



NYU

ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE

PADM-GP 2106: Community Organizing
January 22, 2024 - May 6, 2024
Wednesdays, 4:55 PM - 6:35 PM
31 Washington Pl (Silver Ctr); Room 509

Instructor Information

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- *Office Hours by appointment*

Note: The best way to reach me quickly is via text. I will respond to email inquiries within 48 hours. I occasionally travel for work with short notice; in those cases class will take place on Zoom and I will notify you prior to the class.

Course Information

Welcome to Community Organizing!

This course provides an overview of community organizing as a way for groups of people to build political power and impact public policy to shape their needs. The focus is on community organizing models and how community organizing fits into a larger theory of social/political change. Throughout the class, students will be expected to engage with active community organizing struggles rooted locally in New York City.

The class is divided into three sections:

1. *Background on Community Organizing (January 24 - February 14)*
 - History of community organizing in New York City
 - What is community organizing compared to other types of organizing and/or social change (labor, electoral, movement, advocacy)
2. *Community Organizing Skills (February 21 - March 13)*
 - Base-Building
 - Leadership Development
 - Communication as an base-building tactic
3. *Community Organizing & Campaigns: How Organizing Shapes Public Policy (March 27 - May 1)*
 - Issue Identification
 - Power-mapping
 - Narrative Change

- How community organizing builds power and transforms advocacy campaigns
- New York City based case-studies

Organizing requires a structural analysis (an understanding of the big-picture power dynamics that organize society) and it is also deeply emotional (it relies on individual relationships and personal connections.) Throughout the class students will be expected to both engage with the materials and themes, the larger forces at play, and their own personal experiences and societal positioning.

Themes we will grapple with in the course include:

- Power and social change
- Political education and popular pedagogy
- Participatory democracy and governance
- Mass communication
- Leadership development
- Coalition building
- Capacity building in marginalized and oppressed communities

New York City is a laboratory of organizing: we have a robust labor movement as well as a dynamic history of community activism. Throughout the course, students will be expected to engage with the live organizing fights happening in the city around us.

Finally, organizing requires reflection, adjustment, and attention to the collective community that people create when they come together – including in the classroom. **This means that throughout the course, students should consider the syllabus a living document that is subject to change throughout our time together. The instructor will alert all students to changes in the syllabus – but do not do all the reading more than two weeks in advance – it may change.**

Required Texts

For both theoretical grounding in organizing as a theory of change and skills development as organizers we will read significant parts of the following two texts:

- McAlevey, Jane. "[No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age.](#)" Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Mineri, Joan & Paul Gestos. "[Tools for Radical Democracy: How to Organize for Power in Your Community.](#)" Jossey-Bass, 2007.

It is up to you if you want to purchase these books: I recommend them both! However, the material is available via PDF and linked in the syllabus/uploaded to Brightspace.

Throughout there will be additional required resources (articles, films) which are available via link in this syllabus and where possible uploaded to the Brightspace.

Assignments & Grading

- **Class Attendance and Participation: (10%) - Rolling**

Come prepared to class and participate weekly.

- **Class Discussion: (15%) - Rolling**

Meeting facilitation is a key practice in community organizing. Once during the semester you will be in charge of co-facilitating a 20-minute section of the class. Identify a current topic and/or organizing campaign in the news in New York City. Facilitate a conversation around that topic, drawing on the week's themes and readings where relevant. **This is not a presentation, nor is it a discussion of the readings.** The purpose is to engage your peers in a critical discussion of concepts related to community organizing as they are showing up in New York today. Try to craft guiding questions to facilitate group conversation.

For example: if the course theme is "Leadership Development," you might (for example) do one of the following things:

- Facilitate a discussion about effective experiences of leadership development based on you and your co-facilitators own experience(s). Are the tools from the reading useful?
- Identify someone who is a public leader (someone in the news speaking about something you care about.) What are their qualities? How is their leadership work similar to leadership as conceptualized in the community organizing field? How is it different?

If the theme is "Power & Community" think about:

- An example of a "community" that exists (geographically or not!) Take the class through a discussion on how to:
 - Reach that community
 - Organize it into powerful collective action

Your assigned week is [linked here](#). For tips and resources on facilitating group discussion, I recommend AORTA's guide, "[Anti-Oppressive Facilitation for Democratic Process](#)."

If you and your teammates are having trouble identifying an exercise or discussion to lead the class through, reach out to the instructor by the **SUNDAY** prior to your assigned class.

If you are unable to attend class the day you are assigned it is your responsibility to switch with another student and let the professor know via email. CC your classmate with whom you are switching days.

- **Base-Building Plan (Team Project) (25%) - March 13**

At the end of Section II (March 13th, the week before Spring Break) students will present base-building plans in a group to the class. [Your team has been assigned randomly and is available here](#).

Each group will have 15 minutes for presentation and Q&A. Using a community issue identified by your team, create a base-building plan with metric goals for list building and volunteer recruitment. Your plan should identify points of entry (how you will recruit people) as well as a "ladder of engagement" to

move people from uninvolved to organizers to leaders. Your plan should include both off-line/in-person and digital recruitment strategies.

