
CUNY

COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL ORGANIZING

PSC 31147-1 (88295)
Monday 5:00-7:30 pm
Fall 2015
Phone: 212-594-8009

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"...community organizing provides a way to merge various strategies for neighborhood empowerment. Organizing begins with the premise that (1) the problems facing inner city communities do not result from a lack of effective solutions, but from a lack of power to implement these solutions; (2) that the only way for communities to build long-term power is by organizing people and money around a common vision; and (3) that a viable organization can only be achieved if a broadly based indigenous leadership – not one or two charismatic leaders – can knit together the diverse interests of their local institutions." -- Barack Obama, 1990

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce students to the theory and practice of effective community organizing. This semester, we will define what community organizing is and identify its value base; explore strategies and tactics of organizing, historical roots and models, current models of organizing and principals and values of community organizing. Students will examine methods and techniques of organizing, including developing leadership, membership building, and campaign development; and consider how community members engage in organizing and in the broader social justice movement.

COURSE OBJECTIVE

- To distinguish community organizing from other approaches to addressing problems in communities.
- To examine the essential concept of power – what it is, how it is used and how communities expand and strengthen their political power through organizing.
- To determine how to identify and engage community members in organizing campaigns.
- To practice skills for developing community leaders and to consider how and why community organizing requires self-determination of community members.
- To differentiate between the problems that affect communities and the issues around which communities organize, viewing social, economic and political problems from an organizer's perspective.
- To apply the concepts of power and self-determination to understanding the main components of community organizing campaigns.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The priority of the course is to keep up with the assigned readings and to participate in class discussions

HOW YOU WILL BE GRADED:

25% - Attendance/Class Participation/Written Assignments
10% - Assignment 1: Ideal Community
15% - Assignment 2: Examining Power

Class participation

This course is designed to maximize learning opportunities and professional growth through interaction, critical thinking, and self-motivation to improve and take advantage of one's learning opportunities. The key to demonstrating these skills is being present in class and contributing to classroom discussion. All students should come to class with questions about the readings and may be called upon to present these questions. Students who do not come to class on time or do not participate actively in class will be unable to earn a course grade higher than a B. The instructor may request that any students who miss 3 or more classes withdraw from the class.

Field Assignment

Students will devote at least 10 hours to field assignment over the course of the semester that will support the work of your final assignment.

ASSIGNMENTS

Please submit all written assignments both electronically and with a hard copy. In addition to the following we may have brief written assignments for practicing and reflecting on the topics discussed in class.

Assignment 1 - "Describe your ideal community?"

- **2 page paper, double spaced**
- **Due Week 3 – Monday, September 21**

This paper should be no longer than 2 pages and double spaced. It should be written independently of any class readings and should not refer to specific points in any of the readings. Rather, it should be a reflection of your own thoughts on the topic. Grading will be based on your ability to express a coherent thought and build an argument for your ideas.

Assignment 2 – Examining Power

- **Oral presentation and 2-3 page paper, double-spaced, with sources cited.**
- **Due Week 5 – Monday, October 5**

This assignment will explore what power is in community organizing, engage in dialogue about organizing with a small group of other students, and bring your observations to the full class for discussion.

Students will pair off to work with on this assignment. Choose one of the two readings that examine an aspect of community organizing (see below). Supplement your understanding of the reading as needed, with other readings, films, experiences, or interviews. (Note that all students will review both readings, but you will choose only one for your group presentation.)

In pairs, plan a presentation/discussion for the class (length of time to be determined) and write-up a brief, 2-3 page outline of your presentation. Please cover the following in your presentation:

- Summarize the key points of the reading, particularly those related to power.
- What are 3 substantial questions about power raised by the reading that the class can

discuss? Please consider the forces of social, political and economic power that cause and perpetuate the problem or problems that your reading explores, as well as the different forms and manifestations of power reviewed in class and in class readings.

