

**PADM-GP.2106.S.001.SP12 – Introduction to Community Organizing:
How to Make Change Happen**

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead

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

Winter 2014

Tuesday, January 21 – Sunday, January 26

9:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.

Students are strongly encouraged to stay late on Thursday to work in small groups.

Please note that we will not meet on Saturday, January 25.

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Classroom: Tisch Hall

40 W 4th St (between Greene St & Washington Sq E)

Room: LC-9

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Introduction to Community Organizing is for those who could imagine running national or local advocacy organizations that make change happen or anyone who wants to understand the art of community organizing. It will provide an overview of and training in contemporary community organizing practice in the United States, with some time spent on international organizing. This includes defining what community organizing is and identifying its value base; exploring the strategies, tactics, and activities of organizing; and thinking about marketing, language, and evaluation. We also will examine the transformations of civic engagement and voluntary associations in the United States and the impact of these transformations on the ways Americans organize and advocate for change.

But there is a larger lesson here: the skills of community organizing – listening, finding areas of consensus, and building on that consensus, finding ways to make change happen – are skills that can be applied to all professional and life settings. Through readings, class activities, cases studies, speakers, and reflection, students will examine skills and techniques for effective organizing, including building a membership base, developing ordinary people as community leaders, and running member-led issue campaigns. Students will also have the opportunity to reflect on and strengthen their own skills as community organizers and advocates.

This is an intensive course – we only have four and a half days to cover a semester’s worth of work. Please be prepared for a full day’s schedule that will include lots of interaction with fellow classmates, guest speakers, frontal presentations, and reflections on what you have read and experienced. You may want to bring snacks to keep your energy going and lots to drink as well.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

During this week, we will work to:

- Distinguish community organizing from other approaches to addressing problems in communities.
- Examine the essential concepts of power – what it is, how it is used, and how groups and communities expand and strengthen their political power through organizing – and consider how to apply this learning.
- Consider how changes in civic engagement and voluntary associations impact community organizing and grassroots mobilization.
- Determine how to identify and engage community members who will get involved in organizing campaigns and how to support their participation in decision-making processes.
- Address the unique leadership skills that make for successful community organizing.
- 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.
- Learn about and apply principles of communication, marketing, and branding to community organizing in general and specifically to the development and implementation of issue campaigns.

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. Having said that, because this is an intensive course, we realize you may not be able to handle all the reading. Try your best so that in class you will be citing from the works that we assigned. 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 one of us 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 – Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday – that seems powerful and/or problematic and then write a one-page, single-space analysis after each of those days. 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 three one-pagers should be submitted by 10 pm EST each evening following the session (alas, that may mean we will be reading your work at one in the morning).
5. For the last session on Sunday, 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. Because the course is so intensive, do not try to accomplish too much in this design – let it be focused and smaller in scope. The design will be presented as a group to the entire class the last day, accompanied by an outline form written description. The design can (and will most likely by necessity, given the shortness of the timeframe) be low-fidelity: you obviously do not have the time to develop a project the way you would if you were in the field, so provide only enough to efficiently and clearly present your issue and provide pathways to address the questions that arise on the subject.
6. You will have until Monday, January 27, at 11:59 pm EST, to offer a final reflection on the course and your experience – what you learned and what you wished you would have learned, 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.
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

1. Please get Saul Alinsky's **Rules for Radicals** (Vintage Books, 1989) because it is the Bible on the subject, used by radicals on the left and right and everyone in between. Also, Michael Gecan's **Going Public: An Organizer's Guide to Citizen Action** (Anchor Books, 2005) is the next generation. You can get them both used on Amazon very cheap if you order in advance.
2. In particular, invest in Joan Minieri's **Tools for Radical Democracy (Chardon Press Series)**. While purchase isn't required, you'll note that it does contain many of the mandatory readings listed throughout the syllabus. To be sure, this is a solid addition to any organizer's collection.

Over the first part of winter break, read as much as you can. You will be able to engage more and feel less pressured during the week of class.

3. Everything else 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

Day I Tuesday, January 21, 2014

UNIT I Morning Session, Part 1 (9 – 11:30 am)

Introduction, Overview, and Getting Organized

Students will refresh or acquire the basic vocabulary that is critical to community organizer training such as: deep listening and collaborative skills, standing on the balcony and turning up the heat, dialogue and debate, SWOT, and other strategic-change models, and identifying techniques and “killer phrases” people use to block change.