[A full assignment guide, including a template for the written portion, is available here.](#)

- **Action Reflection (Individual or Group) (15%) - May 8**

New York is a laboratory of community organizing. Please attend an action organized by a community group on an issue you care about and write a short (750 word) reflection.

- What was the event? Was it a public action or a community meeting/event?
- Who attended? How was the turnout?
- Who was the audience for the event? Neighborhood residents? Lawmakers? Media?
- What is the campaign? Why did people come together for this event?
- If a public action:
 - What was the demand?
 - Who was the target? Do you feel as though the action moved the target? Why or why not?
 - Find a news story about the event and share the link.
- If a meeting:
 - What was the agenda? What was discussed?
 - What leadership development tools were displayed at the meeting?
 - How did the meeting advance campaign goals?
- If it is a day of outreach:
 - Participate! Get trained on the “rap” and try it out
 - Try to figure out the follow up plan. Are the organizers going to reach out to the contacts they met in the streets or on the doors?
 - Ask the organizer for an overall update: How many contacts or petition signatures did you get?
- Take pictures, and attach them to the assignment.
- Feel free to attend with a classmate and submit as a group. You will both receive credit. You can also attend an event on your own.

Throughout, the instructor will advertise community organizing events you can attend in order to observe.

- **Campaign Assessment (Individual) (35%) - May 8**

Based on what we learn throughout the class, draft a case-study of a recent campaign by a community organization, coalition, national network, or labor union. This can be a local, state, national or international campaign with specific wins linked to a specific organizational formation of your choosing. This paper should be approximately 1500 words. In your case study include a assessment of the campaign and answer the following questions:

- What is the basic overview: what was the campaign demanding, and why?
- Who were the main targets? Who were allies/coalition partners?

- What was the strategy to win?
- What tactics did the campaign use to advance the strategy?
- What resources (funding) did the organization need to conduct the campaign?
- Was the campaign successful? Why or why not?

For inspiration, you can review The Forge’s “Craft of Campaigns” issue, available [here](#).

Additionally, please employ some of the following research techniques:

- Reviewing campaign materials, reports, and other material associated and/or about the campaign, including campaign plans, messaging documents, etc.
- Primary sources (at least one of the following)
 - Visiting an event (*your Action Reflection counts! I suggest combining these two assignments!*)
 - Scheduling an interview with 1-2 people from the organization to talk about the campaign, preferably a staff person and a member (30-45 minutes should suffice).
- Researching media clips, and other forms of documentation, FB live events, social media posts, videos, etc.

Some good resources to find an organization or campaign to study include the following:

NY Based Organizations:

- [Grantee Directory — New York Foundation](#)
- [Grantees - North Star Fund](#)
- [Strengthening New York Communities Grantees — The Scherman Foundation](#)

