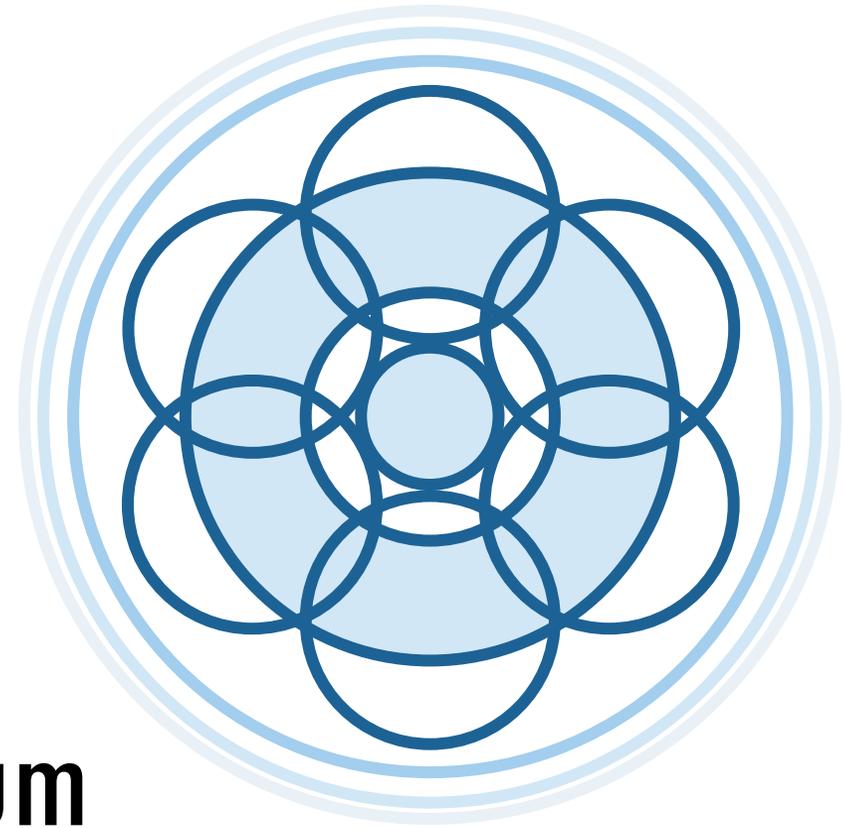


INTRODUCTION TO THE PNI PRACTICUM

Level I

Smaller-scale PNI



PNI Practicum

A project-based course in participatory narrative inquiry

cfkurtz.com/pnipracticum

Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 International License

Copyright 2023 Cynthia F. Kurtz

ABOUT YOU

Take a moment to introduce yourselves and (quickly) answer these questions:

Where are you,
geographically
speaking?

Where do you live?

Why are you
here?

What brought you to
this moment? What
interested you in this
course?

What do you want to
get out of this
course?

What would you like to
have at the end of it that
you don't have now?