We also will explore the ways that Americans organize, the web of relationships and a network of associations that provide significant benefits of social capital, personal meaning, and tribal affiliation well beyond the confines of any particular institution. What roles do voluntary associations and social capital derived from participation in voluntary associations play in fostering civic engagement in the context of American democracy? Of particular interest is whether voluntary associations, the core of American public service commitment, demand participatory behavior in a world moving from a place in time to virtual associations no longer dependent on geography. The core questions:

- What impact will the shifts in the ways Americans participate as active citizens have on grassroots mobilization and community organizing?
- What is community organizing and how it is different from other approaches to addressing community problems?

In anticipation of this session, list all of your voluntary associations and bring the list to class to share in small groups.

Readings:

- Skocpol, T., **Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life** (Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 2003), chapter 6 “What We Have Lost”
- Sen, R., **Stir it Up**, Introduction: Community Organizing: Yesterday and Today [first seven pages: pp. xliii – xlix]
- Alinsky, S. **Rules for Radicals**, The Purpose; A Word About Words
- Christian Coalition Handout

UNIT I Morning Session, Part 2 (11:30 am – 12:30 pm)

Who am I to Tell Other People What To Do? Diversity and Privilege in Community Organizing

Our goal is to give you the tools, insights, and strength to be excellent community organizers. That said, we need to think about the issues of “otherness” in America and the impact prejudices have on the American political process and on communities. A lot of community organizing takes place among those most disenfranchised and race, national origin, and ethnicity, sexual identity and gender, religion and class all are inextricably mixed up in community organizing. And even more, these identities are intermingled and compounded, and organizing activity takes place at the intersections. We will ground our work with these issues in mind and spend the hour at least bringing some of the issues to the foreground and then allow them to remain as background to all that we learn.

Reading:

- Mason, Nicole C., **Leading at the Intersections**, Women of Color Policy Network, RCLA Wagner, www.wagner.nyu.edu/wocpn/publications/wcpn.intersections.pdf
- McIntosh, Peggy, **White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack**, Wellesley College Center for Research on Women
- Tervalon, Melanie, and Jann Murray-Garcia, **Cultural Humility Versus Cultural Competence: A Critical Distinction in Defining Physician Training Outcomes in Multicultural Education**, Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved, Volume 9, Number 2, May 1998, pp. 117-125, http://info.kaiserpermanente.org/communitybenefit/assets/pdf/our_work/global/Cultural_Humility_article.pdf

12:30 – 1 pm Lunch

UNIT 2 Afternoon Session (1 – 3 pm)

Power and the Community Organizer

We will focus on a definition of power and the ways that power is used in the world of community organizing. In this context, we will begin to explore the role of an organizer and begin to assemble the qualities and skills that are crucial for a successful organizer. What allows an organizer the right to intervene in the lives of a community? How does one go about organizing? More important, we will take the issues of power head-on: What is power all about – for whom, over whom, with whom?

Guest speaker: **Carmen Pineiro**, Organizer, Community Voices Heard

Readings:

- Alinsky, **Rules for Radicals**, chapter on Tactics, pg. 125
- Minieri, J., **Tools for Radical Democracy**. Introduction - Chapter 2
- Minieri, J., **Power. Leadership. Change: What is Community Organizing?** worksheet
- Gecan, **Going Public: An Organizer's Guide to Citizen Action** (Anchor Books, 2005)
- David Cohen, Margo Hittleman and Jennifer Dodge, **Reflections on Social Justice Organizing and Leadership**, RCLA (not yet published), NYU

For Wednesday: Choose a quote that speaks powerfully to you (download from **Quotes** on NYU Classes, listed under Tuesday)

Also For Wednesday: Fill out self-assessment survey (download from NYU Classes, under Session II)

Day II Wednesday, January 22, 2014

UNIT 3 Morning Session (9 am – 12:15 pm) Engaging A Community

Who are the stakeholders, where do we find them, and how do we engage communities and work with new constituencies? We will look at various recruitment techniques and methods to get people involved, as well as how to build coalitions. As part of this session, we will deepen our analysis of the challenges of race, gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual identity, and nationality – basically recognizing the reality that people are really different – as we focus on the processes of community organizing. We will consider the assumptions people make when they meet others and pose the question: “How does a community organizer create community coalitions out of diversity?”