Course Calendar

Date	Topic
Part I: Background on Community Organizing	
1/24/2024	<p>Introduction to the Class</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Syllabus & Assignment Review ● Definitions: Introduction to terms we will rely on in this class <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● None <p>Assignments Due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● None
1/31/2024	<p>Theories of Change: Advocacy, Activism, and Organizing <i>Types of Community Organizations & Community Organizing</i> <i>How does community organizing relate to other types of social change work? How is it the same? How is it different?</i></p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● McAlevey, Jane. “No Shortcuts.” Introduction. PDF here.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sen, Rinku. "Stir It Up: Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy." Introduction: Community Organizing, Yesterday and Today. PDF Here. • Minieri, Joan. "Tools for Radical Democracy: How to Organize for Power in Your Community." Preface, Intro and The Story of CVH. Available Here. <p>Assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class facilitation. See if it is your week here.
2/7/2024	<p>Power & Community <i>What is "Power"?</i> <i>How do we build it and wield it?</i> <i>What tensions can we identify between community organizing and power building?</i></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McAlevee, Jane. "No Shortcuts." Chapter 2: The Power to Win is in the Community. (pp. 27 - 70). PDF here. • DeFilippis, James, Robert Fisher and Eric Shragge. "Contesting Community: "The Limits and Potential of Local Organizing." Chapter 1: "Community and Its Discontents" PDF Here. (pp. 7-34) • Healy, Richard and Sandra Hinson. "The Three Faces Of Power." Grassroots Policy Project, 2013. PDF Here. <p>Assignments Due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class facilitation. See if it is your week here.
2/14/2024	<p>Professional Community Organizing/The Role of the Organizer</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitchell, Maurice. "Building Resilient Organizations." (2022) • Sen, Rinku. "Stir It Up: Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy." Chapter 1: New Realities, Integrated Strategies. PDF Here. • Petitjean, Clement. When Organizers Are Professionals. Jacobin Magazine, July 2017 • Szakos, K. L. & Szakos, J. (2007). We make change: Community Organizers Talk About What They Do and Why. Vanderbilt University Press. Chapter 1: "What is Community Organizing?" and Profile: Brian Johns (p.1-15). <p>Assignments Due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class facilitation. See if it is your week here.
Part II: Organizing Skills	
2/21/2024	<p>Organizing Tools: Base-Building & Outreach <i>Meeting people where they are at</i> <i>Mass outreach/field programs → Absorption</i></p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minieri, J. et al. (2007). Tools for Radical Democracy: How to Organize for Power in Your Community. Jossey Bass. Chapter 3: Recruiting Constituents for Collective Action (p.37-60) • People's Action: "Building a Bigger We: Changing Hearts & Minds On Immigration in Rural America." (2020) <p>Assignments Due</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class facilitation. See if it is your week here.
2/28/2024	<p>Organizing Tools: 1:1s & Leadership Development Plans</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor Notes, How to Have and Organizing Conversation • Ransby, Barbara. "Ella Baker & the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision." (2003). The University of North Carolina Press. Chapter 12: A Freirean teacher, a Gramscian intellectual, and a radical humanist: Ella Baker's Legacy (p. 357-374) • Ganz, Marshall. "Marshall Ganz' Leadership Framework: A Primer." (2018). Available Here. <p>Assignments Due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class facilitation. See if it is your week here.
3/6/2024	<p>Storytelling, Communications, and Narrative Organizing</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ganz, Marshall. Why Stories Matter (2009) • Housing Justice for All, "Our Stories, Our Power: A Guide for Strategy Story-Telling." (2022) • Mann, David "Is Narrative Strategy a Communications Strategy?" Grassroots Policy Project (2015). <p>Assignments Due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class facilitation. See if it is your week here.
3/13/2024	<p>Student Presentations: Base-Building Plans</p> <p>Readings</p> <p>Assignments Due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present your base-building plan to the class. • Each group will have 10 minutes to present, followed by 5 minutes of Q&A.
3/20/2023	Spring Break
Part III: Running Campaigns, Building Community Power, Sustaining Organizations	
3/27/2024	<p>Community Organizing & Campaigns <i>What are campaigns?</i> <i>Campaign Goals</i> <i>Advocacy/legislative versus corporate campaigns</i> <i>Considerations for community organizations in waging successful campaigns</i></p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poo, Ai-jen. "A Twenty-First Century Organizing Model: Lessons from the New York Domestic Workers Bill of Rights Campaign." New Labor Forum. 2011. • Andrias, Kate and Benjamin Sachs. "Law and Organizing for Countervailing Power" Law and Political Economy Project. 2021. • Hertel-Fernandez, Alexander. "How Policymakers Can Craft Measures That Endure and Build Political Power." Roosevelt Institute. June 2020

	<p>Assignments Due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class facilitation. See if it is your week here. • Students should email Cea their proposed campaign/organization for your final project by April 1, 2023 at cmw530@nyu.edu
4/3/2024	<p>Components of a Successful Campaign <i>Issue ID; Target ID; Strategy & Tactics</i></p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minieri, J. et al. (2007). <i>Tools for Radical Democracy: How to Organize for Power in Your Community</i>. Jossey Bass. (Chapter 7, Chapter 8, Resource H) • Assil, Reem and Jay Donahue. <i>Campaign Research: A Tool for Grassroots Organizing</i>. 2015. Available here. <p>Assignments Due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class facilitation. See if it is your week here.
4/10/2024	<p>Class Visit: Jennifer Hernandez, Make the Road NY</p> <p>Podcasts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McAleve, Jane. "No Shortcuts." Chapter 6: Make the Road NY. PDF here. • Valdez, Javier and Ana Maria Archila. "Immigrant Advocates Just Got JPMorgan Chase to Stop Financing Private Prisons." The Nation, March 8, 2019. <p>Assignments Due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class facilitation. See if it is your week here.
4/17/2024	<p>Strategies & Tactics</p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minieri, J. et al. (2007). <i>Tools for Radical Democracy: How to Organize for Power in Your Community</i>. Jossey Bass. (Chapters 9 and 10) • WATCH: How to Survive a Plague (2012)- 2 hours. Available for Rent on Amazon and iTunes for \$4.99; free on Netflix for subscribers <p>Assignments Due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class facilitation. See if it is your week here.
4/24/2024	<p>Democracy & Power in Community Organizations <i>Power versus participation; Co-Governance</i></p> <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jenkins, Steve. "Organizing, Advocacy, and Member Power: A Critical Reflection." (2002). PDF Here. • Enger, Mark and Paul Engler. "A Guide to Co-Governance: Can movements and politicians work together?" June 2022, PDF Here. • Williams, Steve. "Demand Everything: Lessons of the Transformative Organizing Model." Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, New York Office, March 2013. <p>Assignments Due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class facilitation. See if it is your week here.

5/1/2024	<p>Reflection on Community Organizing as a Model for Change <i>Based on your campaign plans, we'll have a group discussion / debate about community organizing as an effective method of shifting power and winning durable change. Be prepared to talk about your campaign and bring your research and examples into the group discussion, as well as the perspectives shared in the readings throughout the class/semester.</i></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• None <p>Assignments Due:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final Paper
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