

Organizing for Social Change 37:575:359:01  
Hickman Hall Room 270 Thursdays 3:55 – 6:55 PM  
Professor Janice Fine (fine@work.rutgers.edu)  
Office hours: Thursdays 10-3 or by appointment  
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## **Course Overview**

Our democracy is imperfect as long as the rewards that accrue to those who organize are so dramatically skewed by class, race, ethnicity, gender and sexual preference. Classics of American politics from Tocqueville to Truman have celebrated the nation's tradition of pluralism, interest group formation and grassroots participation but as Schattschneider famously opined: "*The flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent...*"

This course examines the history, theory, art and practice of community organizing.

Organizing is how individuals come together to pursue their interests. It is a life skill that students will need no matter the field they end up pursuing or the community in which they end up settling.

How do students, low and moderate income people, immigrants and people of color come together to form organizations and take action to win on the issues they care about? How do organizations build power? How do they develop winning strategies?

The curriculum and examples are drawn from my twenty-plus years working as an organizer and trainer before entering academia and from classics of political science, economics and sociology that shed light on key ideas. The course will cover the building blocks of organizing including: recruitment, how to run a meeting, building the organization, fundraising, power and power structure analysis, corporate research, strategy, how to plan effective actions and designing issue campaigns. We will read both practical and scholarly work in these topics and explore them through class discussions, exercises and role plays.

## **The Goals of This Course Are:**

- 1) To examine the theory and practice of organizing.
- 2) To learn a set of concrete organizing skills.
- 3) To analyze the role of community organizing as an empowerment strategy in disadvantaged and marginalized communities, especially communities of color and think about its relationship to broader movements for social change.
- 4) To engage in dialogue and debate around issues of power, inequality, organizing and politics.

## **Course Requirements**

**Weekly Discussion Questions:** In order to help prepare for discussions during class, students must submit written questions on the readings due each week through the sakai drop-box. Homework cannot be handwritten. You have the option to skip TWO weeks of your choice. I will be grading the homework: one check means you must re-do it, two checks means it is acceptable, three checks means it is good and four means it is excellent. Occasionally, I will throw out extra credit questions that you can hand in the following week. Finally, I will expect these questions on the day they are due. If they are more than one week late, I will deduct one check from the grade and will not accept any homework after it is more than two weeks late.

**One-on-Ones, Small Group Participation and Class Discussions:** Each week at the start of class, students will engage in a one-on-one conversation with each other. Most weeks students will also meet in small groups to plan role plays and exercises, discuss the reading assignments or work on strategy development. The richness of our larger conversations about the reading will be totally dependent upon having done the reading ahead of time and bringing thoughts and ideas to the larger discussion.

**Essays:** Students will write two 6-8 page essays based upon their reflections on the main issues and themes that emerged in the readings, lectures, role plays and class discussions. Please remember that you **MUST** refer to several different class readings pertaining to the question.

Essay #1: What is power? What is the relationship between power and social change?  
DUE: February 24<sup>th</sup>

Essay #2: What is organizing? What is the relationship between organizing and social change?  
DUE: April 7<sup>th</sup>

### **Group Assignment**

**Strategy Chart:** Over the course of the second half of the semester, student groups will collectively choose an issue and then meet weekly to work on each column of the strategy chart. Students will need to work on the chart and conduct research on the issue and the components of the chart outside of class and by the final day of class must present a power point of a full strategy chart, timeline and written campaign plan to be handed in lieu of a final exam. To ensure that all group participants are contributing, students will be asked to grade their peers.

DUE: April 28<sup>th</sup> in class

**Attendance:** Class meets only once a week and attendance is mandatory. You should have no unexcused absences. **After the second unexcused absence, you will be marked down one letter grade per unexcused absence.** This means that if you are at a B+ you would receive a B. You must also arrive at class on time. Students arriving more than ten minutes late will be penalized.

## Readings

1. All of the required articles are available on the web through Sakai. Go to <http://sakai.rutgers.edu>
2. Enter your Rutgers ID and password in the upper right corner
3. Click on the tab that says 37 575 359
4. Click on “Resources” at the left
5. Click on the folder titled “ S10 Resources”

Click on the folder for the week you want, then the file you want to download. Many of the readings are in Adobe Acrobat format. If your computer doesn't have it, you can download the reader for free at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

## Grading

Discussion Questions	25%
Essay One	25%
Essay Two	25%
Group Assignment	25%

## Week 1: January 20

*Introduction to Organizing:* This class will begin by asking students to think about their own beliefs and passions. It will go on to provide students with an understanding of what organizing is, what it entails and what the work life of an organizer looks like.

Why Organize? First One-on-one  
Organizing and Power  
Hungry Person Exercise  
Carey Daniels diary  
Some Basics on Power and other handouts

### **\*\*\*See if you can download and read prior to the first class:**

Barack Obama. 1990. "[Why organize? Problems and promise in the inner city.](#)" In Peg Knoepfle (ed.). *After Alinsky: Community Organizing in Illinois*. Springfield, IL: Illinois Issues, University of Illinois at Springfield.

