IT help desk, in Plass or Bennet Computer Center
- If you have a question about **resources on campus**, please contact me immediately so I can connect you with the appropriate people.

Your success includes life outside of class

Basic Needs: Any student who faces challenges securing food, housing or other basic needs and believes this may affect their performance in any course is urged to contact Molly Steffes-Herman, Campus Advocate, at molly.herman@washburn.edu for support.

Everyone with a Washburn iCard can access the following services (Bring your iCard.):

On campus - **Bods Feeding Bods** is a free on-campus food and commodities pantry located in Kuehne Hall 101. Ichabods are welcome to take any food or hygiene items they need from the shelves for free. Visit the pantry in Kuehne, an outpost in The Village common areas, or online: <https://www.washburn.edu/student-life/services/bods-feeding-bods/index.html>

On or off campus - **Emergency related assistance** also is available for students through the Ichabods Moving Forward Financial Grants. Grants are open to all students (you'll be asked for you're your WIN/iCard number) by application: <https://www.wualumni.org/ichabodsmovingforward>. Please note each student can apply only once.

On campus - **Health Services** is available in Morgan Hall 140 (8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday). Basic exam services are free; lab services may require a fee. <https://www.washburn.edu/health>.

On or off campus - **Counseling Services** provides free, easily accessible, confidential mental health. You can learn more about the broad range of mental health services available on campus at the Counseling Services website at <https://www.washburn.edu/counseling>.

On campus - **Exercise:** The SRWC includes access to group fitness classes, equipment, and locker-rooms/showers (ask for a lock at the desk if you need one). Staff can work with you to develop a program to address your goals. Daily hours, class schedules, and more are available at <https://www.washburn.edu/getfit>.

In Topeka - **Transportation:** Your iCard is a Topeka Metro bus pass. You can find route information and timetables by visiting <https://www.topekametro.org>.

- **If you are comfortable**, please notify me of your needs. This will enable me to direct you to additional resources from the broader community.

On-Campus Resource Quick Guide:

- **Aleshire Center for Leadership and Community Engagement: Plass Learning Resource Center, Room 217,** (785) 670-2000, <https://www.washburn.edu/aleshirecenter>
- **Center for Student Success: Plass Learning Resources Center, Room 315,** (785) 670-1942, <https://www.washburn.edu/success>
- **University Libraries: Plass Learning Resources Center,** (785) 670-2485, <https://www.washburn.edu/library>
- **English Writing Center: Plass Learning Resources Center, Room 116.**
- **Student Health Services: Morgan Hall Room 140,** (785) 670-1470, email: studenthealth@washburn.edu, website: <https://www.washburn.edu/health>
- **Counseling Services: Kuehne Hall, Room 200,** (785) 670 3100, email: counseling@washburn.edu, website: <https://www.washburn.edu/counseling>
- **Student Life Office: Morgan Hall Room 240,** (785) 670-2100, email: studentlife@washburn.edu, website: <https://www.washburn.edu/studentlife>
- **Student One Stop (S.O.S.): Morgan Hall Welcome Center,** (785) 670-2162, email: sos@washburn.edu, website: www.washburn.edu/sos
- **Student Accessibility Services, Plass Learning Resources Center, Room 316,** (785) 670-1622, email: accommodations@washburn.edu; website: www.washburn.edu/studentaccessibility.
- **Military Student Success Center: Plass Learning Resources Center, Room 113,** (785) 670-1983, <https://www.washburn.edu/student-life/military/military-student-success-center.html>.
- **Student Success Week (Week before Finals):** <https://washburn.edu/faculty-staff/faculty-resources/faculty-handbook/faculty-handbook-section-6.html>

The university syllabus additions document can be found here: <https://d2l.washburn.edu/shared/Master-Syllabus/master-syllabus.html>