

**Social Work 305: Theories and Practices for  
Community Action and Social Change**

**Community Action and Social Change Minor  
Foundation Course**



**FALL 2015:**

Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:30 - 2:00 p.m.  
School of Social Work, Room B798

**Instructor**

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Office Hours: By Appointment

**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 student 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.

## **Background Context:**

Praxis: Reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it  
*-Paulo Freire, The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

## **Readings**

All readings will be posted to Canvas.

## **Grading and Assignments**

The class requires a set of assignments aimed at:

- 1) gaining critical awareness about one's self as a community change agent
- 2) building knowledge about historical frameworks, theory and key people, and
- 3) applying the lessons and learning to one's current interest or work.

### **A. Individual Reflection Paper (5%) DUE: Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>**

All students will complete a short 3- page paper on their experiences in and motivations for community action and social change. Participants will be asked to share their own story with emphasis on the following questions: 1) Why do I care about community action and social change? 2) What are some of my experiences engaging in activities of community action and social change? 3) What are some of my influences (people, experiences, communities, ideology, etc) that shape my motivations? 4) What core values do I hold that influence how I engage with community action and social change? 5) What do I think I can contribute to the class? 6) What do I hope to learn?

Students will use the paper to inform their storytelling during Week 2 of class

### B. Team Contract (5%) DUE: Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>

Each group will also develop a Team Contract that will serve to govern the way in which the team does its work. The contract will also plainly state any rules or policies regarding team roles and practices. The professor will provide an example in class.

### C. Learning From History (25%) DUE: Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>

Students will select a historical social justice movement, key social change leader, or organization. Students will conduct research and write a 5-7 page double spaced paper based on your research that addresses the following questions:

- What is the movement/organization about? What is its history?
- Why did/does the movement occur? What are the social justice issues that it is/was trying to challenge/change?
- Underlying perspectives/frameworks/core values of the work?
- What approaches used?
- What can you learn from this movement for your own work?
- Why and how does this movement matter?

### D. Semester-long Community Action and Social Change Group Project (35%)

DUE: Dec. 8<sup>th</sup>

- Students will develop a GROUP project based on their shared passions or interests/desires to learn about or further their efforts in Community Action & Social Change
- Proposal: DUE September 24<sup>th</sup>
- Each group will prepare a one-page written document to discuss their overall topic and project action. In addition to describing their project, students should include any areas they feel they will need support around. Students will get feedback (either written or in person) to support their project plan.
- Students will develop an action project. Examples of projects include:
  - Resource guide/Tool Kit with curriculum, websites, student organizations around a topic (e.g. educational justice, prison reform, racial justice) or approach to community change work (e.g. community organizing, community facilitation, popular education)
  - Develop an organizational strategy/action plan for an organization, program or a campaign for campus (could be current or proposed)
  - Develop a one-day workshop curriculum on a specific social justice topic that could be implemented in the community/on campus
  - Conduct 4 Interviews with current social justice leaders on issues, transcribe the interviews, and analyze the takeaways across the interviews

- Develop a set of media materials around a specific social justice topic (e.g. communications materials, website, messaging in campaigns)
  - Conduct a research project on a social justice topic that could inform campus or community action.
  - Read Grace Lee Boggs, “The Next American Revolution” and prepare a paper that discusses the main themes and the application to community change work.
- Students will develop 3 page write up of their project. The write up should include: 1) a 2-3-sentence overview of the project, 2) description of the activities/project work, 3) skills gained from completing the project, 4) core lessons learned and reflections from the project.
  - Students will be prepared to share projects with class. Presentation days are Dec. 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>.

