

# Community Psychology PSYC 2550 Course Syllabus - Spring 2026

## Course Overview

### Access Details

- 📧 **Dates:** January 20 – April 5, 2026
- 📧 **Faculty:** Erika Sanborne, Psychology Department
- 📧 **Messaging:** Please use Canvas messaging (*Inbox*) within the course to message me directly. Send an outside email **only** if not currently enrolled ([Erika\\_Sanborne@uml.edu](mailto:Erika_Sanborne@uml.edu)). I intend to reply to Inbox messages within 24 hours during the semester when our course is in session.
- 📧 **Office Hours:** Drop-in live Wednesdays 8-9PM ET via Zoom from inside Canvas
- 📧 **Course:** [canvas.uml.edu/](https://canvas.uml.edu/)
- 📧 **Course Catalog:** [gps.uml.edu/catalog/search/?keywords=PSYC+2550](https://gps.uml.edu/catalog/search/?keywords=PSYC+2550)
- 📧 **External Course Website & Resources:** [geterika.com/psych/](https://geterika.com/psych/)
- 📧 **Need help? Visit UML Online Student Success Central:** [gps.uml.edu](https://gps.uml.edu)

### Course Description

"Surveys the field of community psychology, including principles of social justice, diversity, and social change. The course reviews historical antecedents, paradigms, conceptual models, strategies and tactics of social and community change and action; examples from selected contexts and social systems, including education, mental health, community organizations, the workplace, health care, justice system, and social services will be employed." (Course Catalog).

*Completion of this course is worth 3 credits.*

Meets Core Curriculum Essential Learning Outcome for Diversity and Cultural Awareness (DCA). Pre-Req: PSYC.1010 Intro to Psychological Science.

### Textbook

Jason, L.A., Glantsman, O., O'Brien, J.F., & Ramian, K.N. (Eds.). (2019). *Introduction to community psychology: Becoming an agent of change*. Rebus Press.

<https://press.rebus.community/introductiontocommunitypsychology/>

**The textbook is an open-access e-book, available free of charge (CC BY 4.0).**

Choose a version from [the publisher's website](#). Or download a compressed PDF version of the whole textbook from inside our Canvas course, which some students prefer. Each week's lecture also includes a link to the public HTML version of that week's assigned readings.



## Getting Started on Day 1



This syllabus file is **huge**. I know. There are graphics and plenty of white space for readability, and I have to address formal things like course policies. The next page has a Table of Contents though - use that. And let me tell you what you should *actually* do at semester startup, okay?

1. Get the free textbook.
2. Make sure you can [log in to the course in Canvas](#) and that you see Start Here and Week 1 sections inside a course called *Community Psychology*.

### And then *by the end of Week 1*, you need to do these things:

1. Go through the *Start Here* and *Week 1* modules. Everything is linked inside there so you shouldn't get lost.
2. Propose a Community Meeting (read about it first - under *Start Here*).
3. Make your Introductions post (read about that first also - in *Discussions*).
4. Take TouchPoint Quiz #1 (yes read about it first - in *Week 1*)
5. Make your Week 1 graded post (read first – you're doing great- in *Discussions*).
6. Just skim the Table of Contents on the next page here so you know what's in this doc.

Is that a lot? I mean think of it this way. This is a ten-week, accelerated semester. Do the above and you're 10% through the course already.

Also! This is semester startup stuff. Here's the list for week two: 1. Go through Week 2 module. 2. Take the Touchpoint Quiz. 3. Make your Week 2 graded post. And that's basically it for real. Okay? Weeks 3 & 4 are like this also. Then Week 5 has a paper due etc. 😊 You've got this.

### Need Startup Registration Help or Tech Support?

Contact the good folks in the [Advising Center or the 24x7 Online Course Support](#). See also [Student Success Central](#).

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# Community Psychology Learning Goals

## Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Define and explain the core principles of community psychology: prevention, social justice, ecological perspective, respect for diversity, active citizen participation, grounding in research and evaluation, interdisciplinary collaboration, sense of community, empowerment, and promotion of wellness.
2. Apply core community psychology principles to analyze real-world community concerns, using specific examples and case illustrations.
3. Evaluate the sense of community in a chosen setting by identifying and illustrating the four elements of the McMillan-Chavis model.
4. Reflect critically on their role as community members, articulating ways they might contribute to positive social impact in their own communities.