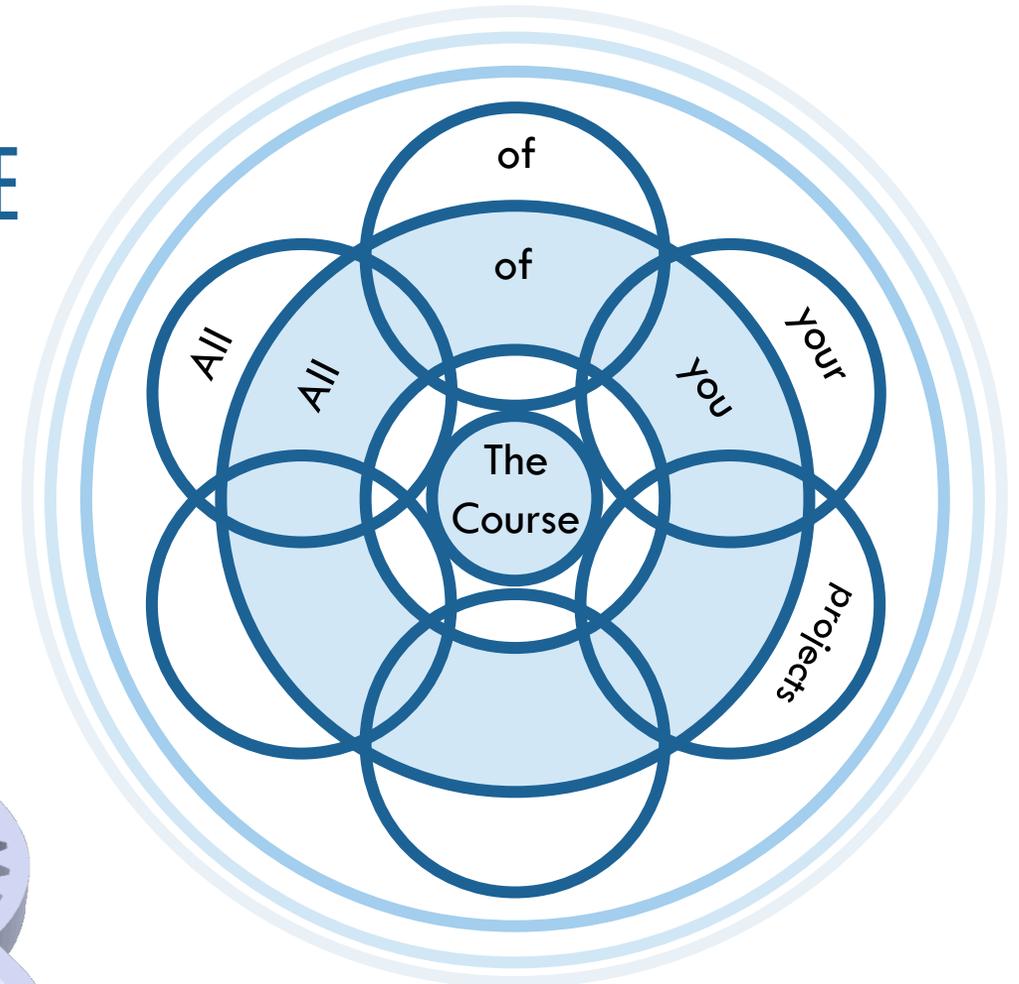
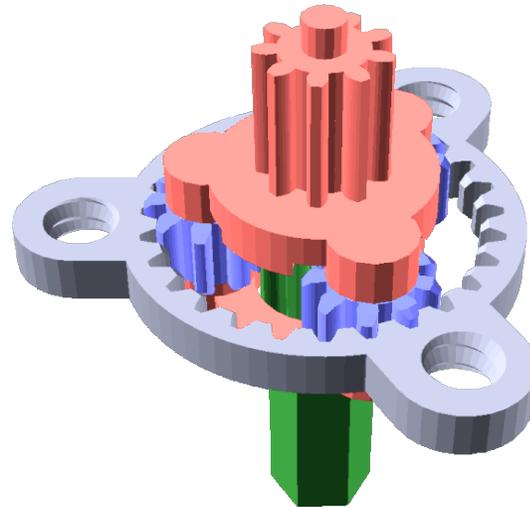
How much do you
already **know** about
PNI?

What about story work in
general? Research?
Facilitation? Anything else
you'd like to mention?

THIS IS A PROJECT-BASED COURSE

In the PNI Practicum, every student carries out a **real PNI project**, and everyone learns from every project.

The courses work like a **planetary gear set**, in which a large outer “ring” gear (PNI) is driven by the **connected energy** of a “sun” gear (the course) and a group of “planet” gears (you and your projects). Everyone benefits – you, your project participants, PNI, and a whole world of people trying to get along with each other and make decisions together.



All of PNI

All of everybody

YOUR PROJECTS

For this project-based course to work, your projects must be:



Synchronized

All project activities will take place on the same schedule, so you can talk about them as they happen.

Exploratory

Projects should be small (24-72 stories) and adaptable. Large, ambitious projects will not fit into our time frame.

Not secret

Everyone must be willing and able to talk about their projects, so you can learn from each other.

ONLINE MEETINGS — SEMINAR

Your primary course meetings should begin on the first day of the course and repeat every other week. They should be **two hours** long. In each meeting, follow this rough schedule.

