
Community Action and Social Change Minor
Foundation Course

Tuesday/Thursday 12:30-2:00
School of Social Work, B780

Instructors

Tony Alvarez
Lecturer II, School of Social Work
aalvarez@umich.edu
2760 SSWB
Office Hours: Tuesday 2-4 or by appointment

Katie Richards-Schuster
Assistant Professor, Director CASC Minor,
School of Social Work
kers@umich.edu
3850 SSW
Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 2-3

Course Description
This foundation course for the Community Action and Social Change Minor is designed to prepare students to be informed and active participants in the process of community building and social change. The course uses a multidisciplinary framework to develop competencies that will help students envision what community action and social change look like, identify and implement steps towards social change, build on positive sources of power, indigenous knowledge and experiences of individuals, groups, and communities who are engaged in social change efforts. The course is co-taught by a team representing different disciplinary perspectives who will work with students to integrate different ways of thinking based on the various disciplinary perspectives to achieve social change.

Supporting Statement for Social Science Distribution
This course meets the requirements for LS&A social science distribution in the following ways. The course material covers theories and practices of community action and social change through an interdisciplinary examination of examples in research and practice. The course focuses on individuals, groups and institutions and how they interact. The course examines empirical quantitative and qualitative studies that test social change methods and provides exposure to and experience with qualitative research methods such as ethnographic observation and interviewing and qualitative data-gathering. Students are engaged in a critical and contrasting assessment of community organizing and other social change methods.

Core Competencies
1. Students will examine their own identity development (race, class, gender, sexual/relational orientation, religion, nationality, ability, other), recognize multiple social identities, and engage in critical analysis of power, privilege and oppression.
2. Students will explore the meaning of community and social change.
3. Students will develop skills in interviewing, relationship-building, and group facilitation.
4. Students will gain awareness of historical framework and theory regarding community action and social change.
5. Students will engage in policy and structural analysis with regard to community action and social change.
6. Students will develop an understanding of community-building and organizing skills.

**Readings**

The required text is:

All additional readings will be posted to CTools.

**Grading and Assignments**

The class requires:

1. Short mid-term assignment based on class content/readings (15 points)- **DUE Oct 10th**
   - CASC FAQs (8 FAQs, 3-5 single-spaced pages)

2. History video project (20 points)- **DUE Oct 22nd**
   - Group Video on CASC Historical Topic, Wiki page, Annotated Bibliography
   - Class Presentation of Video
   - Seelio Project- Self Learning Reflection

3. CASC Project Work/Learning Circle Work- Students can select projects for their CASC Project Work Gallery (Must make commitments for the work by Oct 31, 30 points)- **DUE Dec 3rd**
   Examples of projects include:
   - Interview with social change agents (CASC alums and others)
   - Development of action strategy and critical analysis of a key social justice issue
   - Learning circle on key CASC topic/skill
   - Creative innovative approaches to CASC
   - Self-proposed ideas

4. Final paper (20 points)-- **DUE Dec 12th**
   - Top 5 Takeaways

5. Participation & Class Engagement (15 points)—**DUE Throughout Class**
   - Mini-homework, small group facilitation, in-class work (5 points)
   - Attendance (total 5 points)
   - Overall participation (5 points)

All assignments are due on their due date at 12pm, unless otherwise specified.
Assignment Specifics (By Due Date):

1. Short Assignment: Understanding CASC- A FAQ Primer (15 points)–DUE Oct 10th

Understanding community is critical to Community Action and Social Change. Write a short FAQ sheet (roughly 3-5 pages single spaced, approximately 8 FAQs) for a group of people that you think should know about community action and social change (examples: other CASC students, members of a group you are part of, your family, your home community) that answers these questions: What does community mean? What does community action & social change mean? What are the core characteristics of community action and social change? What are various frameworks for unpacking or understanding community action and social change? In addition, identify at least 4 other FAQs that are important for you. Make sure to draw on class readings and discussions. Finally, provide a brief overview of the group that you are writing the FAQs to and why you selected them. (15 points)

We will provide the opportunity for students to re-write this paper, if needed, to ensure mastery of the concepts. Re-written papers will be due by Oct 31st. There are NO exceptions or extensions to this date.

2. Learning From History: Creating a CASC Primer of People, Theories, and Events- DUE Oct 22nd (Seelio Project DUE Oct 31st)

PART 1: GROUP PROJECT (15 points)

Students will work in small groups to explore more intensively a historical aspect of community action and social change by researching and creating a video about the topic.