#### E. Class Participation (15%) DUE: throughout semester

Active participation will enhance the class discussion and make possible the exploration and exchange of ideas that are critical in this course. Class participation involves thoughtful engagement with the material, contributions that are pertinent to the topic being discussed and all forms of respectful verbal and non-verbal behavior, such as being attentive, asking questions of the professor and other students, sharing reasons why one agrees or disagrees with different ideas, and practicing supportive listening. Respectful behavior also includes being willing to meet individually with the professor upon request. **Failure to exhibit respectful behavior can result in the loss of all 15 points.**

**Also, please note that ringers on cell phones should be turned off when class begins. Texting is not allowed in class but laptops are permissible for note taking and in-class research. If you have an urgent phone call or text message, please leave class to deal with this.**

#### F. Class Attendance 12% DUE: throughout semester

Students with one or no absences will earn 12 points. After the first absence, 1 point will be deducted for each additional absence. **Arriving more than ten minutes late or leaving class early will be counted as half an absence.**

Exceptions to the absence and attendance rule include events for which a student has no control. Here are some examples: jury duty, a summons to appear in court, required military service, and being in a car crash on the way to school.

**Official documentation** will be required in order to classify these absences as excused. **Such situations should be talked about in private during office hours or by**

appointment—this means that I would prefer not to discuss them in front of others right before class starts or during a class break.

### G. Learning Assessment (3%) DUE: Last Day of Class

The 'Learning Assessment' is a required individual assignment. It is an opportunity at the end of the semester for you to assess your own work, learning and progress in this class.

It is expected that your responses will be confidential and that you as a student will not have access to the submissions of other students in the class. You can earn a maximum of 3 points towards your grade for the course in this assignment.

### Assignment Expectations

Due dates are firm. All written assignments must be submitted electronically via Canvas on the day they are due by **12:30 p.m.** unless there are extenuating circumstances. I 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

I 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. I expect that all sources used will be cited or referenced. If I suspect plagiarism, I will follow the University's protocol for disciplinary action. This could mean a loss 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 me if you have any concerns about the class, your participation in the class, or have personal issues that relate to the class. I am more than happy to meet with you at any point to discuss your situation or to address any special accommodations. I am also available to assist you with accessing school or university-based resources you may need during the semester.

As a reminder, any special needs or accommodations must be documented by the Office

of Students with Disabilities and presented to me by the drop/add deadline to ensure proper accommodations can be made.

### 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:

94-100 = A	74-76 = C
91-93 = A-	71-73 = C-
87-90 = B+	67-70 = D+
84-86 = B	64-66 = D
81-83 = B-	60-63 = D-
77-80 = C+	

### Evaluation Component

The CASC department plans to evaluate and use the lessons learned from class activities to do further research on 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.

## CLASS CALENDAR

### I. BUILDING COMMUNITY (Week 1-3)

#### **Week 0: Introduction to Community Action and Social Change (September 8)**

*What is Community Action and Social Change? What is the CASC Minor? What is 305 and where does it fit?*

*What is social work as a field? How does SW relate to community action and social change? What are the critiques? What are the possibilities?*

*What should you expect for this class? What goals do you plan to set for yourself? What do you want to learn? What do you want to gain?*

Reading:

- NASW Code of Ethics, International Code of Ethics

#### **Week 1: Understanding our Story: Why are We Here? What do we care about? (September 15)**

*What are our stories? How do we explore our own ideas, experiences, and interests in the context of community action & social change?*

*Why do stories matter for community change work? How can and have stories been used to facilitate change? How are our stories tools for change? How has storytelling motivated others to take risks and create change?*

*How can storytelling help build community?*

*What does vulnerability have to do with community action and social change?*

Readings:

- Szakos & Szakos, We Make Change – Chapter 1
- Pyles, Chapter 2 – Self-Aware Organizer
- Brene Brown, TED Talk on vulnerability

#### **Week 2: Building Community with a framework of PODS (September 22)**

*What is needed to explore community action and social change through a lens of privilege, oppression and social justice?*

*What are the dynamics involved? What are the core concepts and skills needed?*

*How does language matter for community change work? How can we critically reflect on language and our own perspectives? What would a common language include?*

Readings:

- Iris Marion Young, Five Faces of Oppression
- Pharr, S. Readings for Diversity and Social Justice
- Johnson, A. Readings for Diversity and Social Justice