- Facilitate a discussion with the class about the questions your group raised.
- Briefly describe your process as a group, including citing any additional research.

1) Alinsky, S. *Rules for Radicals*.

Chapter on Tactics: Reviews several organizing campaigns from the 50's and 60's where Alinsky was involved, and touches on some labor movement campaigns led by John L. Lewis. Alinsky also outlines his take on a series of rules for effective campaigns.

2) Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Chapter One. The foundational text for popular education based on the author's work in Brazil.

Assignment 3 – Analyzing an Organizing Campaign

- **Double-spaced with sources cited.**
- **Due Week 9 – Monday, November 9.**

This assignment will apply the concepts you learned in class to a community organizing campaign. You will demonstrate that you understand the basic concepts of organizing and that you can reflect on what is successful or not successful in the practice of community organizing. You will also demonstrate your ability to use multiple sources to obtain the information needed to complete your analysis.

Choose from the list of three organizing scenarios. Describe and analyze the campaign issue, addressing the following:

What is the **problem** experienced by members of the community?

What is the **issue** in the campaign?

Who are the **constituents** affected by the issue?

Who are the potential **leaders** of the campaign? (Describe their characteristics and name some individuals if possible.)

What are the roles of any professional **organizers** or staff? How is their role different from that of constituent leaders, and how do they carry out their roles?

Who could be the specific person who is the **target** of the campaign?

What **strategies** will the campaign use?

What are some possible **demands** of the organizing campaign?

Describe in as much detail as possible some key action or **actions** of the campaign, such as a mass accountability session with a public official, a public demonstration, or whatever actions flow from the strategy.

What kinds of **choices** does the organization face in developing, planning and implementing this campaign? How do members, leaders, and staff address these choices?

In your view, how **effective** can this campaign be, according to the goals of community organizing (such as building a base of power, winning concrete demands).

What social or political **impact** can this campaign have?

Sources: You may use academic resources; reliable mass media sources; interviews. You may use organization websites for your own background information, to gain direct contact

information, or to learn about possible resources, but please do not rely on these websites. They are often not up-to-date for grassroots organizing groups and are generally promotional tools, not sources of objective information. Keep in mind that for current campaigns, interviews are likely to be essential information sources.

You may work on your own, in pairs or small groups to complete this assignment.

Assignment 4: Developing an Organizing Campaign

- **Final Paper (12 - 15 double-spaced typed pages with sources cited)**
- **Due Week 15 – Monday, December 21**

In preparation for your final paper, you will need to identify an organizing issue in your community. Through your own observations, discuss both issues that affect everyone who lives in the community and issues that affect specific groups such as seniors, families, newly arrived immigrants, women etc.

Second, interview at least 15 community residents and ask them to identify issues that they are concerned about. Please summarize the results of your interviews in the paper.

Choose one of the issues that the community members identified to create a community organizing campaign. Using the organizing methods that we talked about during the semester, discuss the ways in which you might organize a campaign to facilitate change around this issue. Who are the key players? What are your targets? What is the community power structure? How will you involve community members? What are the short-term and long-term goals? What are the organizing tactics and strategies you would use to engage community members and create change? Imagine what the outcome might be.

You may also choose an issue that is already being addressed by the community that you can build an organizing campaign around – just make sure you incorporate your own critical thinking in your description of this process. Remember details are important. If you write that you will organize 100 community residents for a meeting, provide details about how you will get 100 residents to come to the meeting.

Assignment 5: Journal entries

Each student is required to submit **5 journal entries** based on the readings for the designated days. Specific days are up to you, just be sure to have completed 5 by the end of the semester. Each should be about 3 typed pages, including in-text citations. Specific journal prompts will be provided at least a week in advance. These entries will not be accepted late except in cases of medical emergency.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, or any other form of academic misconduct will result in a failing grade on the assignment and can lead to a range of disciplinary actions by the University as described in the Code of Academic Conduct.