### Readings for Week 2:

Saul Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals*, Chapter One: What is a Radical? 3-23  
Michael Gecan, *Going Public*: Preface: Why Organize? xi-xix Introduction: 1-16  
Kim Bobo, Kendall and Max *Organizing for Social Change*: 6-13  
Rinku Sen, *Stirring it Up* Introduction: Community Organizing-Yesterday and Today

Optional additional reading on these topics:

Gary Delgado, *Organizing the Movement* Chapter Two: The Sixties Movements: Roots of Community Organization 13-38 and *Beyond the Politics of Place: New Directions in Community Organizing in the 1990's*

## **Week 2: January 27**

*Relations of Power*: What is power? The next two classes will provide students with an understanding of the nature of power and the use and sources of power in organizing for social change. Readings and class lecture will provide an overall conceptual framework for thinking about power and in particular the systemic power of business in advanced industrial societies.

### Readings for Week 3:

John Gaventa: *Power and Powerlessness*, Power and Participation 1-32

Charles E. Lindblom *Politics and Markets: The World's Political and Economic Systems* Chapter 13, The Privileged Position of Business 170-188

## **Week 3: February 3**

*Relations of Power*, continued

### Readings for week 4:

Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years: 1954-1963*, Chapter Five: The Montgomery Bus Boycott 120-196

## **Week 4: February 10**

*Strategy and Designing Campaigns*: The essence of effective organizing is strategy and planning campaigns that accurately identify and concentrate power on specific targets for the achievement of specific goals. This class will lay out a key tool from the Midwest Academy called the Strategy chart which will form the basis for the semester-long group assignment.

Brief training on how to run a meeting

Handouts:

Bobo, Kendall and Max, *Organizing for Social Change* "Developing a Strategy" 20-34, Strategy Chart and Blank strategy charts

Bobo, Kendall and Max, "Planning and Running Meetings" 95-102

### Readings for Week Five:

Michael Lipsky, "Protest as a Political Resource", *American Political Science Review*, December 1968.

Marshall Ganz, *Why David Sometimes Wins*, Chapter One, Introduction: How David Beat Goliath 3-21

### **Week 5 February 17**

*More on Campaign Strategy Development:* In this class we will further explore strategy. Students will also form into groups of 4 and choose the issue they will develop into a full-blown strategy chart.

Handout: Campaign Strategy Exercise: Sludge Incinerators in Providence, Rhode Island

#### Reading for week 6:

Michael Gecan, *Going Public*: Part I. The Habit of Relating: 19-32, 33-46 and Part III. The Habit of Organization 129-166

### **Week 6: February 24**

*Building the Organization:* The essence of all effective organizing is recruitment and leadership development. Drawing upon ideas and exercises from Northeast Action and the IAF the next two classes will focus on the analyses, strategic approaches and concrete skills necessary to recruiting participants to an organization and involving them in building and leading it. This week we will hear from Mike Gecan, IAF National Organizer and author of *Going Public*.

First meeting of small groups: Working on the Goals column of the strategy chart

Handout: "Effective Organizing for Congregational Renewal" Mike Gecan, Industrial Areas Foundation

#### Readings for Week Seven:

Mark Warren, *Dry Bones Rattling: Community Building to Revitalize American Democracy*, Princeton University Press, 2001: Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2

Malcolm Gladwell "Six Degrees of Lois Weisberg" *the New Yorker* Jan. 11, 1999 52-63

Marshall Ganz, "The Power of Story in Social Movements", *American Sociological Association Annual Meeting*, 2001, 16 pp.

### **Week 7: March 3**

*Building the Organization* continued. This week we will hear from Arnie Graf, IAF National Organizer.

Second meeting of small groups: Working on the Goals and Organizational Considerations columns of the strategy chart

Readings for Week Eight:

Clarence Stone, *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta 1946-1988* pp. 1-12, 219-233.  
Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf and Todd Swanstrom, *Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the Twenty-first Century*, Chapter 4: 92-132 The Road Not Taken: How Federal Policy Promoted Economic Segregation and Suburban Sprawl.

**Week 8: March 10**

*Community power analysis/the Power matrix:* This class will instruct students in a concrete method developed by AGENDA for thinking carefully and critically about the distribution of economic and political power in a specific geographic community. Readings and class lecture will unpack the forces that have traditionally shaped urban and regional planning, the role played by local elites in these processes and the debates political scientists, sociologists and others have engaged in about the existence of a cohesive power elite. We will hear from veteran organizer Jane McAlevey who will teach the tool and demonstrate a power analysis.