Report in

Talk about what happened when you carried out the previous outside-of-class activity. Give everyone a chance to share their experiences.

Discuss readings

Talk about the week's readings. What surprised you? What confused you? Did you disagree with any of what you read? What would you like to explore further?

Plan out

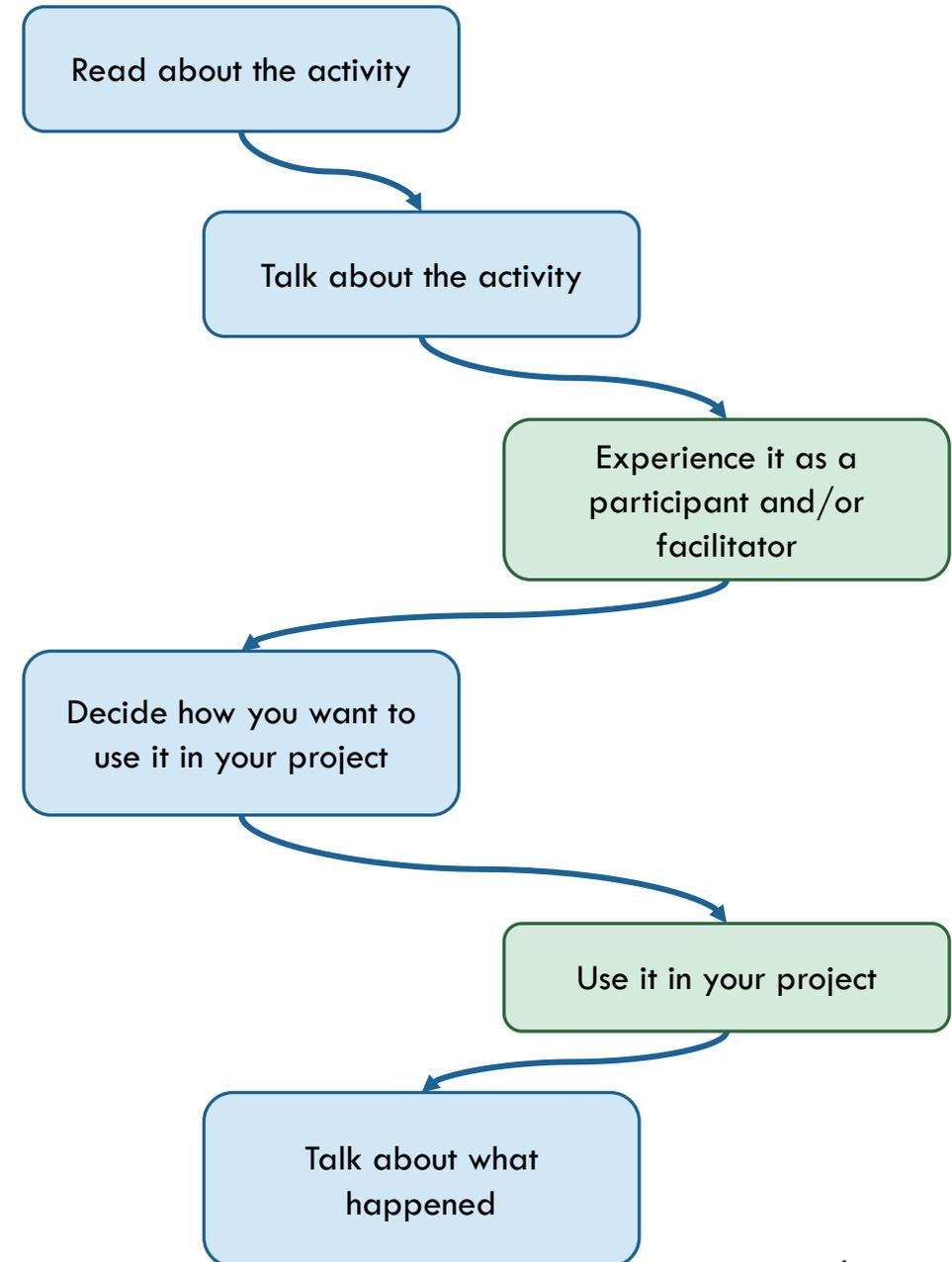
Describe your plans for the next outside-of-class activity. Give everyone a chance to present their plans and get feedback and advice.