Guest speakers: Graduate Student Organizing Committee/UAW (GSOC/UAW)

Readings:

- Elcott and Rosenthal, **Engaging America**, Unit 4
- Minieri, J., **Tools for Radical Democracy**, chapters 3-4
- Alinsky, **Rules for Radicals. The Education Of An Organizer**, In the Beginning
- Smock, K., **Democracy in Action**, Introduction, pp. 3-34
- RCLA Leadership for a Changing World Program publications:
 - Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities
 - Don't Just Do Something, Sit There

12:15 – 12:45 pm Lunch

UNIT 4 Afternoon Session (12:45 – 3 pm) Developing Community Leaders

The first task is to identify potential leaders. The second is for them to see themselves as leaders, and take on responsibilities. We will examine the types of training models you can use to support leaders to run their own campaigns and organizations.

Readings:

- Minieri, J., “**Conversation on Leadership,**” presented in France (2012)
- Minieri, J., **Tools for Radical Democracy**, chapter 5
- Alinsky, **Rules for Radicals**, Chapter on Communication, pg. 81
- Sen, R., **Stir it Up**, chapter 5
- John Tropman, **Successful Community Leadership**, chapters 2-3
- RCLA Leadership for a Changing World Program publications:
 - From Constituents to Stakeholders
 - A Dance That Creates Equals
 - Quantum Leadership

For Thursday: Choose a quote that speaks powerfully to you (download from **Quotes** on NYU Classes, listed under Wednesday)

Day III Thursday, January 23, 2014

UNIT 5 Morning Session, Part 1 (9 – 11:30 am) Identifying Issues and Strategies for Organizing

How do we distinguish between problems and issues, something that often gets in the way of effective organizing and successful change? We will develop techniques on how to do effective research and power analysis with community members toward establishing communal and/or organizational goals. We will learn effective narrative skills on “how to tell the story.” Based on a clarified mission, we will work on the skills of choosing target, strategy, and implementation options.

Readings:

- Smock, K., **Democracy in Action**, chapter 7
- Sen, R., **Stir it Up**, chapter 5
- Minieri, J., **Tools for Radical Democracy**, chapters 7-9
- RCLA: **Social Change Leadership from the Inside** (Overview: pp. 7-8; Integrating Culture and Values to Support Collective Action: pp. 24-37), <http://leadershipforchange.org/insights/research/files/Group4Portrait.pdf>

UNIT 6 Morning Session, Part 2 (11:30 am – 12:30 pm) Determining Success: Logic Models, Funding Proposals, Evaluation, and Other Assessment Criteria

There is an additional skill to acquire, for constant self-evaluation (personal and institutional) demands are ubiquitous and come in a variety of ways – 360 degree personal/professional evaluations, group assessments, responses to funding proposals, donor and government-driven evaluations, media scrutiny, successful or failed elections, and advocacy campaigns. Community organizers and their organizations often feel that providing proposals and delivering evaluation assessments negatively affect their capacity to do the work that needs to be done. Yet evaluation is a crucial tool, allowing organizations and individuals to know where they are going and whether they are on track or, if not, to change course as needed. We will try to understand what funders look for in proposals and evaluations, and provide feedback loops and analytic techniques that allow for serious but not debilitating methods of evaluation.

Guest speaker: **Talia Milgrom-Elcott**, Program Officer in Urban Education, Carnegie Corporation, focusing on human capital and data and accountability

12:30 – 1 pm Lunch

UNIT 7 Afternoon Session (1 – 3 pm)

Reach Out: The Art of Building Partnerships and Coalitions

Leading “without easy answers” often requires eliciting the collaboration of groups, organizations, and constituencies that speak different languages (literally and figuratively) and that have never cooperated in the past. This includes ethnic and immigrant communities, religious communities, groups divided by class, race, or geography, particularly significant in urban areas. We almost always need partners to be effective and partnership is hard work. How can we partner with other groups using a model of shared power and equitable decision-making and problem solving? Are we prepared to address dynamic tensions that will be inherent in our partnerships? Joint initiatives often are great ways to deepen partnerships. We therefore need to be mindful of structures and processes that can minimize conflict and maximize our individual contributions. Thinking win/win, we can create programs that advance our advocacy agenda while deepening relationships with important allies.

Readings:

- Sen, R., **Stir it Up**, chapter 5
- Elcott and Rosenthal, **Engaging America**, Unit VI
- Minieri, J., **Tools for Radical Democracy**, chapter 14
- RCLA Leadership for a Changing World Program publications:
 - Lynn Stephen, et al, **Building Alliances, A Leadership for a Changing World** collaborative ethnography

Students are strongly encouraged to stay late on Thursday to work in small groups in preparation for Sunday’s final presentation.