You are responsible for understanding the meaning of plagiarism for this class. You can avoid plagiarism by knowing what it means and by knowing how to correctly cite and paraphrase work by others. For information: <http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/QuotingSources.html>

Citing Sources: For class papers I expect you to use the following citation guide for the Chicago Manual of Style, available online:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html. When you draw on a source you can use either the humanities style footnote and bibliography, or the "author-date" citation in parentheses and then a reference at the end. Note that for any paper you must include both an in-text citation (parenthetical) AND a bibliography at the end.

The American Political Science Association also provides this quick citation guide:
<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocAPSA.html>

Required Texts

BOOKS

- Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 1970.
- Sen, Rinku. *Stir It Up: Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2001.
- Kim Bobo, Jackie Kendall, & Steve Max (1991/96) *Organizing for Social Change: A Manual for Activists in the 1990's*, Seven Locks Press, 2001.
- Branch, Taylor. *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63*, Simon & Schuster, 1989.
- Alinsky, Saul. *Rules for Radicals*, Vintage, 1989
- Joan Minieri, Paul Getsos, and Kim Klein. *Tools for Radical Democracy: How to Organize for Power in Your Community*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2007.

ARTICLES and OTHER TEXTS

- Phelan, Joseph. "Get in the Game: Civic Participation and Community Organizing," April 2008, Miami Workers Center.
- Winkleman, Lee. "Integrated Voter Engagement: A Proven Model to Increase Civic Engagement," Funders Committee on Civic Participation, 2009.
- Ruth Milkman and Kent Wong. "Voices from the Frontlines: Organizing Immigrant Workers in Los Angeles," Center for Labor Research and Education, University of California at Los Angeles, February 2000.
- Carlson, Neil F. "The Making of a Movement: How Organizing Is Transforming Housing in New York City," Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development, November 2005.
- Richard L. Wood, Brad Fulton, and Kathy Partridge. "Building Bridges Building Power: Developments in Institution-Based Community Organizing," Interfaith Funders, 2013.
- Nikrin, Bina Thompson. "Community Organizing and Citizen Involvement: Case Studies from the Twin Cities Training Program for Neighborhood Organizers," Cura Report, Winter 2005.
- Sibora Gjecovi, Esther James, and Jeff Chenoweth. "Immigrant-Led Organizers in Their Own Voices: Local Realities and Shared Visions," Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., May 2006.
- Chris Benner, Tony LoPresti, Martha Matsuoka, Manuel Pastor, and Rachel Rosner. "Immigrant Workers Empowerment and Community Building: A Review of Issues and Strategies for Increasing Workforce and Economic Opportunity for Immigrant Workers," Center for Justice, Tolerance & Community, University of California Santa Cruz, April 2005.
- Whitman, Gordon. "Beyond Advocacy: The History and Vision of the PICO Network," Social Policy Magazine, Winter 2006-2007.
- Petersen-Smith, Khury. "Black Lives Matter: A New Movement Takes Shape," International Socialist Review, Issue 96, Spring 2015.
- Garza, Alicia. "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement," The Feminist Wire, October 2014.
- Griffith, Mark Winston. "The Black Organizer Blues," Gotham Gazette, July 7, 2003.
- Williams, Nat Chioke. "Making Black Lives Matter," Hill-Snowdon Foundation, 2015.
- Selected exercises from Transforming Lives and Communities: Community Organizing for YOU!, Trainer's Manual Workshop I, The Community Health Advocacy Initiative and Center for Community Change, 2000.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The following is the overview of the course. In addition to the readings and topics listed, we will have guest speakers, student presentations, and additional readings, all based to the extent possible on student interests.

Throughout the semester, the instructor will inform the class about additional readings and speakers, and list this information on Blackboard. The syllabus is likely to change to accommodate both current events in community organizing and the availability of guest speakers, so please check for updates in assigned readings and class plans.

