EXEC-GP 2106 - 001
Organizing for Change: An Introduction to Community Organizing

“It always seems impossible, until it’s done.”
Nelson Mandela, President of South Africa

“that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth”
Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address

“Consciousness + Commitment = Change”
Coalition of Immokalee Workers

Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service
New York University

Fall 2017
Saturday, 9:00am - 2:30pm, September 9 and September 23
Saturday, 9:00am - 12:30pm, October 21, November 4, November 18, December 9

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Classroom: Bldg: BOBS Room:LL149, Washington Square

Office hours: Immediately after class.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
Community Organizing will provide an overview and introduction to the fundamentals of organizing to win, implement, monitor and sustain change in the private and public sectors. We will compare, contrast different forms of participatory community organizing and explore the linkages between community organizing and social movement building in the 21st century. We will probe the moral values and priorities imbedded in different organizing approaches and cultivate or hone participants’ concrete skills in active listening, leadership development, strategic analysis, campaign design, research, coalition-building, mobilization, design and use of non-violent direct action, communication (including use of symbols and art), assessment, role of funders, monitoring and sustaining change. While the principal focus will be organizing in the US, we will examine approaches taken by people’s organizations in Sri Lanka and Haiti and how these approaches can be adapted in the US context as well as how strategic international support for organizing can effect change in these countries elsewhere in the world.

Through readings, class activities, speakers, reflections, and a final organizing project, students will emerge with an enlarged vocabulary and set of models for organizing, the skills to catalyze and build organizations, and the ability design campaigns for the purpose of achieve and sustain change.

Course Objectives
- Understand different models of community organizing
- Examine concepts of power – what it is, how it is used, and how groups and communities expand and strengthen their political power through organizing
- Consider how changes in civic engagement and voluntary associations impact community organizing and grassroots mobilization
- Determine how to identify and engage community members, develop leaders, and support participatory decision-making processes
- Differentiate between problems that effect communities and issues around which communities can be organized.
- Learn how to develop a campaign, message effectively, mobilize and evaluate.
- Explore various ways to ensure gains that are won are implemented and monitored.
- Understand the significance of non-violent direct actions, why they are used and how to design and carry out large-scale, multi-day engagements.
- Learn how to build and manage coalitions of diverse partners toward a common aim.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
1. Careful preparation for and serious involvement in all seminar sessions. This means reading the materials and thinking about the topic before the session. In your reading, you are asked to:

   - Question the significance of the topic and the analyses you read – is the methodology solid; does the analysis comport with the results? Search for what biases (and there are always biases) affect the choice of subject, data, and analysis.
   - Check yourself out: in what ways do the evidence and analyses conform to your own experience and assessments, and in what ways do they challenge them?
   - Consider what institutional and organizational implications can be drawn from the readings, and what types of leadership responses would be most productive.
   - Think about what you learn as a leader and manager, policy analyst and community builder.

2. Class participation is crucial and the quality and thoughtfulness of your involvement will be reflected in your final grade. If speaking in public is difficult for you, please come to see me early on.

3. Assume leadership in class activities (alone or as part of a team) – there will be many opportunities for you to experiment with your own organizing skills.

4. Students will choose a reading, a quote, something said by one of the speakers, a lingering doubt, or meaningful interaction from class following each session that seems powerful and/or problematic and then write a one-page, single-space analysis after each class. This analysis, while reflecting rigorous and careful reading, allows you to explore what excites you intellectually and how you imagine applying what you read to professional areas that interest you. Each paper must also reference at least two of the readings for the course. These five one-pagers should be submitted 1 week prior to the next class. (For example, the Sept. 9 reflection will be due on Sept. 16). Prior to the first class on September 9, you are expected to submit a bio (no more than one page) that is suitable for sharing with the class.

5. For the last session, you will prepare a plan for a grassroots advocacy campaign or project as part of a team on an issue you consider to be significant for which community organizing could be effective. This means locating the challenge that must be faced, imagining the stakeholders and the conflicting issues, researching the topic, analyzing models that have succeeded or failed, and developing one aspect of a community or organizational campaign or advocacy effort. e. The
design will be presented as a group to the entire class the last day, accompanied by an outline form written description. These are not exhaustive campaign plans, but rather informed designs which efficiently and clearly present your issue and provide pathways to address the questions that arise on the subject.