ONLINE MEETINGS – SANDBOX

Sandbox meetings should also happen **every other week**, but they should start the *second* week of the course and should alternate with the project progress meetings.

In each sandbox meeting, you will participate in an activity or exercise similar to the ones you will be facilitating in your own projects. After each activity, you can talk about how you intend to use it.

Because this is a self-running course, **someone will need to read the instructions** before each sandbox meeting in order to facilitate the session. One or two people can do this for the whole course, or you can all take turns doing it.



GROUND RULES

Before the online meetings

At least **skim the short readings**, so you are ready to discuss the relevant topics and activities.

If you have agreed to facilitate a sandbox session, familiarize yourself with those instructions beforehand.

During the online meetings

Do **respect everyone's time** and attention. Don't dominate the discussion. Give everyone time to speak.



In your project

Do put your time and energy into your project! You will learn about PNI in this course, but only if you actually **do a PNI project**.

About other people's projects

Be respectfully curious. Ask useful questions. Don't insult or make fun of people, their projects, or their mistakes.

YOUR COURSE MATERIALS

Description

- This presentation, which describes the course.

Syllabus

- What you will read and do in each week of the course.

Activities

- What you will do in your project in each part of the course.

Sandbox Instructions

- How to carry out the sandbox exercises.

Course Log

- A file with questions you can answer to create a record of the course and of your project.

COURSE READINGS

In each part of the course, the syllabus lists readings that are:

Short

20-40 pages from *WWS Simplified*

Medium

20-40 pages from *Working with Stories*

Long

Selections from 1-2 other books on relevant topics

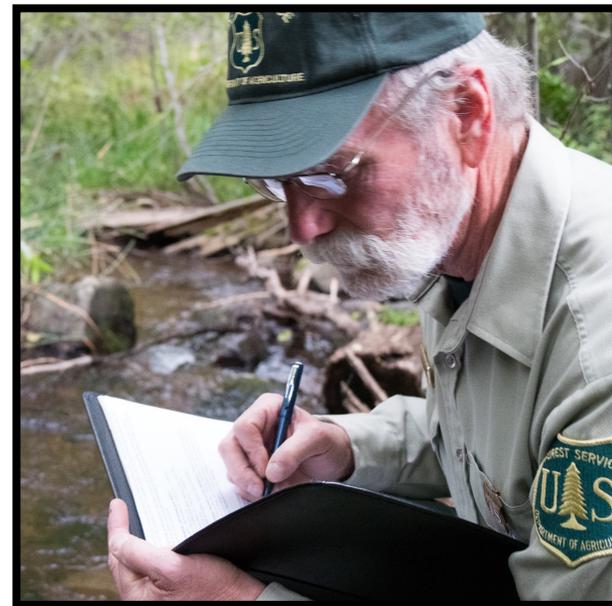
Only the short readings are required. Please read or skim them before the seminar meetings. You can also read the medium or long readings, dip into them briefly, or save them for later.

COURSE LOG

The course log is a record of the course, **written by you**. There are many questions for you to answer as you go through each part of the course.

Please make this document your own. Add your own questions, notes, comments, thoughts, photos, recordings – whatever you think you will want to remember when you look back on the course later.

The course log is optional, but you may find it helpful.



On what **dates** are you taking this course?

Why are you taking the course? What do you hope to get out of it?

What are your **expectations** going in?

Describe the **project** you intend to carry out as you take the course.

...

Activity – Observe a story-sharing conversation

Record (or take notes on) a casual conversation. Listen to the recording (or look at your notes). Find the stories in the conversation. Answer some questions about them.

In your attempts to draw out stories, what **worked**, and what didn't? Did anything surprise you?

Answer the following questions for up to three of the **stories** you heard on the recording.