## Essential Learning Outcomes

"Under UMass Lowell's Core Curriculum, students must have the opportunity to master each of seven Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs)..." [Read more about ELOs](#). Those of you who are *not* Psychology majors can count this Community Psychology course under Breadth of Knowledge as a Social Science elective. For those of you who *are* Psychology majors, this course will satisfy the ELO of Diversity and Cultural Awareness by enabling you to be better able to:

1. Identify and analyze one's own cultural norms and values in relation to those of other cultures and diverse social groups.
2. Identify and analyze indicators of discrimination and demonstrate how discriminatory practices and attitudes can create barriers for some and opportunities for others.
3. Articulate answers to complex questions about other cultures and diverse groups, reflecting an awareness of diverse cultural and social group perspectives.

*(I mean, just look at all this white space. This syllabus is feather lite...)*

# Grades

## Course Grade Computation

Course grades are computed as follows *without further rounding*:

$$92.95 - 100.00 = A (4.0)$$

$$89.95 - 92.94 = A- (3.7)$$

$$86.95 - 89.94 = B+ (3.3)$$

$$82.95 - 86.94 = B (3.0)$$

$$79.95 - 82.94 = B- (2.7)$$

$$76.95 - 79.94 = C+ (2.3)$$

$$72.95 - 76.94 = C (2.0)$$

$$69.95 - 72.94 = C- (1.7)$$

$$66.95 - 69.94 = D+ (1.3)$$

$$62.95 - 66.94 = D (1.0)$$

$$0 - 62.94 = F (0.0)$$



## Assignment Grade Weights

All grades in this course add up to a maximum potential sum of 100 points.

Graded Posts	30 points (3 points X 10 weeks)
Community Meeting Paper	25 points
Investigation Paper	25 points
Touchpoint Quizzes	10 points (1 point X 10 weeks)
Final Exam	10 points



Canvas does gradebook math in its own special way sometimes. There are midterm and final grade calculators on [the course website](#) you can use whenever you want to check your math.

There is no "extra credit" – course grades are earned as outlined here, from all the regular opportunities to earn all the credit.

## Assessment and Evaluation Methods

### Graded Posts (30%)

This is the work of every week. Graded posts give you the space to engage critically with the course material by applying key concepts to your own observations and experiences, aligned with your personal and professional interests.

Each post is due Sunday by 11:59 PM Eastern Time, and you must complete the week's Touchpoint Quiz before submitting your graded post. Graded Posts should be 250–500 words in length.

To complete a graded post, reference key terms or concepts from the week's assigned readings, indicating those terms in **bold type** and citing them in APA Style. A complete reference list should accompany your post. The terms you put in **bold** are the ones being graded, the concepts you are applying to your community of reference. That personalized application is central to all work in this course.



Graded posts are evaluated on three criteria:

- Completeness: addressing all parts of the prompt in sufficient depth
- Correctness: applying course concepts accurately and thoughtfully
- Structure: writing clearly and citing sources properly in APA Style

**Only your first post is graded. Submitting a placeholder or blank post will result in a zero.**

Graded post assignments are not about summarizing or quoting or paraphrasing course materials but they ARE about illustrating concepts through your own personal observations, stories, reflection and evaluation of course concepts as applied to your community.

Attempts to submit AI-generated work typically earn failing grades because they lack the required correctness and personal understanding. Replies to classmates are optional but encouraged.

Graded posts are central to practicing how to apply community psychology principles to real-world concerns using your own examples. [Find detailed assignment guidelines in \*Start Here\* and on the external course website.](#)

### Community Meeting Paper (25%)

**Mini description:** Attend an approved community meeting live and write a 2400-3600 word paper reflecting on each of the ten core principles of community psychology. The paper is due at the end of Week 5.

This is the first of two major course papers, due at the end of Week 5 (February 22, 2026). For this assignment, students need to attend an approved community meeting. During Week 1, you will propose the meeting you want to attend.