6. You will have until **Tuesday, December 12, at 11:59pm**, to offer a final reflection on the course and your experience – what you learned, what you wished you would have learned, what you plan to explore, how you think the experience will affect you if at all, and what readings or experiences had a particular impact. This should be no more than five pages maximum; additional pages for the sake of volume are not of value here. **You must also reference at least five of the readings** for the course.

7. Please submit all written assignments electronically via NYU Classes.

8. Your grade will reflect your participation in class sessions, your thoughtful planning and facilitation of the activities in the class sessions, your three one-page analyses, your final group design and presentation, and your final reflection. The combination thus reflects your analytic skills, your ability to cogently present and also participate in discussions, and your ability to link your study to anticipate future community building.

**NYU Classes**

1. Much of the reading, many announcements, class-related documents, and other useful class information will be posted to the NYU Classes site so make sure to check that regularly.
2. Also, check your NYU e-mail regularly for any other announcements.
3. You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader in order to view some of the materials. Make sure that you have it installed.

**Readings**

You are expected to complete all readings prior to the class session. Classes will not be repetitive of the readings, rather they will use the readings as a basis for discussion and departure. The first several classes are very heavy with reading in order to give you the broadest possible foundation quickly. We will be returning to earlier readings later in the course to recapitulate themes in a new key. Later sessions are deliberately lighter in reading so as to allow you time for planning your final project and for synthesizing what you are learning.

1. I suggest you purchase Joan Miniere’s *Tools for Radical Democracy* (Chardon Press Series). Many mandatory readings are from this book and it is a very useful book to have in your library.
2. While you are not required to read all of Saul Alinsky’s *Rules for Radicals* (Vintage Books, 1989) in this course, I suggest you purchase and read it as it is a classic text for community organizing.
3. I do suggest you purchase Karima Bennoune’s *Your Fatwa Does Not Apply Here*, W.W. Norton & Company, 2013. The entire book is mandatory reading and it demonstrates nuance and depth in cross-cultural understanding.
4. All other readings will be available on NYU Classes or on the Internet as noted. Otherwise, books will be placed on reserve in the library.

**Academic Integrity**

As a professional, you will need to use many resources that have been developed, authored,
and/or organized by others. Making great use of the work of others is a valuable professional tool – originality is not axiomatically a virtue. Honoring the hard work of those who prepared what you borrow and use is an issue of integrity. That lesson begins in your academic work. To refresh yourself on the rules of academic integrity, see https://wagner.nyu.edu/current/policies.

**Course Sessions**

**Class I: September 9, 2017, (9:00am-2:20pm)**

9:00-11:00  **Unit 1: Overview of the Course, Introductions and Models of Community Organizing**
In this session, we will introduce ourselves to one another and become acquainted with key organizing practices by thinking through a case study together. An interactive lecture will sketch out different types of community organizing models. Please submit a bio via NYU Classes (no more than one page). We will share these with the class.

**Please be prepared to share with the class a 2-minute (max) response to the following questions:**
What is your name?
What is your current profession?
What stirred your interest in learning about organizing?
What you hope to gain from this class?
What is one burning question you wish to explore about organizing for change?

**Case Study: Organizing for Child-Centered Recess Rights in White Plains Elementary Schools**
We will learn the what’s and how’s of organizing by working together to think about how we would organize to establish recess that promotes elementary students’ physical, cognitive and social well-being. This is a real-life case, so we will compare our process and proposals with what occurred and is continuing to unfold.

*Key topics and skills to be explored are: moving from problem to issue, understanding power, ensuring streams of accountability, identifying decision-makers, developing a critical mass, types of action, fostering new leaders, going outside traditional channels, reading the room, practicing, decisions about media, assessment of progress, building deep and wide.*

11:10-12:30  **Interactive lecture on models of community organizing**

**Readings**
- Engler M. and Engler, P. *This is an Uprising* (Nation Books: 2016), Chapter 2 “Structure and Movement” and Chapter 3 “The Hybrid”, pp. 31-85.


- America Will Be, A New Poor People’s Campaign, [https://art.poorpeoplescampaign.org/portfolio/americawill-episode-1/](https://art.poorpeoplescampaign.org/portfolio/americawill-episode-1/)

**12:40 – 1:40pm Unit 2: Diversity and Privilege in Community Organizing**

It is a truism to say that people are different and those differences matter. Our identities are chosen, imposed, inherited, and can and do change. Our race(s), class, national origin and ethnicity, sexual identity and gender, religion, and culture impact how we describe and live in the world as it is and into the world as we believe it should be. Community organizing often seeks to redress prejudice and injustice that follows from systemic discrimination. In organizing – and in this class – we bring our fullest selves to the process and learn from one another, while recognizing that undue privilege and protection have been conferred upon some of us in varying degrees while others of us have been disregarded, excluded, or harmed because of our identities. During this hour, we will foreground this discussion of the multiple ways we are situated and how the ways in which we identify ourselves and others shape our participatory organizing, and then allow it to permeate our discussions throughout the semester.

