

**NYU****ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

Field Lab on the Communal Production of Shared Resources Term YYYY

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Prerequisites: n/a

Course Description

All around the world, people rely on a multitude of resources that are neither private nor public, but are instead provided by self-organizing communities. In New York City, for instance, these communal arrangements range from the mundane, like roommates maintaining a shared kitchen, to the more formal and consequential, such as Parent-Teacher Associations in public schools, business improvement districts, worker-owned enterprises, member-based cooperatives, community land trusts, credit unions, and a myriad of labor, industry, tenant, and neighborhood associations.

This course is organized as a field lab where students examine how some of these communal arrangements thrive while others fail or are not even created.

It is composed of three modules. During the first module, students learn key concepts related to collective action and shared resources, including the main types of goods, how each of these types can be affected by collective action problems, and how these problems have been solved by different groups, in different places and at different times.

During the second module, students acquire basic skills in field research, including research ethics and informed consent, getting access, conducting a good interview, and analyzing field notes.

During the third module, students collect and analyze primary data on a communal production arrangement of their choice anywhere in New York City, discuss their interim findings with their classmates, and prepare a final report.

Learning Objectives

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand the difficulties associated with communal production and collective action
- Describe how different communities have overcome these difficulties to sustain cooperation

- Conduct primary research, including designing research questions, collecting and analyzing data, and synthesizing findings into a coherent scholarly paper.

Assignments and Evaluation

- Participation → 30% of final grade, divided into three evaluations of 10% each, one for each module of the course
- Memo on “Insights from Theory” → 20%, due at the end of first module
- Draft Research Proposal → 20%, due at the end of second module
- Final paper → 30%, due at the end of the course

Readings and Course Outline

First Module: Key Concepts in Collective Action

1 – The Challenges of Collective Action

Hardin, Garrett (1968) Tragedy of the Commons. Science

Achian, Armen, (XX) Property Rights, The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics

Kropotkin, Peter (1902) Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution

2 – Key Concepts

Olson, Mancur (1965) The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups, Harvard University Press

Axelrod, Robert (1994) The Evolution of Cooperation

Abramistky, Ran (2018) The Mystery of the Kibbutz: Egalitarian Principles in a Capitalist World, Princeton University Press

3 – Governing the Commons

Frischmann, Brett M., Alain Marciano, and Giovanni Battista Ramello. 2019. "Retrospectives: Tragedy of the Commons after 50 Years." Journal of Economic Perspectives, 33 (4): 211-28.

Ostrom, Elinor (1990) Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action

4 - Cooperatives

Whyte, William F. and Kathleen White (1988) Making Mondragon: The Growth and Dynamics of the Worker Cooperative Complex, Cornell University Press

Tendler, Judith (1983) What to Think about Cooperatives: A guide from Bolivia

Zhanping Hu, Qian Forrest Zhang & John Donaldson (2023) Why do farmers' cooperatives fail in a market economy? Rediscovering Chayanov with the Chinese experience, The Journal of Peasant Studies, 50:7, 2611-2641

5 – Business Associations

Doner Richard and Ben Ross Schneider (2017) Business Associations and Economic Development: Why Some Associations Contribute More Than Others, Business and Politics

Cammett, Melanie (2005) Fat Cats and Self-Made Men: Globalization and the Paradoxes of Collective Action, Comparative Politics

McDermott, Gerald (2007) The Politics of Institutional Renovation and Economic Upgrading: Recombining the Vines That Bind in Argentina, Politics and Society

Nadvi, Khalid (1999) Collective efficiency and collective failure: the response of the Sialkot surgical instrument cluster to global quality pressures, World Development

6 - Production without property rights

Weber, Steven (2005) The Success of Open Source, Harvard University Press; chapters TBD

Cowen, Tyler (2024) Open-Source Software Is Worth a Lot More Than You Pay for It, Bloomberg News

Croese, Emily (2017) Meet the Pharmaceutical Hacker Trying to Make Open-Source Drugs

Thompson, Clive (2011) Build It. Share It. Profit. Can Open Source Hardware Work? Wired Magazine

Second Module: Research Methods

7 – Challenges and ethics of fieldwork

Murray Davis (1971) That's Interesting: Towards a Phenomenology of Sociology and a Sociology of. Phenomenology

Timmermans S and Iddo Tavory (2014) Abductive Analysis: Theorizing Qualitative Research, NYU's Institutional Review Board

8 – The logic of case study research

Small, Mario and Jessica Calarco (2022) Qualitative Literacy: A Guide to Evaluating Ethnographic and Interview Research

Evan Lieberman (2016), Can the Biomedical Research Cycle be a Model for Political Science?

Bardach, Eugene (2004) The Extrapolation Problem: How Can We Learn from the Experience of Others?

9 – Interviewing

Lareau, Annette (2021) Listening to People: A Practical Guide to Interviewing, Participant Observation, Data Analysis, and Writing It All Up

Silbey, Susan S. (XX) Conversational Interviews, MITx

10 - Analyzing data

Becker, H. S. (1998). Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing it. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Timmermans S. and Iddo Tavory (2022) Data Analysis in Quantitative Research: Theorizing with Abductive Analysis

Third Module: Workshop for Student Papers

The remaining classes are devoted to in-class discussion and presentation of student-led research.