For Friday: Choose a quote that speaks powerfully to you (download from **Quotes** on NYU Classes, listed under Thursday)

Day IV Friday, January 24, 2014

UNIT 8 Morning Session (9 – 11 am)

Framing & Branding: Marketing a campaign

What if you call for a grassroots community advocacy campaign and nobody comes? The reasons may not be apathy but a failure to move effectively from vision to implementation. At the core of an effective implementation strategy is branding and marketing. While corporations may have millions to invest in marketing and branding, community organizers and grassroots organizations generally have to work with less. Yet we have many cases of successful grassroots campaigns that were smart in their use of networking, media presence, and on-line activity. Here is our chance to learn techniques and skills that can be applied in a wide range of professional settings.

Readings:

- Koleva, Spassena P., Jesse Graham, Ravi Iyer, Peter H. Ditto, and Jonathan Haidt, **Tracing the threads: How five moral concerns (especially Purity) help explain culture war attitudes**, *Journal of Research in Personality* 46 (2012), pp. 184–194.
- Lakoff, George, **Don't Think of an Elephant**, preface and Chapter 1
- Westen, Drew, **What Created the Populist Explosion and How Democrats Can Avoid the Shrapnel in November**, (31 August 2010), *Huffington Post*, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/drew-westen/what-created-the-populist_b_699960.html.

11 am – 1 pm Working Lunch

Work in small groups to prepare for Sunday's final presentations.

UNIT 9 Afternoon Session (1 – 3 pm)

Community Organizing Internationally: Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Readings:

- Rathke, Wade, (2012). **Roots and Branches of Community Organization**. ACORN International, prepared for Japanese Institute for Labor Policy. http://chieforganizer.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Roots-and-Branches-of-Community-Organization.Tokyo_.October2012.1.pdf
- Williams, Heather L., (1996). **Planting Trouble: The Barzón Debtors' Movement in Mexico**. UC San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies. Retrieved from: <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/9z15x8sg>. Please at least read pgs. 5-12, and 23-38.

Day V Sunday, January 26, 2014

UNIT 10 Sunday morning (9 am – 1 pm)

Final presentations: Running a Community Organizing Advocacy campaign

Each group will develop a community member-led grassroots project 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. These will be presented in class and provide the resource for assessing what has been learned during the week. David and Ben will jointly make the most of your presentations.

As you prepare, you may want to consider some of the following questions:

- What is the problem experienced by members of the community?
- What is the issue in the campaign (the solution to the problem)?
- Who are the stakeholders: the constituents affected by the issue, the leaders of the campaign (describe some of their characteristics and/or positions), the potential opposition, and the allies?
- What are the roles of any professional organizers or staff? How is their role different from that of other stakeholders and how will they carry out their roles?
- Who is the specific person or people, organization or governmental body target of the campaign?

- How will you brand and market this campaign?
- What strategies does the campaign use? What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats?
- What are the specific demands that would fulfill the mission and meet the goals?
- 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, a media or email campaign, or whatever actions flow from the strategy.
- What kinds of choices has the organization faced in developing, planning and implementing this campaign? How can members, leaders, and staff address these choices?
- How would you assess the effectiveness of this campaign, according to the goals of community organizing (such as building a base of power, winning concrete demands)?

A Limited Bibliography

Alinsky, S. **Reveille for Radicals**. New York: Vintage, 1946 (reissued 1989).

Bai, M. **The Argument: Billionaires, Bloggers, and the Battle to Remake Democratic Politics**. New York: The Penguin Press, 2007.

Bobo, K., Kendall, J. and Max, S. **Organizing for Social Change: Midwest Academy Manual for Activists**. Santa Ana: Seven Locks Press, 2001.

Branch, T. **Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963**. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989.

Brown, M. **Building Powerful Community Organizations: A Personal Guide to Creating Groups that Can Solve Problems and Change the World**. Arlington, MA: Long Haul, 2006.

Fine, J. **Workers Centers: Organizing Communities at the Edge of the Dream**. Ithaca, New York, 2006.

Garrow, D. **Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference**. New York: HarperCollins, 1986.

Medoff, P. and Sklar, H. **Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood**. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1994.

Minieri, J. and Getsos, P. **Tools for Radical Democracy: How to Organize for Power in Your Community**. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007.

Sen, R. **Stir it Up: Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy**. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, 2003.

Smock, K. **Democracy in Action: Community Organizing and Urban Change**. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Szakos, K. and Szakos, J. **We Make Change: Community Organizers Talk About What They Do – and Why**. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2007.

Welton, N., and Wolf, L. **Global Uprising: Confronting the Tyrannies of the 21st Century: Stories from a New Generation of Activists**. New Society Publishers, 2001.

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)