

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND URBAN STUDIES

UNDERGRADUATE FACT SHEET

Overview

The youth empowerment and urban studies (YES) program offers an interdisciplinary minor open to all WCU students. The YES program operates on the assumption that urban youth are assets to their communities. These courses are designed to combat the notion that young people are apathetic to their surroundings: when given the right opportunities, young people can make real change.

The program offers students in the YES minor a chance to work with youth in urban settings. Students in the YES minor will be able to analyze the multitude of problems that many youth face in urban areas and apply what they have learned to capitalize on the strengths of urban communities and youth, and work with them directly. Thanks to the program's academically diverse faculty, the program is open to all students in any college or major. Qualified students will be eligible to apply for internships, some of them specialized and/or paid opportunities in the city of Philadelphia with youth-serving organizations focused on social change.

Brief History of Community Engagement

Young people are at the forefront of social change in the United States and elsewhere, now and for a long time. Community-engaged, hands-on learning to transform where we live is a proven effective student learning practice at universities. Community engagement emerged as an academic movement in the 1960's and grew in strength throughout the 1980's and 1990's, yet full academic programs based on this type of meaningful, community-based learning are rare. Even fewer are focused on a strength-based, interdisciplinary approach to understanding urban environments and the youth who grow up in them. A student may identify as one such youth or might be an individual interested in seeing society's problems through a similar lens.

Undergraduate Degrees

Minor in Youth Empowerment and Urban Studies. Upon completion of the program, students will receive a minor in youth empowerment and urban studies on their transcript. The YES minor fits into all West Chester University courses of study, including but not limited to students in education, geography and urban studies, political science, psychology, social work, and more.

Career Opportunities

Those enrolled in the YES program gain useful leadership skills and unique experience that will stand out on a resume. Graduates of this program will find employment in a broad range of fields, including criminal justice, education/teaching, government, language and literacy, nonprofit administration, psychology, public policy, social work, sociology, and more.

Students will acquire tools to work with individuals of diverse backgrounds and perspectives, teamwork, and flexibility, as well as greater persistence and communication abilities – valuable assets that employers seek.

The YES program will also prepare graduates for any advanced degree, including business, communications, education, English, history, law, medicine, political science, psychology, sociology, African American studies, women's and gender studies, or urban studies.

Special Study Opportunities

Students enrolled in the minor will work with youth in the Philadelphia region. The knowledge that students gain through the diverse courses of the YES program will directly complement the hands-on work experience.

The YES Experience

The YES program believes in keeping classes small so that students can get individualized attention. Emphasis is placed on the student's voice, and all voices will be heard in these classes. Students in the YES program get intensive, real-life practical experience in an urban environment. This experience will prove useful in building skills for the future. The minor requires 18 hours of course work, many of which also meet other University requirements. As a result of completing the minor, students become a part of a cohort that they can connect with both at the University and beyond.

Curriculum

I. Required core courses

- YES 250 Introduction to Youth and Urban Community Work. Students will be introduced to key ideas and dispositions for working with urban populations.
- YES 300 Youth Empowerment and the Urban Context. Students will partner with urban youth through organizations in the city of Philadelphia and study the history of organizing as an educational and empowerment tool.
- YES 301 Seminar in Youth-Led Media and Inquiry. Students will partner with urban young people through youth-serving agencies to produce multimedia, community-based work and study youth-led media as a cutting-edge educational, social change, and empowerment practice.

II. Focused electives (9 semester hours – choose one from each of the following three categories)

- A. Urban contexts and communities
 - ANT 347 Culture of Cities
 - ECO 350 Urban Economics

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- GEO 204 Introduction to Urban Studies
- GEO 312 Urban Geography
- PSC 304 Urban Politics
- SOC 342 Urban Sociology

B. Youth and social systems

- EDF 255 Evolution of Schooling in the U.S
- EDF 300 Democracy and Education
- HIS 444 History of American Education
- HON 312 Educational Systems and Social Influence
- HON 322 Leadership with ELLs in the Classroom and Community
- SOC 345 Sociology of Education
- SWO 423 Child Welfare Practice and Policy
- WRH 305 Images of School in Film

C. Empowerment work in diverse communities

The YES program requires that all students gain real-world experience through work in diverse communities. This additional course requirement can be completed under any college, department, or organization linked to course work that integrates service learning, community-engaged learning or research, field placement in an urban setting, or with diverse populations. The course is expected to take critical and strength-based approaches to issues addressed. Courses and placements that qualify will be approved by the coordinator of the program by review of syllabi.

YES Program-Affiliated Faculty

Faculty who teach in the program and serve on the advisory board come from many different disciplines: anthropology and sociology; communications; early, middle grades, and secondary education; educational technology; English; geography and planning; history; political science; psychology; social work; and special education. See the website for a complete listing at http://www.wcupa.edu/_academics/sch_cas/YES/whoweare.asp/.

For More Information

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Webpage: http://www.wcupa.edu/_academics/sch_cas/YES/

Facebook: Search for "Youth Empowerment and Urban Studies"

Twitter: twitter.com/WCU_YESminor

About West Chester University

A comprehensive, public institution, West Chester University offers high-quality undergraduate and graduate degree programs in more than 100 subject areas, as well as certification and certificate programs. West Chester is the largest member of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, offering a full and rewarding educational experience as well as reasonable tuition.

With a rich heritage dating back to the 19th century, West Chester University was founded in 1871 as West Chester Normal School for the purpose of training teachers for the Commonwealth's newly established public schools. In 1960, West Chester State Teachers College expanded its programs to include liberal arts and graduate degrees and, as a result, dropped "Teachers" from its name. In 1983, West Chester State College became one of the 14 institutions in the State System of Higher Education. Along with its university status, the school acquired a new system of governance and the opportunity to expand its degree programs.

Today, more than 15,800 graduate and undergraduate students, along with 1,500 faculty and staff, study and work on the 406-acre campus. Situated in the Borough of West Chester, the campus is a picturesque mix of Gothic, Victorian, and modern architecture with pleasant, tree-shaded walks.

Strategically located at the center of the mid-Atlantic corridor between New York City and Washington, D.C., West Chester is just 25 miles west of Philadelphia and 17 miles north of Wilmington.

Information on Admission

Office of Admissions

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