What was the story about ?	What was the story about ?	What was the story about ?
How did the story start ? How was its abstract offered and accepted? Did you hear any reframing or negotiation?	How did the story start ? How was its abstract offered and accepted? Did you hear any reframing or negotiation?	How did the story start ? How was its abstract offered and accepted? Did you hear any reframing or negotiation?

...

Activity – Facilitate a Sensemaking Workshop

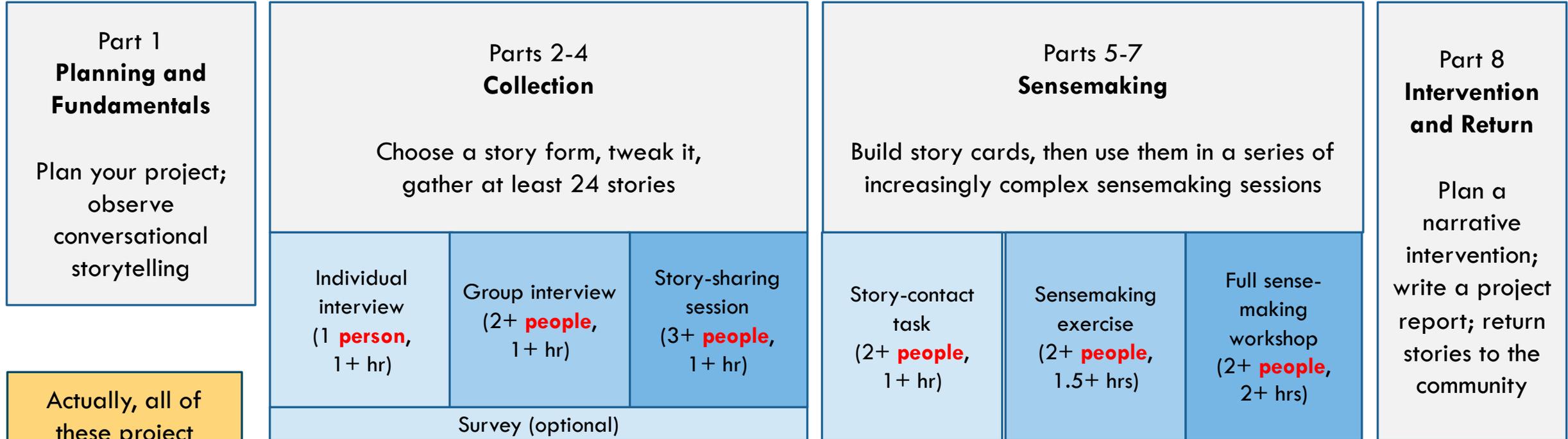
Help a group of people use your previously collected stories to make sense of your topic. Record the session and/or take notes on it. (If you do more than one workshop, you might want to copy and paste this table of questions for each workshop.)

What parts of the workshop were **easier or harder** than you expected? What felt natural to you, and what was difficult?

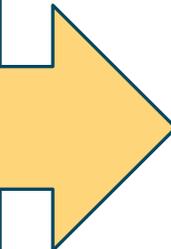
What part(s) of the workshop did the participants seem to **like** most and least?

What did you notice about the **dynamics** of the group? How did the energy flow throughout the workshop? Did it change as time went by?

ACTIVITIES – CARRYING YOUR PNI PROJECT



Actually, all of these project activities are **offset by two weeks**. This is so you can do them after you have experienced them in a sandbox session.



These activities are designed to be **iterative**. The idea is to **build your skills through practice**, with discussion, feedback, and reflection in between.

Schedule the “people” sessions with your 6+ project participants. You can ask the same people every time, different people every time, or a mix. You can ask specific people to join specific session types (interviews, etc), or you can let them choose.

This is an ideal schedule! You probably won't be able to match it exactly. Do your best to practice facilitating story collection and sensemaking multiple times during your project.

TIME COMMITMENTS

Here are some **minimal time estimates** for each two-week part of the course. You may or may not need more time than this, depending on how ambitious you want to be.