**Readings**


- PBS *NewsHour*, Rev. William Barber is building a new ‘moral movement’ to reach people on race, Published on June 23, 2017 (8 min. 30 sec.) Special correspondent Charlayne Hunter-Gault speaks with Reverend William Barber and Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, co-authors of “The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear,” about what it takes to tackle America’s racial divide. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzIUgFDHFUs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzIUgFDHFUs)

- The Movement for Black Lives Platform, [https://policy.m4bl.org/platform/](https://policy.m4bl.org/platform/)

**1:40 - 2:20pm Unit 3: The Context in Which We Organize**

What are the web of relationships and network of associations through which people participate in life together, gain social capital, personal meaning, and develop their worldview? How do these voluntary organizations foster civic engagement? Is this “third sector” in decline or resurgence in 2017? How is the virtual world of online relationships and corporate branding colliding, adapting to, and countered with a renewed interest in place/watershed/encuentro?
Readings


- Skocpol T., **Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life** (Unv. Of Oklahoma Press, 2003), chapter 6, “What We Have Lost”.


- **Christian Coalition handbook.**

- Dovi, S. **What’s Wrong with Indivisible**, https://medium.com/everyvote/whats-wrong-with-indivisible-ce2a5ad866f3


Class II: Saturday, September 23, 2017 (9:00am-2:20pm)

The Power to Create Change
We will explore definitions of power and how to exercise power in order to create change from animating leaders, to designing successful campaigns, to the use of language and symbols in communicating your purpose, developing/honing concrete skills of detailed planning and mobilization for action, and evaluation. We will use the Coalition of Immokalee Workers as a best practice example, compare its work with other examples and models, and do an exercise in planning strategy, campaign and action in class.

9:00 – 10:00 Unit 4: Concepts of Power and Values Embedded in Different Organizing Models
In this unit, we will explore what are different concepts of power and how community organizing marshal power to effect change. We will investigate how the ethical values embedded in various community organizing models impact both organizing and solutions. What are we organizing for? Is it possible or desirable to be “ideology-free?” What is the relationship between means and ends? Are there any approaches that are off the table? Who gets to architect strategies and solutions and why?

- Douglass, F. **If there is no Struggle, There is No Progress** (1857) http://www.blackpast.org/1857-frederick-douglass-if-there-no-struggle-there-no-progress

- Charlottesville: Race and Terror, VICE News Tonight on HBO, 20 minutes, August 14, 2017 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5sP0Nlngg [N.B. This disturbing video provides both behind the scenes footage and interviews with some of the leaders of the far-right, racist forces that terrorized that historic town for two days, allowing the white supremacists to define themselves, and their intentions, in their own words. This video gives an unprecedented window into the worldview and how white supremacists describe their own organizing. It is difficult to watch but too important to ignore.]


10:00-12:30pm Unit 5: It Takes a Movement: From community organizing to structural change
Gerardo Reyes Chavez will discuss how the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, a community-based, human rights organization comprised of low-wage workers joined with consumers to change the supply chains of multi-billion-dollar food retailers and achieve unprecedented human rights gains for farmworkers. He will provide an in-depth examination of how the CIW began and organized across languages and cultures to unite farmworkers; how CIW develops leaders and ensures accountability, how CIW partnered with consumers through the Campaign for Fair Food to convince corporations and their suppliers to structurally change the supply chain.


Guest Presenter: Gerardo Reyes Chavez, Coalition of Immokalee Workers
Gerardo Reyes Chavez is a senior staff member with the award-winning human rights organization, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW). Mr. Reyes is a farmworker and has worked in the fields since age 11, first as a peasant farmer in Mexico and then in the fields of Florida picking oranges, tomatoes, blueberries, and watermelon. A CIW member since 1999, Mr. Reyes has worked with consumer allies to organize national actions in the Campaign for Fair Food. As part of the implementation of the Fair Food Program, Mr. Reyes conducts workers’ rights education with thousands of farmworkers on participating tomato farms. Mr. Reyes speaks regularly about the Fair Food Program at events across the country, such as Yale the Harvard Law School Labor and Worklife Program Convening on Farm Labor Challenges and the Interfaith Council on Corporate Responsibility’s Multi-stakeholder Roundtable on Ethical Recruitment.

