**Research on Housing and the Social Environment in Camden**

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Community Partner: Camden Churches Organized for People (CCOP)

Class hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:20-2:40, Armitage Hall, Room 218

Sakai site: <http://sakai.rutgers.edu> “Research on Camden Housing”

Class Synopsis

This class is an experiment! It will require learning and growing, flexibility and collaboration, a willingness to share ideas and thoughts, respect and care for one another, on all our parts.

This course focuses on three sets of questions.

**One, abandoned housing as a problem afflicting urban areas:**

Why are so many abandoned houses and vacant lots in the city of Camden, compared to other nearby towns and cities? How does it affect residents of the city? What are the residents and the government of the city of Camden doing about it? Where do these efforts succeed and where do they not? How has housing and Camden changed over time?

**Two, the process of doing research:**

What is going on? Why is it happening? What has happened in the past? How do we find out? How do we find out about the possibilities for action and the obstacles? Who is most deeply involved in and affected by these issues? What are their perspectives and understandings of the issue? How do we treat them with respect and care so that they are willing to share their sense of the issue with us?

**Three, the possibility of creating change**:

How can we work respectfully with a community organization that is a long-term advocate for people living in Camden? How do we make sure that our research is useful to them? How can our gathering and analysis of information help create change around abandoned housing in Camden?

This course is primarily built around a research project, in which each student will tell the story of an abandoned house in Camden, pulling together interviews with people who live near abandoned housing, archival documents, and visual documentation through photos and maps of the house and surrounding neighborhoods. The information we collect will be used by Camden Churches Organized for People in their organizing and media efforts. In the process, we will learn something about the process of doing qualitative research, the issues surrounding housing in urban areas in the contemporary United States, and how a knowledge-making institution (Rutgers University) can collaborate with a change-making organization (Camden Churches Organized for People).

We will be looking at abandoned houses in the Cramer Hill neighborhood in Camden. Cramer Hill is not the neighborhood in the city with the most abandoned houses, but it is a neighborhood which is worried about the issue and which CCOP is organizing. This project will involve numerous independent trips to Cramer Hill, to survey the block and to interview residents. For those of you without cars, Cramer Hill is accessible from the Rutgers University campus by the #452 bus which stops at 4th and Market every half hour on weekday or from the #419 bus from the 36th Street Station in Pennsauken on the RiverLine (see sakai).

Class Schedule

**1. Doing Research, Being Fair**

**January 19th**

Introduction to research and the course.

**January 24th**

By this class, you need to have completed human subjects certification at http://orsp.rutgers.edu/Humans/hscpletter.php. To log into sakai, you will need a netid (available at http://oit.rutgers.edu/services/account/quick.html). Read through the modules and take the test (this should take you about three hours). If you can=t pass the human subjects certification test, then you may not participate in the research and should drop the class.

**Due:** Human Subjects Certification (bring certificate to class)

**January 26th**

*Reading:*

Bruce Jackson, AAppendix: Death Row@ and ABeing Fair@ in *Fieldwork* (Urbana: University of Illinois press, 1987), pp. 259-296

**2. Camden’s History, Camden’s Present**

**January 31st**

*Reading:*

Howard Gillette, *Camden After the Fall* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), Chapters 1 and 2, pp. 1-61.

**February 2nd**

*Readings:*

1) Annie E. Casey Foundation, AA Path Forward for Camden@ (2001), pp. 1-33

2) Matt Katz, ACamden Rebirth: A Promise Still Unfulfilled,@ *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 3 November 2009.

**3. Abandoned Housing: The Why, the How, and the What to Do**

**February 7th**

*Readings:*

1) Alan Mallach, ARestoring Problem Properties: A Guide to New Jersey=s Abandoned Property Tools@ (2005), pp. 1-9 and Table 2.1, p. 12.

2) ARestoring Problem Properties: A Guide to New Jersey=s Abandoned Property Tools@ (handout prepared by CCOP)

3) Deborah Hirsch, A>Ugliest House= Still Stands Tall,@ *Courier Post*, 28 August 2009.

4) Deborah Hirsch, ACamden Stymies Rehab of Houses,@ *Courier Post*, 13 September 2009.

5) Deborah Hirsch, ACamden Testing Out Redevelopment Tool,@ *Courier Post*, 3 May 2010.

**5. Interviews**

**February 9th**

*Reading:*

Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 1995)*,* Chapters 6 and 7, p. 122-167.