Part	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
TOTAL	9 hrs	10 hrs	11 hrs	12 hrs	17 hrs	8 hrs	8 hrs	12 hrs
Activities	Observe story sharing: 2 hrs	Plan project: 3 hrs	Choose and tweak story form: 2 hrs	Conduct group interview: 1 hr	Design story-sharing session: 1 hr	Design sensemaking session: 1 hr	Design sensemaking session: 1 hr	Design sensemaking session: 2 hrs
			Conduct individual interview: 1 hr	Transcribe stories, prepare story card: 6 hrs	Conduct story-sharing session: 2 hrs	Conduct sensemaking session: 2 hrs	Conduct sensemaking session: 2 hrs	Conduct sensemaking workshop: 4 hrs
			Transcribe stories, improve story form: 2 hrs		Transcribe stories, prepare story cards: 6 hrs			
Readings	2 hrs	2 hrs	1 hr	No readings	3 hrs	No readings	No readings	1 hr
Meetings	4 hrs	4 hrs	4 hrs	4 hrs	4 hrs	4 hrs	4 hrs	4 hrs
Course log	1 hr	1 hr	1 hr	1 hr	1 hr	1 hr	1 hr	1 hr

ABOUT YOUR PROJECT

Please take a moment to talk about your project plans.

Is there a **particular project** you plan to do in this course?

Can you briefly describe it?

If you don't have a particular project in mind, **what sort of project** are you interested in doing?

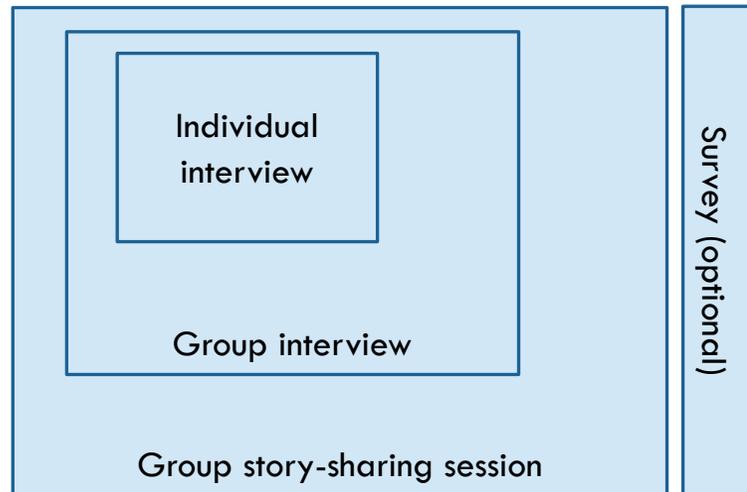
What are some topics you'd like to explore?

How do you feel about **collaborating on shared projects** with other students?

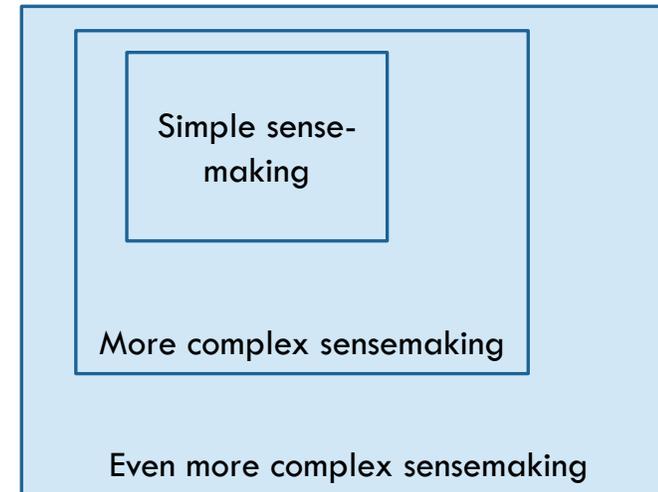
Does that seem appealing to you?
Or would you rather work on your own project?

IF YOU FALL BEHIND

It might be hard to schedule all of your participatory sessions on your project schedule. People might be busy. They might say they'll come but not show up. Or you might get sick or have a busy month. *That's fine.* You will be practicing story collection and sensemaking **three times each**. So even if things get delayed, you should still be able to complete all of your course activities.



