Community Action Research Project
Leadership, Ethics, and Social Responsibility   **Fall 2012**

As a central part of the learning experience, students will design and develop a semester-long active action research project of their choice. The project will enable students to focus **creatively** on a course-related issue relevant to their personal goal, interests, and involvements.

Beyond a "term paper," the project should involve active exploration/research drawn from a variety of sources (in addition to the research literature). That is, students should examine their chosen topic in the context of the research literature and relevant resource materials, <u>and</u> actively explore the issue through interviews, discussions, surveys, observations, and the like. Toward this end, students are encouraged to work with local leaders and agencies relevant to the course, and <u>to build upon their current service/leadership involvements</u>. The goal is contribute to a community need through active inquiry and participation, and learn throughout.

While each project will have a written component, students may augment the project via alternative forms (e.g., the creation of a video, a Power Point presentation, or educational materials for those in a leadership/service context, etc.). The written component/description of project should be from 10 to 15 typed pages (possibly briefer for those using alternative formats). Further suggestions for project development, organization, and writing will be discussed in class.

If possible, design and write the project so that it will benefit others (not just the student and professor). Following review and feedback from the instructor, classmates, and other resources persons, the goal is to produce a work of quality that contributes to understanding/development in the chosen arena. Students are asked to work in groups (2 to 4 members) to create projects that go beyond the potential of an individual.

The student-directed research will add to the diversity and scope of the class. Students <u>are expected to present findings</u> and observations from their projects during relevant class meetings (see syllabus).

The projects will be evaluated/graded according to the following factors:

- Organization
- Creativity
- Investment in project
- Means of gathering information
- Development of critical argument

- Original thinking/personal expression
  (vs. summary of others' work)
- Clarity and accuracy of written expression
- In-class contribution/presentation of project

Project topics should be chosen (see list of sample topic areas) and a brief typed description of your plan turned in by early September. Consult with the instructor, fellow students, and others as you design and develop the project. A full draft of the project will be due in mid-November. The final version will be due in late November. Projects will be accepted early! (Projects with grammatical/spelling errors will not be considered complete.)

Outline/Description of Action Research Project   (One page, typed)

Please follow this outline (including the headings below) when writing your project description. Remember: <u>use no more than one page</u> (change font size if necessary).

Collaborators on Project (list all in alphabetical order)

Working Title

— a good title is important to beginning well, framing your domain

— be creative and specific

Topic/Area of Interest

— give a brief description of topic / area / research questions

Method(s) of Research and Project Development

— note both research literature and experiential/observational components

— describe relevant research questions: what you hope to learn, answer

References/Resources

— list at least three <u>specific</u> references/resources (citing author, date, title) you have already consulted

— name future resources you will examine (not by type or resource, but specific documents or references)

Potential Means to Share with Class (In addition to end-of-semester class presentation)

— consider how you will share the project with the class, or involved members
(please don't assume the project needs to be complete to share preliminary info with class; share when relevant)

— consider linking with other groups to present similar projects in class

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Stretch yourself. Work/plan/learn in new ways.

Enjoy the process of developing an excellent project and related expertise.

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Here are a few project ideas to stimulate your thinking. Don't limit yourself to this list. Develop something that works for you that serves to motivate and carry your natural enthusiasms.

1. Conduct participatory/action research with a local agency or the like on a topic relevant to the class. Integrate and present findings for the good of the organization, etc.

2. Develop a project out of your ongoing community service/social action experience. Design your work to make a contribution to site, persons served. Is there a question the organization needs to research, knowledge of which would help it improve? Or, similarly, you could write a case study of the leadership history of your group, especially if such is unique/interesting to others (and possibly publish).

3. Interview leaders (on campus, in the business world, or the like), especially those involved in social change efforts. How did they learn to lead? What are their working assumptions about ethics and leadership? How or why do their methods work, not work. Is social change a result? Observe, compare, and outline differences, similarities.

4. Trace the life history and developmental path of a current leader (preferably one you can speak with). Or develop a psychohistory (using the methods of Erikson, Gardner, etc.) of a social leader in history. Draw from relevant literature; discuss implications.

5. Interview/survey students, professors, teachers, other citizens about moral leadership, what they believe about leaders today and for the future. Summarize, document, present.

6. With others, plan an experiential learning opportunity to enhance understanding of leadership and ethics (i.e., visit to the Center for Servant Leadership or Center on Philanthropy in Indianapolis). Implement, learn, analyze.

7. Examine the potential to create a leadership and social responsibility minor or concentration at Notre Dame. Research models/programs at other Universities, and program models. Consider viability, means of support, academic integration, and like. Interview student leaders, faculty, deans, and others. Work with instructor to present findings and recommendations.

8 Attend a conference focused on leadership/ethical development. Build a project around your learning and a particular content area.

9. Study/interview a cross-section on particular group of ND alumni/ae. Seek info about their leadership development experiences, current leadership for social responsibility, recommendations, etc. Instructor has leads, etc.

10. Develop a series of creative exercises that enhance ethical leadership, possibly with youth in local area. Pilot test and refine. Present the exercises as a set in written form for use by others.

11. Observe (possibly in an participatory, ethnographic manner) in various service/leadership contexts (e.g., meetings of service group or agency leaders); note leadership styles, ethical challenges, …

12. Write, publish and article/essay about leadership and social responsibility (based on your current insights, or work for any project undertaken).

13. Research and develop a plan to enhance leadership and skill development for student leaders. Implement. Analyze.