Students will analyze a chosen meeting through the lens of the ten core principles of community psychology. The paper is divided into two sections: an 800-1200 word description of how the meeting went for you, and a 1600-2400 word reflection applying the ten core principles of community psychology to the experience of having attended this particular community meeting.

Meeting proposals are due by the end of Week 1 or ASAP. Details about how to propose a meeting, including what types of meetings are eligible, can be found in [the detailed assignment guidelines in "Start Here" and on the external course website.](#)

## Investigation Paper (25%)

**Mini description:** Evaluate the sense of community in a chosen setting by identifying and illustrating the four elements of the McMillan-Chavis model. Then write a 2400-3700 word paper focusing primarily on the four elements of sense of community and the most pressing issues in the community. The paper is due at the end of week 7.

This is the second of the two major course papers, due at the end of Week 7 (March 8, 2026). For this assignment, students will select and investigate a present-day community that interests them. The chosen community can be locality-based (e.g., a neighborhood, town, or block) or relational (e.g., a faith community, gym, fraternity, social club, workplace, online mutual support group, etc.). It can also be a mix of locality-based and relational (e.g. the Lowell Cambodian Youth community).

The focus of the paper is to evaluate the sense of community through the four elements as defined by the McMillan-Chavis model: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection.

No approval is required for your chosen community, but it needs to be based on the present-day and not historical awareness. Ask questions as needed and [read the detailed assignment guidelines in Start Here and on the external course website.](#) Unsure? Come to office hours and we'll talk it through together.

## Touchpoint Quizzes (10%)

There are ten Touchpoint Quizzes in our ten-week course. Each quiz has four questions. Quizzes must be completed before a student can submit the graded post for that week. They can be retaken once to improve grades (for a total of two takes). The purpose of these quizzes is to provide frequent, low-stakes feedback and keep students engaged with the course content.

## Final Exam (10%)

Because it is required by the university, this course has a final exam. Questions are multiple-choice and meant to assess the student's ability to connect core concepts from community psychology with provided illustrations. Students may complete the final at their convenience during week 10. It is an open book test, available during week 10 and due by April 5, 2026.

## Course Calendar (See also the [GPS Calendar](#))

Week	Dates	Textbook	Topics	Assignments
1	1/20 – 1/25	Ch. 1	Core Principles	
2	1/26 – 2/1	Ch. 2 & 3	Social Trends and Historical Cycles	
3	2/2 – 2/8	Ch. 6	Research Methods	
4	2/9 – 2/15	Ch. 5	Ecological Theory	
5	2/16 – 2/22	Ch. 5	Sense of Community	Meeting Paper (due 2/22)
6	2/23 – 3/1	Ch. 8	Respect for Diversity	
	3/2	Last day to withdraw with "W"		
7	3/2 – 3/8	Ch. 9 & 10	Empowerment	Investigation Paper (due 3/8)
	3/9 – 3/15	Spring Recess		
8	3/16 – 3/22	Ch. 13	Stress and Coping	
9	3/23 – 3/29	Ch. 12	Prevention and Promotion	
10	3/30 – 4/5	Ch. 14	Program Evaluation and Public Policy	Final Exam (due 4/5)

Table 1 Weekly dates, textbook readings by chapter, topics, and major assignment due dates

## Teaching Methods

This section describes how I can help you achieve the course objectives in our Community Psychology course, which is delivered as an asynchronous online course. Therefore, the primary teaching methods I employ in *this* course are:



### Lecture (recitation)

Lecture or recitation means mostly presenting course materials and answering student questions. Within this teaching method, I emphasize the following:

**Accessibility:** Course content is broken down into manageable sections with both visual and audio support. Content warnings are provided when necessary. Open-access course materials are used.

**Timeliness:** I use a "just-in-time teaching" approach, where I adapt the lecture content to address emerging questions or gaps in understanding. This also includes integrating relevant community issues and current events to make the material more directly applicable to current community dynamics.

**Relevance:** I incorporate real world topics where students can find their own interests intersecting with the course content and choose their own adventures while completing assignments in this course.