As a group you will:
(1) Select a topic to learn more about (done during class)
(2) Develop a project plan (using Trello or similar planning process tool)
(2) Prepare a 5-minute video, a one page overview sheet (“a Wikipedia type article”) that covers the content listed below, and an annotated reference list.

More information will be provided in class.

VIDEO and OVERVIEW Content Required

- OVERVIEW: Provide a descriptive overview about the example. Assume that people will have little background information about the case/person/theory. For example:
  What was/is the case study?
  What was/is the historical context?
  What was/is the community?
  Who were/are the key people?

- HALLMARK ELEMENTS: What are the defining elements of the case? What are the key ideas? What are the main components? How would you describe the core values, principles, and major activities? Why has this been important to understanding CASC?
• ISSUES/ACTIONS/ACTIVITIES: Describe some of the issues and activities that connect to the case. Provide an example, if possible.

• CURRENT ASPECTS: Are there current examples of this aspect?

• TAKE AWAYS FOR CASC: What are the take-aways/lessons learned? How does it inform our understanding of CASC and CASC concepts? What can we draw from for our own thinking about CASC?

You can draw from a range of sources to assist you with learning about your case example: books, videos, internet, and articles. We are available to meet with your team to discuss sources.

You will be asked to provide an annotated list of sources consulted as part of your project. Ideally, you should consult at least 6-8 sources in preparing your presentation (note that sources should be outside of required class readings).

Points will be given for effort, fulfillment of the required content, and quality of the content, not for video quality.

PART 2: Seelio Project Learning (5 points)

You will be asked to create a Seelio Project element that discusses your individual work with the project and your takeaways: What did you do? What did you learn? What skills did you develop? What are the takeaways for you?

Seelio (www.seelio.com) is a new online portfolio platform that we will be using for the CASC minor. More information about Seelio will be given in class. But, for initial information you can learn more about what you can do on Seelio here: www.seelio.com/about-us See how Seelio enables you to showcase yourself: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6kwotUjDSI If you ever have technical questions about Seelio, you can contact their support team at support@seelio.com.

3. Understanding CASC In Action: Individual/Pair Projects (30 points) - DUE Dec 3rd.

We want you to select a project that will help you to understand CASC more in-depth based on your own interests, goals, and experiences. Examples of the projects could include:

- In-depth interviews with at least four social change agents in the community/CASC alums working on a social justice issue and analysis about lessons learned.
- Development of action strategy and critical analysis of a key social justice issue
- Learning circle on key CASC content topic/skill
- Creative innovative approaches to CASC (e.g. video, game, toolkit)
- Self-proposed ideas

Each project must be proposed by no later than Oct. 31st and must be completed by Dec 3rd. You may work in pairs, but not teams. If you work in a pair, you will be awarded the same number of points regardless of individual contribution.
All projects will be presented in class during a “social justice learning” day. Presentations should be self-guided (poster board or PowerPoint, etc.) that (1) details your topic and learning and (2) how you might apply this learning for your own CASC work. This presentation will be shared in-class.

More information will be provided in class.

4. **Final Paper (20 points) – DUE DEC 10th**

Drawing from the class assignments and readings, we will ask you to select 5 top takeaways from the class. In your take-aways, we want you to reflect on the class, and discuss specific learnings, ideas, and core concepts that you will “take with you.” Each take-away will be worth 3 points and is expected to cover the following: What is the concept/idea? You should use reading and in-class discussions to legitimize your point. 2) Why is it important? You should use readings, discussions, and assignments to back-up your claims. 3) How will you apply this concept moving forward? How will you use this “take away”? We want you to apply the concept to your own work or work that you hope to do. The best answers will show critical thinking, application, and creativity. The remaining 5 points will be given for overall depth in discussion of content, creativity in approach, writing quality, and application of concepts.

5. **Participation & Engagement (15 points)- DUE Throughout class**

Class attendance and participation are crucial. Students are expected to (1) attend all classes, (2) be on-time and prepared for class, (3) participate in activities and discussions, (4) complete mini-homeworks and readings, and (4) be engaged during class time.

Mini-homework and in-class assignments will be a critical component of engagement and participation. Mini-homeworks will be assigned in-class for completion by the next class. They will be used to extend discussion on concepts and readings. If you don’t do them, you can’t participate in the same way as your colleagues.