*Class Activities*: Practice interviewing one another

**4. Abandoned Housing: The Why, the How, and the What to Do? Part 2**

**February 14th**

*Readings:*

1) Philip Langdon, AThe Disappearing Rowhome Neighborhoods of Philadelphia and Baltimore: What=s an Urbanist to Do?@ (2001), p. 1-27

2) ACramer Hill Tomorrow: A Strategic Plan for Neighborhood Organization and Development@ (2003), pp. 3-6

3) CamConnect, ACramer Hill Facts, 1999-2000@ and ACamden Facts, 2008@

4) Paul W. Speer et al, AThe Intentional Exercise of Power: Community Organizing in Camden, New Jersey,@ *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* 13 (2003): 399-408.

*Guest speaker:* Kate Goodman (CCOP)

**5. Interviews**

**February 16th**

*Class Activity:* Quiz on Camden and abandoned housing. Show how to do transcriptions

*Assignment:* Interview with one key person and at least three other people with information about the same abandoned house

**6. Block Survey**

**February 21st**

*Reading*s:

1) Paul Kutsche, *Field Ethnography: A Manual for Doing Cultural Anthropology* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1998)*,* ABlock Survey,@ p. 14-26.

2) John Collier, Jr. and Malcolm Collier, *Visual Anthropology* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), APhotographing the Overview,@ pp. 29-44.

*Class Activities:* Create guide of what to look for in photographs and on the block.

*Assignment*:Block survey (in pairs), mapping exercise, photographs

**February 23rd**

No class. Do the block survey.

**7. Observation**

**February 28th**

*Reading*:

Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), Chapter 5, pp. 108-141.

**Due:** Block Survey

**March 2nd**

**Due:** Practice fieldnotes (5 pages)

**March 7th**

Discuss interviews and work so far

**March 9th**

Discuss interviews and work so far

SPRING BREAK

**7. Using Documents & Records**

**March 21st**

*Class Activities:* Work with the records available from city databases on abandoned housing.

*Assignment*

Records of houses on the block; look for photos from Camilo José Vergara=s *Invincible Cities* website for historical information (on sakai)

**March 23rd**

*Class Activities*: Field trip to Camden County Historical Society

**9. Data Analysis**

**March 28th**

**Due:** Fieldnotes of observation

**March 30th**

**Due:** Archival and Records Data

**April 4th** *Reading:*

Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), Chapter 6, pp. 142-168.

**Due:** Transcriptions from the interviews

*Class Activities:* discuss open coding, and open code an interview

**April 6th**

*Class Activity:* bring an interview that you have coded to discuss in class; I’ll give the directions for the final paper and presentation

**April 11th**

*Class Activity:* Accompany Nick Falconiero, from Code Enforcement; meet in the parking lot in front of City Hall (5th and Market) at 1:15pm.

**Due:** Sign-up for the Undergraduate Research Poster Session at <http://sociology.camden.rutgers.edu/poster-form.htm>

**April 13th**

**Due:** Open coding of all fieldnotes, block survey, and interviews plus analytic memo

**Thursday, April 14th, 2pm, Adventure Aquarium:** Mayor meets with CDCs and CCOP to discuss abandoned housing. You do not have to go, but you might be interested in going to learn more about the City’s response to CCOP’s advocacy efforts about abandoned housing.

**April 18th**

**Due:** 3-5 Core themes due

**April 20th**

Individual meetings with Jamie and Dr. Coe

**April 25th**

**Due:** Coding around the 3-5 themes plus analytic memo

**April 27th**

**Due:** Poster presentation in the Undergraduate Research Poster Session, during the free period (12:15-1:15), in the Campus Center Multipurpose Room

Also possible: more private presentation with Iraida Afanador, Director of Code Enforcement, to be announced.

**May 2nd**

Visit from Kate Goodman: Questions and discussion about what you learned and update on the progress of CCOP’s advocacy work with the City.

**May 4th**

**Due:** Final Paper

**Grades**

* Quiz: February 16th (5%)
* Block survey: February 28th (10%)
* Fieldnotes on observation: March 28th (10%)
* Archival and Records Data: March 30th (10%)
* Interview transcriptions: April 4th (15%)
* Open coding and analytic memo: April 13th (3%)
* Deciding on 3-5 core themes: April 18 (2%)
* Coding around the 3-5 themes plus analytic memo: April 25th (3%)
* Poster Presentation: April 27th (12%)
* Final paper: May 4th (20%)
* Participation and attendance (10%)