Course Description

This course examines community-based policy advocacy as a process for involving people in the formation, implementation, and evaluation of policies. In contrast to the notion of advocacy as an approach in which individuals speak on behalf of others, community-based advocacy enables people themselves to build capacity and address issues that affect them.

The course analyzes core concepts of community-based policy advocacy, steps in the process, and perspectives on practice in a society which values diversity as an asset. Emphasis is placed on increasing involvement of traditionally underrepresented groups in economically disinvested and racially segregated areas.

The course draws upon best practices and lessons learned from issues such as education, environment, health, human services, housing, and neighborhood revitalization, in addition to social work, public health, urban planning, and related fields.

Course Objectives

- Understand core concepts of community-based policy advocacy in a diverse democratic society.

- Develop knowledge of process steps and practice skills, e.g., formulating strategy, identifying issues, organizing constituencies, building coalitions.

- Critically assess case studies and lessons learned from empirically-based practice.

- Identify issues of underrepresented groups in economically disinvested and racially segregated areas.

- Examine questions of ethics and values arising in the field.

Course Design

Responsibilities include readings, participation in discussions, written assignments, and individual and group exercises related to course objectives. Resource persons will address selected topics.
Relationship of Course to Curricular Themes

**Multiculturalism and Diversity:** Students will identify ways in which advocacy can address race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, sexual orientation, and other forms of stratification and inequality.

**Social Justice and Social Change:** Emphasis is placed on how advocacy can strengthen social change and social justice by building community and challenging oppression and in disinvested and segregated areas.

**Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation:** The course will focus on how to prevent social problems and promote healthier communities in proactive ways, rather than to merely react to immediate issues.

**Behavioral and Social Science Research:** Relevant research and best practices from diverse disciplines and professional fields will contribute to understanding of empirically-based practice.

**Social Work Ethics and Values**

The NASW *Code of Ethics* establishes responsibility for social workers to engage in socially-just political action addressing the needs of diverse and disadvantaged populations.
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Reading List

Core Concepts


Rogers, J. et al. 2012 Building power, learning democracy: youth organizing as a site of civic development. Review of Research in Education 36, 43—66, at http://rre.sagepub.com/content/36/1/43.full.pdf+html


Community Agencies


Website of San Francisco Youth Commission, at www.sfbos.org/index.aspx?page=5585
Grassroots Groups


Websites of Coleman Advocates, Funders Collaborative for Youth Organizing.

Formulating Strategy


Planning for Change


Engaging Communities


Driskell, Chapter 2.

Website of Participation and People.net.

Building Organizational Capacity


Website of Youth and Young Adults of Color Leadership Training School, at http://www.uua.org/re/youth/identity-based/color/158493.shtml

Forming Community Coalitions


**Intergroup Dialogue**


**Influencing Individuals: Building Relationships and Lobbying**


**Influencing Groups: Making Presentations and Testifying**


Bobo, Chapter 13.

**Using the Internet**


Websites of New Organizing Institute, Detroit Digital Justice Coalition.

**Strengthening Social Justice**

Assignments

A primary purpose of assignments 1,2,and 4, is to synthesize and refer to the course readings, organize your thoughts, and make a specific point about the topic.

**Assignment 1:**

Write a paper in which you describe a community or community group and a few of its distinct characteristics and concerns, and summarize five steps in a policy advocacy process for empowering them. (3-5 typewritten pages, draft due September 26, final due October 3, 10 percent).

The community might be distinguished by age, class, cause, culture, ethnicity, geography, gender, ideology, race, religion, sexual orientation, or other identity.

**Assignment 2:**

What is a policy issue that concerns you? Who is affected by the issue and how are they affected? What are the main causes of the issue? What are some possible solutions? What impact will the proposed solution have on social justice? Write a paper in which you discuss these questions. (3-5 pages, draft due October 24, final due October 3, 20 percent).

Please include a supplementary one-page policy fact sheet, prepared as if to share with an influential stakeholder and, in addition, a few talking points you’d want to make to him or her.

**Assignment 3:**

Formulate a strategy for increasing the involvement of young people in public policy of a grassroots group or community agency. Form a project team with at least three members, consult with the group, gather information, formulate a strategy, and prepare a written report and poster for presentation and feedback in class and to a community leader or agency staff member. (12-15 pages, due November 21, 50 percent).

