NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE
PADM-GP 4116
Participatory Policymaking
Spring 2013
Thursday 6:45pm – 8:25pm, GODD B06
Professor Rachel Swaner

Contact Information:  Email: RLS200@nyu.edu
                      Phone: 917-445-7219
                      Office hours: by appointment

Course Pre-requisites
Students must have completed P11.1022 (Introduction to Public Policy).

Course Description and Objectives
Though the policy-making process is complex, with a host of actors and competing interests, public policy is traditionally shaped by elected officials, administrative agencies and lobbyists hired by the privileged. Even when policies are informed by the lived experience of members of low-income and marginalized communities, their participation is often hidden. Conscious public servants engage communities in asserting their own priorities and rights. Meaningful constituent involvement is a key ingredient of ethical and successful plans and programs, and essential in efforts to alter the course of persistent social and economic injustice.

In this course, we will examine the essential concepts of power – what it is, how it is used, how groups and communities can expand and strengthen their political power, and how public officials can share theirs. We will explore strategies for participatory policymaking from above (e.g., government/policymakers initiating participatory approaches to decision-making) and below (e.g., grassroots communities mobilizing to influence policy), and why it is essential to our democracy to challenge traditional structures of power.

Course requirements
Class preparation and participation are essential for this course. Students are expected to read required texts in advance and be prepared to participate in class discussions. Each week, a different group of 4-5 students will lead that week’s discussion of the readings and facilitate a conversation about that week’s topic. Students should feel free to be creative and bring in additional materials (e.g., a short video clip, newspaper article about relevant current event) that illustrate the topic. In addition to class participation, students will work in groups to write a final paper about participatory budgeting in New York City. More detailed instructions of final assignment are on NYU Classes.

Relative Weight of Assignments

Class Participation 25%  (This is not just coming to class, but being actively involved.)
Leading Class Session 25%
Final Paper 50%

Course Schedule and Readings (All readings are available on NYU Classes, except where links are provided below.)
Class 1: January 31 – Introduction and Overview; Understanding Power

  - “The Purpose”
  - “A Word About Words”
  - Chapter 1 (pages 14-59)

Class 2: February 7 – Participatory Democracy; Participatory Budgeting Part 1

- *Guest speaker: Jumaane Williams, New York City Council Member*

Class 3: February 14 – Participatory Budgeting Part 2

- *Guest speaker: Pam Jennings, The Participatory Budgeting Project*

Class 4: February 21 – Community Organizing Part 1

  - “The Education of an Organizer”
  - “Communication”
• Introduction: Community Organizing – Yesterday and Today (pages xliii – llix)

• Guest speakers: Christopher Kocher and Stephen Barton, Mayors Against Illegal Guns

Class 5: February 28 – Community Organizing Part 2
  o Chapter 9: Youth First in Jackson Square! (pages 175-193)
  o Chapter 2: Organizing New Constituencies (pages 24-47)
  o Chapter 3: Picking the Good Fight (pages 48-78)

Class 6: March 7 – Participatory Action Research
• Right to the City Alliance. 2010. “We Call These Projects Home: Solving the Housing Crisis from the Ground Up.” http://www.cdp-ny.org/report/We_Call_These_Projects_Home.pdf

Class 7: March 14 – Critiques of Participatory Policymaking