Week 1 – Monday, August 31

Introduction and Overview

- Discuss course assignments and requirements
- What community organizing is and how it is different from other approaches to addressing community problems.
- Why Organize Exercise
- Four Strategies Matrix Exercise

Week 2 – Thursday, September 10

Understanding Power: What is Power? How Do We Get It and How Does It Relate to Community Change?

Readings

- Alinsky, Saul. Rules for Radicals, Vintage, 1989. Pgs. 49-61; 113-125.
- Joan Minieri, Paul Getsos, & Kim Klein. Tools for Radical Democracy: How to Organize for Power in Your Community, San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2007, Part One: Building Community Power, Taking It On.
- Sen, Rinku. Stir It Up: Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy, San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2001, Introduction, xliii –ixv.

Week 3 – Monday, September 21 (Assignment 1 is due)

Engaging People from the Community in Organizing: Working with new constituencies. Recruitment techniques.

Activity: Doorknocking with Community Action for Safe Apartments

Readings

- Joan Minieri, Paul Getsos, & Kim Klein. Tools for Radical Democracy: How to Organize for Power in Your Community, San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2007, Chapter 3.
- Alinsky, Saul. Rules for Radicals, Vintage, 1989, The Education of an Organizer.

Week 4 – Monday, September 28

Developing Community Leaders: Identifying leaders and what leadership means in community organizing.

Readings

- Joan Minieri, Paul Getsos, & Kim Klein. Tools for Radical Democracy: How to Organize for Power in Your Community, San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2007, Chapter 5.
- Sen, Rinku. Stir It Up: Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy, San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2001, Chapter 5.

Activity: Students can start conducting one-on-one outreach in community for Assignment 3. (Students can work in pairs for first one-on-one and then individually for the rest of contacts.)

Week 5 – Monday, October 5 (Assignment 2 is due)

Identifying Issues and Strategies: Doing effective research and power analysis with community members. Choosing a target and strategy. Comparisons with online organizing efforts.

Readings

- Joan Minieri, Paul Getsos, & Kim Klein. Tools for Radical Democracy: How to Organize for Power in Your Community, San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2007, Part Three: Developing and Running Campaigns, Identifying the Right Issue and Researching the Politics of an Issue.
- Kim Bobo, Jackie Kendall, Steve Max. Organizing for Social Change: a manual for activists in the 1990's. Washington: Seven Locks Press, Chapters 1-5.

Guest Speakers:

- Virgilio Aran – Laundry Workers Center
- Linda Sarsour – Arab American Association

Week 6 – Monday, October 19

Identifying Issues and Strategies Continued and Class Presentations on Examining Power

Refer to readings for Assignment One

- Freire, Paulo. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 1970: Chapter One and Chapter Two.
- Alinsky, Saul. Rules for Radicals. Chapter on Tactics.

Guest Speaker:

- Amaha Kassa – African Communities Together

Week 7 – Monday, October 26

Implementing and Evaluating a Campaign: Developing a member-led plan. Managing collective and direct actions.

Readings

- Joan Minieri, Paul Getsos, and Kim Klein. *Tools for Radical Democracy: How to Organize for Power in Your Community*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2007, Chapter 10-12 and Resource H.

Film presentation: A Day's Work, A Day's Pay

Week 8 – Monday, November 2
Class Presentations for Assignment 3

Immigrant organizing: The challenges and effective strategies for organizing immigrants.