We will explore how to develop a campaign and plan, effective messaging that is tailored to reach key allies, establish a range of take action opportunities, best practices in mobilizing, and different
Readings
- The Nation We Build Together: Smithsonian Enshrines CIW’s Lady Liberty in New Exhibit at American History Museum in Washington, DC. http://www.ciw-online.org/blog/2017/06/the-nation-we-build-together/
- Miner, J. Chapter 10, “Planning a Comprehensive Campaign”
- Sen, R, Stir it Up, Chapter 3: “Picking the Good Fight”

Class III Saturday, October 21, 2017 (9:00am-12:30pm)

Unit 7: Non-violent Direct Action and Unit 8: International Organizing
In this unit, we will zero-in on creating and carrying out non-violent direct actions as part of a campaign. Non-violent direct action reveals injustice that has been obscured by the every-day operations of systems, demonstrates relations of power, and makes a moral appeal to the opponent. Such actions are especially important to and used by people who do not have access to regular channels for seeking change. Using testimony from participants in such actions we will look at the dimensions of non-violent direct action in leadership development, communication of core issue and urgency, overtures to opponents, and as the meeting of survival needs themselves and/or how survival needs are met by groups of human beings whose human rights are in question. Our guest presenter will describe how non-violent direct action is a critical part of organizing in Sri Lanka for land and water rights and give us, simultaneously, a window into how struggles for rights in Sri Lanka are connected and can be supported through our efforts in the US.

Guest Speaker: Herman Kumara, Convener of the National Fisheries Solidarity Movement of Sri Lanka (NAFSO). In the late 1990s, Sri Lanka was emerging from a 26-year civil war that displaced thousands of people, especially ethnic Tamils from the northern and eastern regions. Despite the end of the military conflict, a climate of violence and fear persisted, as the government and international aid agencies pursued an agenda of industrializing coastal regions for large-scale aquaculture and tourism. After the devastating Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, efforts to grab the coastline in the name of “reconstruction” intensified, blocking fishing people from returning to their homes. NAFSO began its work in 1997, conducting political seminars and trainings for fishing communities on how to defend and reclaim their lands and livelihood rights. NAFSO is now active in numerous international networks, promoting food sovereignty and human rights and equality for all fishing communities.

** Students will complete a mid-course feedback **

Readings


- Damico, N. *Fast Journal at the Coalition of Immokalee Workers Hunger Strike Outside Taco Bell in Irvine, CA*, 2003, https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B8AMHn2zxY6oRWgtVGJXejdlIMEk


- Forthcoming resource about Mouvement paysan Papaye (MPP) in Haiti. Please review the MPP’s website https://www.mpphaiti.org/?lang=en


Class IV: Saturday, November 4, 2017 (9:00-12:30pm)

Unit 9: Leaders and Leadership Development
In this unit, we will explore what leadership is and different models of exercising leadership. How do you as an organizer work with members to identify the different leadership roles needed by your organization and within your campaign? How do you identify leaders and cultivate their skills for running meetings, campaigns, and negotiations; for public speaking, media work, and education? How do leaders identify and develop other leaders? What are the types of ongoing support that leaders need? To whom and how are leaders accountable? How do leaders ensure transparency and participation in decision-making?

Guest Speaker: Juanita Lewis, Community Voices Heard
Juanita is the Hudson Valley Organizing Director Community Voices Heard. She was born and raised in Saint Paul, MN. She graduated from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities with a B.A. in History and Political Science, and with her Masters of Advocacy and Political Leadership Degree from the University of Minnesota-Duluth. She began her work as a community organizer with the Minnesota chapter of ACORN. Since 2004, she has worked on numerous electoral campaigns at the city, state and federal level in different staffing capacities. Juanita develops community members into leaders that work on strategic issue based campaigns that bring the issues of low-income people to the forefront.