Overall participation points will be given based on engagement, preparedness, level of participation, and class attendance. Similarly, points will be lost by inappropriate use of technology and through other behaviors that demonstrate a disengaged presence.

We will ask students to sign in to ensure accuracy in attendance. **We retain the right to lower an overall final grade by a minimum of ½ grade for any student who has excessive absences/tardiness or is highly disengaged in class.**

**Assignment Expectations**

Due dates are firm. We expect that assignments will be turned in on the day they are due unless there are extenuating circumstances. **We reserve the right to mark down papers ½ a grade for each day late in fairness to classmates who turn papers in on-time.**

**Plagiarism**

We take plagiarism seriously. Plagiarism is when you attribute others’ ideas and/or exact words
as your own. This includes ideas and/or passages from the readings, class activities, peers, and from the Internet, among others. We expect that all sources used will be cited or referenced. If we suspect plagiarism, we will follow the University’s protocol for disciplinary action. This could mean a lost of points, failure of a grade, and/or other consequences. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

**Learning Environment**

This class is based on a collaborative learning model—one in which students are both “teachers and learners” in the classroom. During the class, we will have regular opportunities for peer-based learning and teaching activities. This model requires that students be prepared to participate, to take risks and share ideas, to respect diverse opinions, and be open to challenging yourself each class.

**Other**

Please see us if you have any concerns about the class, your participation in the class, or have personal issues that relate to the class. We are more than happy to meet with you at any point to discuss your situation or to address any special accommodations. We are also available to assist you with accessing school or university-based resources you may need during the semester.

As a reminder, if you think you need an accommodation, please let us know at your earliest convenience. As soon as you make us aware, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities to make appropriate accommodations. For more information, please see SSD’s website: [http://ssd.umich.edu](http://ssd.umich.edu) or come talk to us.

**Grading Rubric**

Scores on the preceding assignments are cumulative and will be converted to a final letter grade at the end of the semester according to the following scale:

- 95-100 = A
- 91-94 = A-
- 88-90 = B+
- 84-87 = B
- 81-83 = B-
- 78-80 = C+
- 74-77 = C
- 71-73 = C-
- 67-70 = D+
- 64-66 = D
- 60-63 = D-

**Evaluation Component**

We plan to evaluate the lessons learned from class activities to further understanding of engaged curriculum and learning activities for community change. We will do this periodically throughout class using brief surveys or questionnaires to gain feedback about activities, skills, and lessons learned. You are under no obligation to participate. All responses will be anonymous. Participation or non-participation will in NO way impact your class grade. We will use the data gathered from class to generate findings for peer-reviewed papers and conference presentations. Please talk to us if you have any questions.
CLASS CALENDAR
1. Please note that we reserve the right to make changes in readings/resources as needed.
2. Mini-Homeworks designated as (A) are due for Tuesday’s class and (B) for Thursday’s class.
3. Most readings should be completed before Tuesday’s class to be used on both Tuesday and Thursdays, except as noted in the syllabus.

I. GETTING STARTED

Week 1 (9/3 & 9/5): Introduction to Class and Class Community
- Overview of Community Action and Social Change
- Overview of class: Who are we as a class?
- What are our connections?
- What are our motivations?

Reading:

Mini-Homework (B): Self-Mapping—Who are you? Why do you care about creating change? Please complete/create a self-map and be prepared to share with your classmates.

II. CORE CONCEPTS AND MODELS FOR COMMUNITY ACTION & SOCIAL CHANGE

Week 2 (9/10 & 9/12): Creating Community: Strengths & Assets for Community Change
- How do we understand the concept of community? What are its forms? What are key characteristics?
- What is a democratic learning community? How can it be created? How do we assess strengths and assets within a community context?

Readings:

Mini-Homework (A): Think about Pyles’ definition of community. Is this different or similar to other ways you’ve thought about community? Bring a list of the communities with which you connect or identify.

Mini-Homework (B): Reflect on Arnstein’s ladder of participation in relationship to your own participation in others classes. Where would you place yourself on the ladder? What are ways to build participation in class?

Week 3 (9/17 & 9/19): Being a Change Agent in a Community Context: Core Concepts and Key Characteristics
- What is community action and social change? What are various meanings of change?
- What are core characteristics of being change agents?
- How do we understand leadership in the context of community change?