**Directed discussion:** Weekly graded post assignments are designed to help students gain understanding and insight about the world based on each week's key concepts.

## Experiential learning

This course emphasizes applying what you learn and making sure that all submitted work conveys a personal, human understanding of course concepts. Assignments are structured to allow students to explore their own interests by applying course concepts to their current observations of their community of reference, and reflecting on those observations. This approach is intended to make the material more relevant and engaging.

## Communication Guidelines

I encourage regular and substantive interaction between student and instructor, which means that there are many weekly opportunities for us to have a one-on-one conversation. I really do want you to reach out if you need anything at all. **I will always make time for you.**

### Focused Weekly Preview

At the start of each week, I'll share a Focused Weekly Preview on top of that week's module. Think of this like the opening notes a professor would give before starting a lecture: quick updates, reminders, clarifications from the previous week, and a look at what's ahead. Each Preview contains links to things needed for that week too, for convenience.

### Typed Interactions

In an asynchronous online course, a lot of our communication is typed, but weekly office hours are video chat (Zoom). Please try to follow these guidelines in the spirit of optimized communication among classmates and between us.

1. If someone does not specify otherwise, we should assume their first name as it appears to us in Canvas is their preferred address. Also please try to spell names correctly and address people as they wish. Names are important and this is all a part of respect.
2. Course Questions? Ask on the Questions & Comments discussion board, unless your question is private or personal in nature (then message me through the Canvas Inbox). Also check the Questions & Comments board for answers to previous questions, and please do feel free to answer anything there that *you* know the answer to. Use that space as a resource that will grow with relevant Q&A as we go. It's not solely for you to ask me questions. You can also come to the weekly office hours (via Zoom) to chat.

Wherever you ask questions, try to ask questions that can be answered for the best results: Say what you know, what you tried (if applicable) and describe either where you are uncertain or specifically what you are questioning or commenting on. Okay?

3. Private/personal questions? Use Canvas Inbox to message me. Note that I am not saying to use email me. You should only email me if you cannot access our course in Canvas. As long as you can get into the course, please use Canvas Inbox for the fastest private response to your questions.

4. If a student feels they have been treated unfairly, their rights are described in the [Student Appeals and Complaints section of the Academic Catalog](#).
5. This course is conveniently available to you 24 hours a day. Unfortunately, I am not. I'm pretty quick with responding to Canvas messages within 24 hours, but you should not expect last-minute, crisis-intervention levels of help. What comes to mind is "Help me help you," and I mean that, because I want to help you do your best.

## Course Policies

### Accessibility Policy

If you have any learning needs that I can accommodate, you need to first contact the [Disability Services Office](#). Together you and they will let me know how I can be most helpful to your learning. Please communicate via the university's [Accommodate system](#). In accordance with university policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), I am glad to accommodate students with documented disabilities.

If you are disabled and not currently receiving formal accommodations, please [contact the Disability Services Office](#) to arrange future accommodations.

UMass Lowell also provides some [assistive technology resources](#) to all students, including students who are not registered with Disability Services.

I also strive for universal access because I realize that formal accommodations are not adequate and available to everyone for all needs. If you encounter any barrier to your successfully completing this course, please be in touch with me.

### Intellectual Property Policy

Students are **not** given permission to distribute, sell, give away, upload, or in any way share lecture materials obtained during this course to or with any outside source without express written permission. Disseminating such intellectual property without permission violates shared norms and standards within the academic community and may be illegal. **Also, students are explicitly informed herein that they have not been given any such license.**

Furthermore, UMass Lowell recognizes the importance of mutual trust between students and faculty. Massachusetts is a two-party consent state, which means it is illegal to record someone without their permission.

### Credit Hour Policy

Based on the federal definition of a credit hour, a standard 3 credit hour course requires 45 hours of instructor-led course activities (i.e. your time spent inside Canvas and with online resources linked inside the course intended to be read/viewed "in class" as a part of lecture) and 90 hours of out-of-class student work. As this is a ten-week, accelerated format course, that math results in an average total of 13.5 hours/week per three credit undergraduate course.