Readings
- Minieri, J. Tools for Radical Democracy, chapter 5
- Friere, Paulo, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, chapter 1, Continuum International Publishing Group, 1970 http://www.msu.ac.zw/elearning/material/1335344125freire_pedagogy_of_the OPPRESEd.PDF
- Sen, R. Stir it Up, Chapter 5
- Baptist, W, The 4 C’s of Leadership, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NR0P_S2dPUU

Class V: Saturday, November 18, 2017 (9:00am-12:30pm)

Unit 10: Building Partnerships and Coalitions
In this unit, we will explore when and how to form coalitions of organizations to address issues. For successful change, it is almost always necessary to build partnerships or coalitions. How can this happen well among groups that have never worked together in the past; or even among groups that have a degree of tension between them? How do we marshal the different literal and figurative languages that we speak as a strength? How can organizations maintain collaborative work on different fronts without losing their sense of mission/purpose? How do such coalitions develop accountability among different powerful groups? How can “unusual” partnerships or “unexpected” allies find synergy across
other points of opposition? How can we ask for what organizations can do and respecting what they cannot. What are ways of evaluating when to continue or disband work together? How are funders “partners” and how are they not? What are considerations to keep in mind when seeking funding for ongoing work?

**Guest:** Larry Cox, Director Kairos Center for Human Rights, former Ford Foundation Executive

Larry Cox has been working for peace, justice and human rights around the world for more than four decades. A graduate of Union Theological Seminary, he is serving as Co-Director of Kairos: The Center on Religions, Rights and Social Justice and is active in building the new Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival. Cox served as Executive Director of Amnesty International USA from 2006 to 2011. He was Senior Program Officer for Human Rights at the Ford Foundation from 1995-2006. Cox was the Executive Director of the Rainforest Foundation, an international organization working with indigenous peoples in the Brazilian Amazon to protect their rights and environment from 1990-1995. His publications include Close to Home: Case Studies of Human Rights Work in the US.

**Readings**
- Sen, R. *Stir it Up*, Chapter 5
- Minieri, J. *Tools for Radical Democracy*, chapter 14
- Logic Model handout

**Class VI: Saturday, December 9, 2017**

**Final Project**
Each group will develop a community member-led grassroots organizing campaign and/or advocacy plan of their choosing that will offer a clear mission, a narrative, methods of assessment, potential stakeholders, a strategy to achieve their objectives and ultimate goal, and examples of implementation. You will be provided various concrete situations from which each small group will choose. These will be presented in class and provide the resource for assessing what has been learned through the course.

As you prepare, you may wish to consider some of the following questions:
- How do community members define the problem(s) they are experiencing?
- What is the process by which you identify, together, the issue around which you will organize to solve to the problem?
- Who are the stakeholders: the constituents directly affected by the issue, the leaders of the campaign, the allies, the potential opposition, the bystanders?
- What additional research was necessary and what did you discover?
- What is the target of the campaign (corporation, government, organization etc.)?
- What are the specific demands of your campaign and how do they forward the mission of your organization?
- What is your strategy for changing the behavior of the decision-maker so that your goals are met?
- What are the specific actions that you will take based on this strategy? Please describe in as much detail as possible.
- How will your team carry share leadership responsibilities for the campaign and ongoing involvement of new members?
- What kinds of choices has the organization faced in developing, planning and implementing this campaign? How do members, leaders and any staff of your organization address these choices?
- What kinds of opposition do you anticipate and how did you prepare for it?
- How will you assess the effectiveness of this campaign? What are the different areas that you’ll evaluate? (meeting concrete demands, leadership development, cultivation of allies, sharpening or expanding the mission of your organization, building a public presence, increasing your base etc.)
- Thinking ahead to the successful achievement of your goals, how will the program or practices or policy be implemented? How will accountability to the community be ensured? How can these changes be sustained over the long-haul?

A Limited Bibliography


Friere, Paulo, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Continuum International Publishing Group, 1970.


**Annotated Bibliographies**
Additional extensive, annotated bibliographies about community organizing are available as library reserves on NYU Classes. See the following:

Smock, Kristina. Bibliography

Szakos, Kristen. What Organizers Read And Watch; Where Organizers Work

Welton, Nina. Resources

Brown, Michael. Bibliography and Other Resources

**Online Resources**

www.comm.org (Articles; queries; discussions about organizing; national job listings)

www.citylimits.org (Under-the-radar news items; event announcements; listings for social change jobs, primarily in New York City)
www.fcyo.org (see Resources: Occasional Papers Series. A series of reports about youth organizing – origins; connections with youth development; regional applications)

www.midwestacademy.com and www.ctwo.org (The Midwest Academy in Chicago and the Center for Third World Organizing in Oakland – National listings for organizer trainings and social change jobs)