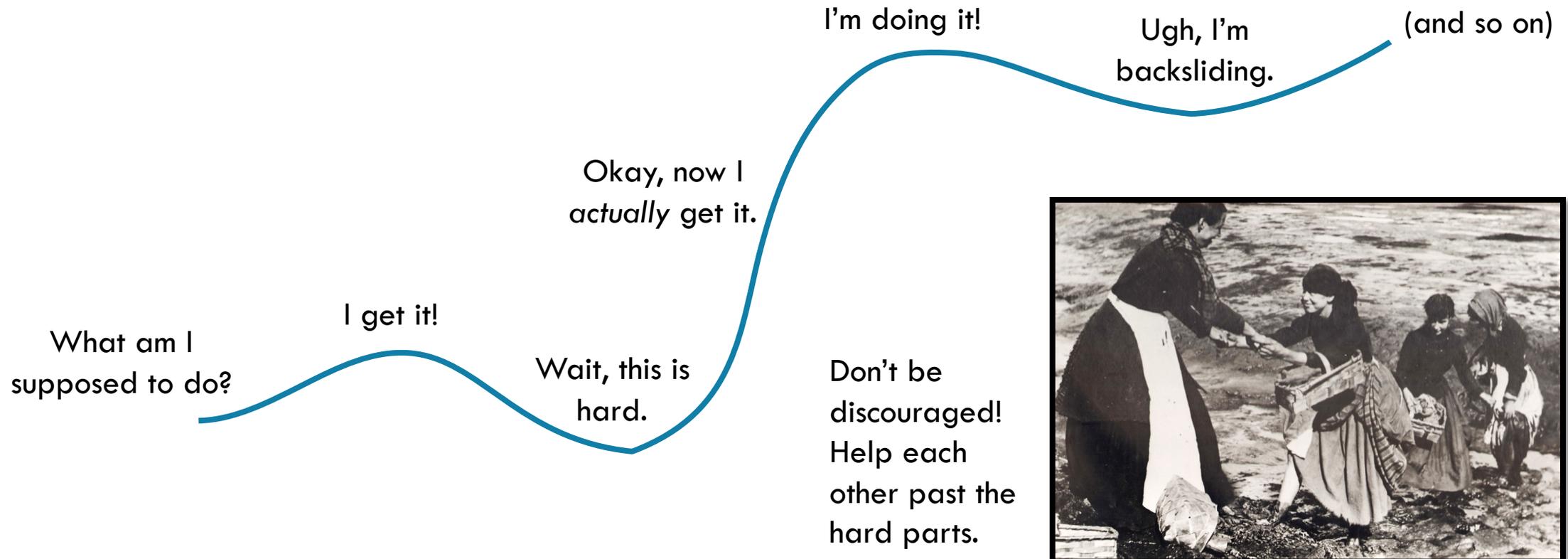
You should **gather at least 24 stories** during the three story-collection parts of the course, ideally with one activity every two weeks. However, you will have **six weeks** to do this. If you end up collecting all of your stories in the last week of the six (and in only one way), that's okay. It will be a busy week, but you can do it.



You should **hold three sensemaking sessions**, ideally one every two weeks. But again, you will have **six weeks** to do this. If you end up holding all three sessions in the same busy week – or even if you can only fit in two sessions – that's okay. It won't ruin the course for you.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Because this course is all about learning by doing, you are likely to find that your **learning curve** looks something like this:



LAST THING: IMAGINE THE END OF THE COURSE

Take a moment to discuss your expectations for the course. What does everyone think will happen? What does everyone want to happen? What can you do at the start of the course to help everyone get what they want and need?

Imagine that the course is over, and it went **much better** than you thought it would. What happened?

What do you think you can do to make that happen, individually and collectively?

Imagine that the course is over, and it was a **waste of your time**. What happened?

What do you think you can do to avoid that happening, individually and collectively?

IMAGE CREDITS

Public domain if no source cited.

Planetary gear set https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Planetary_Gear_Animation.gif

Synchronized rowing <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Achter.jpg>

Rules <https://www.flickr.com/photos/maggiejones/1378287920>

Man writing in log book <https://www.flickr.com/photos/forestservicenw/32464473572/>

A helping hand https://www.flickr.com/photos/hartlepool_museum/6004547665/