## Academic Integrity Policy

You have no idea the time I will clear in my schedule to respond to suspected acts of academic dishonesty, because I believe that such dishonesty disrespects all students. "Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the university..."

Students should familiarize themselves with UML's [Academic Integrity Policy](#), which is authoritative whether or not a student has familiarized themselves with it.

Academic dishonesty includes more than plagiarism. For example, using AI beyond what is sanctioned by the AI Policy, making a blank post in an attempt to circumvent the restrictions on the graded post discussion forums, submitting blank documents as papers so as to claim that a paper was submitted on time, and other attempts to work around restrictions in place via the Learning Management System are also academic dishonesty.

## AI Policy

As defined in UML's [Academic Integrity Policy](#), academic misconduct subject to disciplinary action includes using "generative AI tools ... to complete assignments, exams, or any other academic work without explicit permission from the instructor. This includes entering assignment or exam questions into AI tools to generate answers, submitting AI-generated content as original work..."

Community Psychology is a course about you and your place in the social world. Authentic demonstration of your knowledge and academic integrity are priorities in this course. AI tools can be potentially useful resources to support accessibility, especially when used to help you understand course materials and improve the mechanics of your writing.

### Allowed Uses of AI

- Reading and understanding course materials (e.g., to help you understand textbook chapters and lectures).
- Grammar, spelling, and tone checking (e.g., to help improve writing mechanics).

### Prohibited Uses of AI

- Having AI generate any examples, applications, or connections between course concepts and real-world observations (which must come from your own thinking)
- Using AI to create any illustrations, examples, or arguments within your graded posts, or any substantive content of your papers (which should be written by you, for assignments with rubrics that are designed to reward human community psychology application of course concepts)
- Doing the above things constitutes academic dishonesty.

### Why This AI Policy Exists

Since the introduction of AI tools, I have observed pretty big shifts in both student performance and effort, but not in the ways you might guess! Before AI, the vast majority of students who completed this course earned an A. Now, grades range from A to F, because some students struggle while over-relying on their AI tools in a course that has been designed to give space for their own, original critical thinking about their own human lives in human communities.

And also? Students trying to use AI tools to generate Community Psychology coursework seem to be spending a lot more time and energy trying to convince the robot to write like a human being in a human community than what students *ever* used to take just a few years back, when they were just writing their own human responses about their human community observations.

You will do SO much better if you do your own work than if you try to use AI beyond the scope that is allowed and described here. Whereas everybody used to earn an A in this course, and it wasn't very hard or especially time consuming, and students tended to enjoy the class, those who use generative AI today earn themselves grades anywhere in the range from A-F, and this is while they're spending *a lot more time and labor struggling* than human student writers did.

This course was made for humans in communities, and I don't want anyone to struggle in this class. Please don't create unnecessary burdens for yourself. I miss the days when everyone in this course earned an A. I'd love for us to head back there together.

## Late Work Policy

All assignments are due before midnight on Sunday nights when due. You need to submit work no later than 11:59:59pm ET. There is no "little bit late" for grading purposes in an online course. **If you are experiencing a crisis (whatever that looks like) talk to me ASAP.**

**Late Graded Posts** can be submitted up to one week late for half credit grading. Graded posts not submitted within the late work period of one week are missed and graded "0".

**Late Papers** can be submitted up to one week late with a late penalty by days. A paper submitted one second late up to 48 hours late is reduced in grade by 10%. A paper submitted 2-4 days late is reduced in grade by 20%. A paper submitted 5-7 days late is reduced in grade by 25%. A paper not submitted within the late work period of one week is missed and graded 50%.

**Late Final Exam** is not a thing. You have all of week 10 to take your final exam. When the course ends at midnight at the end of week 10, our course and the semester will be over. A missed final exam is graded 50% (5/10 points). If you miss the final exam because of an emergency that officially warrants a grade of Incomplete for the course according to the university's [Incomplete Grade Policy](#), communicate that to [Erika Sanborne@uml.edu](mailto:Erika_Sanborne@uml.edu) ASAP.

**The course syllabus ends here. A trophy for you! :)**