*Due: Goals and Organizational Considerations portions of the Strategy Chart*

**Week 9: Spring Break No Class**

Readings for Week 10

Bobo, Kendall and Max: *Organizing for Social Change*, Chapter 20 “Tactical Investigations” 162-192 (read the first ten pages and skim the rest)  
Peter Dreier, unpublished article, “When Is Business Bluffing? Progressives’ Dilemma Over Capital Mobility”  
David Vogel, “Why Businessmen Distrust Their State: The Political Consciousness of American Corporate Executives” *British Journal of Political Science*, 1978 pp. 45-78.  
Boston Urban Study Group, *Who Rules Boston? A Citizen’s Guide to Reclaiming the City*, IDS, 1984. (just skim)

**Week 10: March 24**

*Movement Research:* This class will introduce students to the art and science of “tactical investigations” for organizing campaigns. We will hear from four movement researchers: Jonathan Werberg, SEIU 1199 NY, Nick Rudikoff, Change to Win.

How to do an Open Public Records Act request: John Aspray

Groups work on Allies/Constituents and Opponents column of the strategy chart:

1. Who cares about this issue enough to join in or help the organization?

- Whose problem is it? Why? How does the issue affect them?
- What do they gain if they win?
- What risks are they taking?
- What power do they have over the target?
  - Into what groups are they organized?

2. Who are your opponents?

- Why will they oppose you? How strongly do they feel about the issue?
- What will your victory cost them?
- What will they do/spend to oppose you?
- How strong are they?

Readings for week 11:

Bobo, Kendall, Max *Organizing for Social Change*, 14-19

Rinku Sen, Picking the Good Fight, in *Stirring It Up*, 48-78

Charlotte Ryan, *Prime Time Activism: Media Strategies for Grassroots Organizing*  
Chapter Three, Getting Framed: The Media Shape Reality: 53-92

Additional Reading:

Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*,  
Chapter Seven: Framing Contention, 106-122, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

**Week 11: March 31**

*Choosing an Issue, "Cutting" an Issue, and Messaging/Framing:* The first half of the class will focus on how organizations decide which issues to organize around. The second half of the class will look at how they define those issues to the constituency they are trying to reach, and through the media to the broader public. We will hear from David Donnelly, National Campaigns Director, Public Campaign, one of the most successful "media organizers".

Exercise: Choosing the Issue

Due: Allies, Constituents and Opponents Write-up

Readings for week 12:

Michal Gecan, *Going Public*, The Habit of Action, 49-99

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zack-exley/organizing-matters-the-l\\_b\\_82337.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zack-exley/organizing-matters-the-l_b_82337.html)

**Week 12: April 7 Tactics:**

*Organizer's Math, Actions and Accountability Sessions*

This session will instruct students in the basics of preparing for (including doing systematic turnout), executing and evaluating actions.

Group Work on Targets and Tactics column of the strategy chart

Action Role Play

Readings for Week 13:

Andrew Boyd, "The Web Rewires the Movement" *the Nation*, July 17, 2003

Christopher Hayes "Move On @ Ten" *The Nation*, August 4-11, 2008.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zack-exley/obama-field-organizers-pl\\_b\\_61918.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/zack-exley/obama-field-organizers-pl_b_61918.html)

Carr, David "How Obama Tapped Into Social Networks' Power" *New York Times*, November 10, 2008.

Sally Kohn, "Real Change Happens Off-Line" *Christian Science Monitor*

<http://www.communitychange.org/our-projects/movementvisionlab/blog/fury-of-response-to-op-ed-about-change-off-line/view>

Malcolm Gladwell, "Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted" *The New Yorker*, October 4, 2010.

Andrew Boyd, TRUTH IS A VIRUS: Meme Warfare and the Billionaires for Bush (or Gore)

### **Week 13: April 14**

*Culture Jamming and On-line Organizing*: This week we will debate the role and value of on-line organizing and consider the art of culture jamming and reinterpreting messages and ideas in popular culture to support organizing campaigns. We will hear from Andrew Boyd, agit-pop.com.

Group Work on Targets, Tactics, Message and Research columns of the strategy chart

Readings for week 14:

Cesar Chavez, "On Money and Organizing"

Michael Brown, "Mobilizing Resources: Raising Money" 243-261 in *Building Powerful Community Organizations: A Personal Guide to Creating Groups that Can Solve Problems and Change the World*

Kim Klein, "The Ten Most Important Things You Can Know About Fundraising" and "Getting Over the Fear of Asking"

Marjorie Fine and the Linchpin Campaign, "Untapped: How Community Organizers Can Develop and Deepen Relationships with Major Donors and Raise Big Money"

### **Week 14: April 21**

*Fundraising*: If you ain't got the dough-re-me boys, you can't support your organization! This week we will look at strategies for funding organizations. Marjorie Fine, veteran

fundraiser, foundation executive and trainer extraordinaire from the Center for Community Change will lead the training session.

Group work on Targets, Tactics, Message and Research columns of the strategy chart

Readings for week 15:

Dreier, Peter “Community Organizing for What? Progressive Politics and Movement Building in America” in *Transforming the City: Community Organizing and the Challenge of Political Change*, Marion Orr, editor.

Dreier, Peter “Organizing in the Obama Years: A Progressive Movement or a New Progressive Era?” COMM-ORG Papers

**Week 15: April 28**

Full Strategy Chart presentations