**Assignment 4:**

What is a socially-just community, and what is a socially-just community-based policy advocacy process for accomplishing it? Synthesize and refer to the readings for the semester. (3-5 pages, due December 12, 10 percent).
**Term Project**

Working in teams, formulate a strategy for increasing the involvement of young people in public policy of a grassroots group or community agency. Form a project team with at least three members, consult with the group, gather information, formulate a strategy, and prepare a written report and poster presentation for feedback to class members and a jury of professionals, and to a community leader or agency staff member.

Team members will have time to meet in class sessions, discuss their work with the instructor and other students, and prepare their presentations.

Studio-based learning is an approach often associated with architecture education. Background information on this approach can be found at www.edi.msstate.edu/work/pdf/history_studio_based_learning.pdf

The written report might be cited as a publication in your portfolio. The poster should be suitable for display. There are several sites for poster printing on campus.

I will provide an illustrative list of grassroots groups and community agencies, such as Youth Voice, Alternatives for Girls, Novi Community School District, Edsel Ford High School, Congress of Communities, and Boulevard House.

**Metropolitan Detroit**

Metropolitan Detroit is a highly segregated area. The city is more than 80 percent African-American, and the suburbs more than 85 percent white. Segregation dominates, although there are small areas of diversity.

Segregation results in disparities, institutional inequalities, and social injustices. For example, some city schools have outdated books and unsanitary bathrooms, while suburban schools boast high academic achievement and test scores.

Young people are aware of segregation, and want to communicate with others who are different from themselves. They have attitudes toward diversity which are different from earlier generations, and know that intercultural skills are needed to succeed in today’s world. They want to increase dialogue, challenge segregation, and create change. However, most of them live in segregation, with few opportunities for meaningful or sustained relationships.

What is a strategy for increasing the involvement of young people in public policy of a grassroots group or community agency in metropolitan Detroit?

It is important to have basic information about metropolitan Detroit. For this purpose, please read the following materials as soon as possible:
Class Participation

Class participation is good for everyone. It might include involvement in discussions, group leadership, volunteering, arranging a day at the ropes course, or other activities. (30 percent).

Participation requires regular attendance, coming to class on time, preparation and engagement in class discussions, and submission of assignments on scheduled dates unless arranged in advance. “Showing up” is itself not participation in the course. Absence from class might result in lowering your grade.

Course Readings

Course readings and class preparation is integral to our learning. You may be asked to open a session, or called upon to share your thoughts on a reading.

Most course readings are available on CTools. Please check CTools to confirm their availability and contact the instructor if anything is awry.

The book for purchase is available for purchase at Common Language Bookstore 317 Braun Court, Kerrytown, Ann Arbor.

On-Line Resources

There are various on-line resources which are relevant for your work in the course, including Comm-Org and Community Tool Box.

Paper Revision Policy

You may revise and resubmit any paper for reevaluation until the last session. Papers are due on assigned dates without extension, unless prearranged with the instructor. All papers in the course should be submitted in hard copy.
**General Guidelines for Papers**

1. Make a specific point. Express what you think.
2. Quality and depth of analysis of information and ideas, and relevance to topic.
3. Appropriate use of and reference to empirical evidence, as well as their variety and range.
4. Quality of presentation, e.g., introduction, logical sequencing, conclusion.
5. Use of proper grammar and professional presentation of material.
6. Level of effort expressed in written work.

**Class Climate**

We want to create a classroom climate in which everyone can experiment with new ideas or skills; explore their own cultural competencies and their implications for social and political action; consult with others on assignments and projects; and identify areas for future learning.

**Using Laptops**

Using laptops for taking notes is acceptable, but using them for other purposes is distracting to others.

**Academic Integrity**

We will follow the Student Code of Academic and Professional Conduct in the School of Social Work Student Handbook. Web resources on academic integrity developed by the University’s Center for Research on Learning and Teaching can be found at their website.

**Disabilities Statement**

If you have a disability or condition that may interfere with your participation in this course, please schedule a private appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations for your needs. This information will be kept strictly confidential. For more information and resources, please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities office at G664 Haven Hall, (734) 763-3000.

**Contacting the Instructor**

My e-mail is barrych@umich.edu, my office is 3840 SSWB, and my home telephone is 734.668.0117. I am available through e-mail, telephone, and by appointment. I want to get to know you, and hope that you will arrange a time when we can talk early in the semester.
SW 674        Barry Checkoway
Community-Based Policy Advocacy       Fall 2013

Student Information Form

Name:
Address:
E-Mail:   Telephone:
UM program:
Professional goal:
Community experience:

Interest in course topic:

Experience or skill which might be useful to the class:

Something that will help me get to know you better: