NEW YORK UNIVERSITY  
ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE  
PADM-GP 4116  
Participatory Policymaking  
Spring 2015, Monday 4:55pm – 6:35pm  
Global Center for Academic and Spiritual Life, Room 265  
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

This is a discussion-based course. We will be exploring issues in a community-learning environment, and as such, class preparation and participation by everyone are absolutely essential. Students are expected to read required texts in advance and be prepared to contribute to class discussions. There is both a speaking and listening component to participation: sharing your ideas and reflecting on/responding to the ideas of others. Additionally, students will choose four weeks to write reading responses. Lastly, students will work in groups to write a final paper about a policy arena of their choosing. More detailed assignment instructions are on NYU Classes.

Relative Weight of Assignments

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
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<td>Reading Responses</td>
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<td>Final Paper</td>
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Course Schedule and Readings (All readings are available on NYU Classes, except where links are provided below.)

Class 1: January 26 – Introduction and Overview; Understanding Power

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

Class 2: February 2 – Deliberative Democracy and Citizen Assemblies/Juries

  - Chapter 1 (pages 1-23)
  - “From Athens to Athens” (pages 9-13)

Class 3: February 9 – Participatory Budgeting


- Guest speaker: Donovan Richards (NY City Council Member, District 31)

Class 4: February 16 – President’s Day, NYU Closed (no class)

Class 5: February 23 – Community Organizing

  - “The Education of an Organizer” and “Communication”
  - Introduction: Community Organizing – Yesterday and Today (pages xlii – xlix)
  - Chapter 2: Organizing New Constituencies (pages 24-47)
  - Chapter 3: Picking the Good Fight (pages 48-78)
  - Chapter 9: Youth First in Jackson Square! (pages 175-193)
- Guest speaker: Ejeris Dixon (Anti-Violence Project, Audre Lorde Project)

Class 6: March 2 – 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 9 – Critiques of Participatory Policymaking