Readings

- Nikrin, Bina Thompson. "Community Organizing and Citizen Involvement: Case Studies from the Twin Cities Training Program for Neighborhood Organizers," Cura Report, Cura Center for Urban Affairs, University of Minnesota, Winter 2005.
- Chris Benner, Tony LoPresti, Martha Matsuoka, Manuel Pastor, and Rachel Rosner. "Immigrant Workers Empowerment and Community Building: A Review of Issues and Strategies for Increasing Workforce and Economic Opportunity for Immigrant Workers," Center for Justice, Tolerance & Community, University of California Santa Cruz, April 2005.
- Ruth Milkman and Kent Wong. "Voices from the Frontlines: Organizing Immigrant Workers in Los Angeles," Center for Labor Research and Education, University of California at Los Angeles, February 2000.
- Sibora Gjecovi, Esther James, and Jeff Chenoweth. "Immigrant-Led Organizers in Their Own Voices: Local Realities and Shared Visions," Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc., May 2006.

Guest speakers:

- Carl Lipcombe – Black Alliance for Just Immigration
- Juwahir Yusuf – Black Alliance for Just Immigration
- Ligia Gualpa – Workers Justice Project

Week 9 – Monday, November 9
Class Presentations for Assignment 3

Movement for Black Lives: Since the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, organizers, activists, and Black community members across the country have sparked the Movement for Black Lives. We'll examine this movement, its growth, and the challenges of sustaining long term direct action and organizing work.

Readings

- Griffith, Mark Winston. "The Black Organizer Blues." Gotham Gazette, July 7, 2003, <http://www.gothamgazette.com/print/470>.
- Petersen-Smith, Khury. "Black Lives Matter: A New Movement Takes Shape," International Socialist Review, Issue 96, Spring 2015.
- Garza, Alicia. A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement, The Feminist Wire, October 2014.
- Williams, Nat Chioke. Making Black Lives Matter, Hill-Snowdon Foundation, 2015.

Guest speakers:

- Mark Winston Griffith – Brooklyn Movement Center
- Ben Ndugga-Kabuye – Black Alliance for Just Immigration
- Ingrid Benedict – Movement for Black Lives

Week 10 – Monday, November 16

Organizing in Action: The class will engage with a roundtable of community organizers who will share their experiences and provide information about how they identify and develop leaders, select campaigns, and build power with leaders.

Guest Speakers:

- Kenia Morales/Chris Bilal – Street Wise and Safe
- Jeremy Saunders – Voices of Community Activists and Leaders
- David Shuffler – Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice

Week 11 – Monday, November 23

The Anatomy of an Organizing Campaign: How do various community organizing groups work and what kind of organizing are they doing.

Readings

- Branch, Taylor. Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63, Simon & Schuster, 1989, Chapter 5: Montgomery Bus Boycott.

Guest Speaker:

- Onleilove Alston – Faith in New York

Week 12 – Monday, November 30

Electoral and Political Organizing: Understanding the rules and restrictions around civic engagement organizing including 501c3 vs. 501c4, legislative advocacy, and how to create change through the political system.

Readings

- Phelan, Joseph. "Get in the Game: Civic Participation and Community Organizing," April 2008, Miami Workers Center.
- Winkleman, Lee. "Integrated Voter Engagement: A Proven Model to Increase Civic Engagement," Funders Committee on Civic Participation, 2009.

Guest speakers:

- Cathy Dang – CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities
- Mo George – Community Voices Heard

Week 13 – Monday, December 7

Movement Building and Considering Models of Organizing

Expanding and using the power of communities to create deep social change. Reviewing some proposed 'models' of organizing.

Readings

- Richard L. Wood, Brad Fulton, and Kathy Partridge. "Building Bridges Building Power: Developments in Institution-Based Community Organizing" Interfaith Funders, 2013.
- Carlson, Neil F. "The Making of a Movement: How Organizing Is Transforming Housing in New York City," Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development, November 2005.

Guest Speakers:

- Joo-Hyun Kang – Communities United for Police Reform

Week 14 – Monday, December 14
Final Assignment Student Presentations

Week 15 – Monday, December 21
Assignment 4 is due

Communications and Fundraising: How do organizing groups convey their message? How do groups raise money to support their work?

Guest speakers:

- Sam Miller – Picture the Homeless
- Anthonine Pierre – Brooklyn Movement Center