Readings:
- Checkoway, B. Core Concepts for Community Change Article

Mini-Homework (B): Interview 10 peers- what is their concept of a leader? Why? What are the important characteristics? Brainstorm other questions that might help us explore the concepts of learning and leadership for social change.

Week 4 (9/24 & 9/26): Social Identity, Privilege & Community Change
- Forming Full Human Relationships
- Awareness of Identity, Power & Privilege- Introduction to “PODS” Framework
- Working in Partnership & Engaging in Community

Readings:
- Boggs, G. (2011). Forward, Introduction, and Ch. 1: “These are the Times to Grow Our Soul”
- Pharr, S. “Reflections on Liberation”, “Liberatory Consciousness”
- Johnson, A.: “What Can We Do?”

Mini Homework (A): First, do a self-survey on privilege, social identity, and community change and second, reflect on the readings in relationship to the self-survey. In what ways do your multiple social identities impact your work in community and community change?

Mini-Homework (B): Bring to class an example on one on-line website, tool kit, or organizational example that focuses on diversity learning and critical examination of power, privilege at the community level.

Week 5 (10/1 & 10/3): CASC & Social Justice- Examining Community Change through Social Justice Lens
- Perspectives on understanding social justice
- Examining community change through a structural lens
- Developing conceptual frameworks for practice
- Brainstorming FAQs

Readings:
- Lee, Pragmatics of Community Organizing: Ch. 5 (THURS)
- Website: Match on Dry Grass (focus on framework) www.matchondrygrass.org (THURS)

Mini-Homework (A): Based on the readings and your own ideas/past experiences, develop a working definition about social justice. Come ready to talk about your definition with your group.

Mini-Homework (B): Bring in a newspaper article that relates to a social justice issue or a community action and social change effort. Be prepared to discuss the article, focusing on an analysis of power, social context, social structures, and larger societal influences that are at play.
III. FRAMEWORKS FOR CASC: EXPLORING THEORY AND HISTORY

- Why theory & history? What are some of the guiding theoretical frameworks for community action and social change? What can we learn from them?
- What is the role of history for community change?

Readings:

Mini-Homework (A): Each team will be assigned a theoretical concept from Pyles. We are asking you to become experts in the theory and come ready to provide a mini-presentation on the theory to the class and its importance to CASC.

Mini-Homework (B): Come with two questions about Boggs. Come ready to talk about your questions with your group.

** FAQs DUE: 10/10

Week 7 (10/15- BREAK, 10/17- In Class Video Project Work)

Week 8 & 9 (10/22, 10/24 & 10/29, 10/31) Historical Video Class Projects & Learning From History
- CASC Social Justice Film Festival
- Overarching Themes

IV. CASC IN PRACTICE: SKILLS & APPROACHES

Week 10 (11/5 & 11/7): CASC Practice Overview: Steps in the Process

Readings:

Week 11 (11/12 & 11/14): Analyzing Issues & Developing Approaches

Readings:
- Boggs Ch. 4 Detroit: Place and Space to Begin Anew, Ch. 5: A Paradigm Shift in out Education
- Checkoway, B. Approaches to Community Change
- TED Talk on Education [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDGpL4U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDZFcDGpL4U)

Mini-Homework (A): Thinking about the TED talk and Boggs’ Chapter- How would you analyze the structural issues with education? Come with some ideas about the issues that are raised and how you might approach working for change.
Mini-Homework (B): Review the case study: Boggsville. Come ready to talk about the case and approaches that your group might suggest.

**Week 12 (11/19 & 11/21): Building Relationships**
- Entering & Engaging
- Listening & Learning
- Roles in Community Work

**Readings**
- Lee, B. Ch. 6. Pragmatics of Community Organization
- Boggs, Ch. 6: We are the Leaders We’ve Been Waiting For
- Reading TBD

**Week 13 (11/26, 11/28- Thanksgiving): CASC Skills: Small Groups Learning Circles**

**Examples of topics, TBD:**
- Participatory facilitation
- Community action strategy
- Participatory research
- Community based advocacy
- Social entrepreneurship
- Intergroup dialogue

**Week 14 (12/3 & 12/5): Project Presentations**

**V. CLASS WRAP-UP**

**Week 15 (12/10): Last Class- Closing, Take Aways, and Questions for the Future**