### **Week 3: Community Change as a Process: Systems, Structures, Power (September 29)**

*What does community change look like in practice? What are frameworks? What are some examples?*

*What are the systems structures and power in play in understanding community change? How do we explore root causes and structural forces? Why does this matter?*

*What are frameworks for exploring power and counter power mapping? What and how can these tools be critical to community change efforts?*

*What do different frameworks bring to CASC work? What questions does it raise about the continuity of what it means to do CASC work?*

Readings:

- Checkoway Core Concepts
- Warren, M. – How CO Works
- Reisch – Defining SJ in an unjust world
- Werner and Bower – Helping Health Workers Learn

## **II. FRAMEWORKS AND APPROACHES (WEEK 4-6)**

### **Week 4: Exploring Approaches: CASC in Practice (October 6)**

*What are the approaches? Single Approaches? Multiple Approaches? How do we understand CASC in Practice?*

*What's the relationship between direct service and direct action?*

Readings/Materials:

- Checkoway: Approaches/Six Strategies
- Shepard, B. Ch. 2 Activism in a Changing World
- Wernick, L. & Kulick, A. Youth Participatory Research/Riot Youth: LGBTQ Activism
- Visit and Review Web Examples of the following organizations:
  - Highlander
  - Southern Echo



- Chicago Freedom Schools
- Neutral Zone
- Michigan Roundtable
- Boston Student Advisory Council

### **Week 5: Critical Praxis in Community Work- Key Issues (October 13)**

Is service learning about community change?

How do we think about the “level of change”?

What is critical to consider about entering and exiting communities? How do we understand ourselves as an insider of a community vs. an “outsider”?

Readings: TBD

### **Week 6: Learning From History & Theory (October 22)**

What can we learn from history and theory to guide community action and social change work?

How can we engage in liberatory theory development in and through community change work?

What are the major movements and organizations that have shaped community practice? What lessons and ideas can we draw from these movements for our own work in community change?

Readings:

- Activism and Social Change, Chapter 3
- Community Projects as Social Activism, Chapter 18
- Progressive Community Organizing, Chapter 3
- Teaching to Transgress, Chapter 5
- Come prepared to share your work from your history papers

### **III. SKILLS, PRACTICES & SPECIAL TOPICS**

#### **Week 7: Organizing, Strategy, and Action (October 27)**

What is community organizing as a specific approach? What is critical about organizing as an approach to change? How and why does strategy matter for creating change? What does developing strategy involve?

Readings:

- A Match on Dry Grass, Chapter 5

- Campus Organizing Guide
- Organizing for Social Change, Chapter 4

**Week 8: Building Relationships & Facilitating Participation: Listening, Learning, & Cultural Humility (November 3)**

What are the skills required for building relationships? How does this matter for community change work?

How does social media change or impact building relationships and facilitating engagement? In what ways does it help? In what ways does it hurt? What are the implications for our own work? How do we see the future of social media for our own social change efforts?

Readings:

- Gladwell, The Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted
- Interpersonal Social Work Skills for Community Practice, Chapter 2
- Roots for Radicals, Chapter 2

**Week 9: Coalition building, Intersectionality, and Allyhood (November 10)**

What does it mean to work across difference for change? How do we build coalitions considering power, privilege, and oppression?

Readings:

- Civic Youth Work, Chapter 4
- Combahee River Collective
- Edwards Allyhood For Social Justice
- Stir it up!

**Week 10: Reality of Community Change: Sustainability & Self-Care (November 17)**

What is the reality of CASC? Given the complexity of systems, how do we think about our work and our potential for change? What are strategies for approaching community action social change work?

Readings

- Tempered Radicals

**Week 11: Film; Walmart – The High Cost of Low Prices (November 24)**

**Week 12: Finalize Papers & Prepare for CLASS PRESENTATIONS (December 1)**

**Week 13: CLASS PRESENTATIONS (December 8)**